CARMELITE POETRY IN FRANCE AND THE LOW COUNTRIES:
THE TRADITION OF TERESA OF AVILA

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When Teresa of Avila founded the Order of Discalced Carmelites in sixteenth-century Spain, she did so in part to restore the austerity that had previously characterized the Carmelite Order. At the same time, mindful of the hardships of convent life, she also sought to balance that austerity with a measure of alegría, or joyfulness. As a means of enlivening the atmosphere of the convents she had founded, she composed coplas, or poems, meant to be sung at daily recreations, and encouraged her fellow Carmelites to do the same. Researchers have shown that this practice was maintained in Spain until at least the early seventeenth century, but until now there has been little indication of this poetic tradition in other countries where Discalced Carmelite convents were founded. In this dissertation, poems composed in Carmelite convents in France, the Spanish Netherlands and later Belgium in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries are presented, demonstrating that the tradition begun by Teresa of Avila was actively carried on by the French, Flemish and Belgian Carmelite women who joined Teresa’s order in the centuries following its foundation. Further, the presentation and analysis of these manuscripts shows that Carmelite poems adapted to new times and new circumstances, and began to function as historical documents, defenses of convent life and as a means of expressing resistance to anti-clerical hostility, notably during the French Revolution. These poems also serve to establish a literary link between “La Grande Thérèse” and “La Petite Thérèse”, as Teresa of Avila and Thérèse de Lisieux are often called in French Carmel. A clear arc of poetic activity that reaches from sixteenth-century Spain in the time of Teresa of Avila to nineteenth-century France in the time of Thérèse de Lisieux is now visible, and the broader meaning and function of poetry in the convents of Carmelite women is made clearer.
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ABBREVIATIONS USED IN CITATIONS

(BRU) Recueil de poésies du Carmel de Bruxelles (Archives of the convent of Brussels, Belgium. Volume dates: 1692-1771, 307 pp.)

(CDX) Pour la fête de notre Rêvérende Mère Catherine-Dorothée de la Croix (In Recueil de cantiques du Carmel de Saint-Denis. Archives of the convent of Créteil, France. Manuscript date: circa 1751, 19 pp.)

(EG) Eglogue du monastère des Carmélites de Mol (Archives of the convent of Antwerp, Belgium. Manuscript date: 1675, 14 pp.)

(GRE) Cantiques spirituels sur la naissance de notre Seigneur et autres sujets, faits par nos sœurs de Saint Denis et par celles de notre maison rue de Grenelle (Archives of the convent of Créteil. Volume dates: 1749-1884, 628 pp.)


(PL) Premier livre de cantiques du Carmel de Beaune (Municipal Archives of the City of Beaune, France. Volume dates: ?-1657,138 pp.)

(RB) Recueil de cantiques du Carmel de Beaune (Archives of the convent of Nevers, France. Undated volume, 70 pp.)

(RC) Recueil de cantiques du Carmel de Beaune (Municipal Archives of the City of Beaune, France. Volume dates: 1655-1657, 123 pp.)

(SAX) Recueil de poésies, faites au Carmel par la plupart des Religieuses du Monastère de l’Avenue de Saxe 26 (Archives of the convent of Créteil, France. Volume dates: 1845-1896, 396 pp.)

(SD) Recueil de cantiques du Carmel de Saint-Denis (Archives of the convent of Créteil, France).

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Prologue

In the Fall of 2007 and Spring of 2008, I was in Paris on fellowship, conducting research for a dissertation that was to be focused on the 17th-century French translations of the Spanish mystic and poet John of the Cross (San Juan de la Cruz, 1542-1591). Working my way through books and articles on John and the reception of his writings in France, I came across a reference to an unpublished manuscript translation of his poem *Llama de amor viva* (The Living Flame of Love), said to be housed in the archives of the Carmelite convent of Pontoise, some 45 minutes northwest of Paris. Having studied the published French translations of John’s poems, the idea of finding a new, unpublished one was exciting, and so I wrote to the prioress of the Pontoise convent to ask whether or not the manuscript in question was in fact in the archives, whether or not they accepted visitors, and if so whether I might be allowed to consult the text.

After several weeks had passed, I finally received a reply to the effect that indeed, the manuscript was in the Pontoise archives, but that it was likely not worth consulting, given the existing published translations that were readily available in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, and generally suggesting that a visit was not convenient. Disappointed but with other leads to follow up on, I thanked my correspondent (the sœur archiviste, Sister Anne-Thérèse de Jésus), and went about working on the other texts and sources available in the Bibliothèque Nationale. But after a few months of working in the BNF on the published translations of John’s writings, I became convinced that I did truly want to see the Pontoise manuscript in order to compare its treatment of John’s poem to the French translations I had already read. So, once again, I wrote to Sister Anne-Thérèse, asking if perhaps it might now be a better time to visit, and attempted to convey the sincerity and seriousness of my scholarly intentions. And again, several weeks passed, but as before, a reply finally came,
saying that in fact another scholar who had viewed the manuscript a few years earlier had made digital photos of the text, and that if I was indeed so keen on consulting the translation, the files could be saved to disk and mailed to me in Paris. At this point, I felt pleased that I would be able to view the manuscript, even if, as Anne-Thérèse had suggested, its significance was limited, and I was also grateful that she had made the concession of offering to mail me the digital copy. Out of gratitude, I suggested that since it wasn’t a long trip on the RER train from Paris to Pontoise, I would be glad to save the postage and come pick the disk up in person, at Anne-Thérèse’s convenience. To my surprise, she agreed, and granted me an appointment the following week.

I was enthusiastic about making the trip, as it would be the first time I had gone outside a library to do research, and after many months of reading printed, published texts, the idea of consulting an original manuscript was exciting. This was also to be my first experience with a convent or monastery, and so (perhaps typical of an inexperienced researcher) by the time I set off for Pontoise I had elevated a short trip to a Paris suburb to the status of a true anthropological expedition, including little-known artifacts and (for me) a foreign culture. When I arrived at the gate of the convent, which is still intact from its foundation in 1605, I was greeted by the tourière, who in most convents is charged with relations with the exterior world, including visitors. Traditionally, this external representative would be a professed nun, like the others in the convent. In Pontoise, the tourières are now local laywomen who volunteer their time and serve as liaisons between inside and outside. This, I came to understand later, was mostly due to the fact that the number of Carmelite nuns “inside” is small and getting smaller, in an age in which religious profession and especially the decision to live as a cloistered nun are increasingly uncommon.
The *tourière* led me into the convent courtyard, through a door, and up a narrow flight of stairs to the *parloir*, another intermediary space between inside and outside, where nuns can receive visitors while maintaining their remove from the world. After almost a full minute of sitting in near pitch darkness, two doors slid open in front of me, letting light come through a perforated grill. On the other side of the grill, sister Anne-Thérèse greeted me, and began to inquire about my work, where I had come from, and what had brought me there. Apparently satisfied enough with my answers to grant me another layer of access, she opened the grill itself, and laid both the disk containing the digital copy of the manuscript and the manuscript itself on the small table between her room and mine. She invited me to examine the manuscript, and as I did so she began to explain its origins, a number of theories regarding its authorship (the translator remains unidentified) and the previous scholarly work that had been done on the text. It was clear to me immediately that Anne-Thérèse was not only an archivist who knew the history of her religious order and its principal figures, but also a person very much aware of and interested in modern scholarship on Carmelite history and the literary production of French Carmelites, whose story began in 1604 when Spanish nuns were brought to France to establish convents in Paris and Pontoise, and later in nearly every corner of France in the centuries that followed.

As Anne-Thérèse had suggested, the manuscript was, while interesting to me as a beginning specialist on John of the Cross, a text of minor significance, even in the context of my project. But the manuscript, and to some extent John of the Cross, were soon to take a back seat to what I would discover in Pontoise and across France and Belgium. After talking a while longer, Anne-Thérèse came to understand that what interested me most in the literary production of French Carmelites was the tradition of composing *cantiques*, or spiritual verses, and that I had been disappointed to find few traces in 17th-century France of a tradition that had flourished in Spain a century before – both John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila (1515-
1582), who had reformed the Carmelite Order in 16\textsuperscript{th}-century Spain, were active poets, composing \textit{coplas}, or poetic verses, and their fellow Spanish Carmelites had followed in their footsteps in this regard, leaving behind a sizeable corpus of spiritual poems. Yet in France, there seemed to be little trace of such activity among the French Carmelites who so closely imitated Teresa and John in other ways. After I had explained all of this, Anne-Thérèse paused a moment, and said: “vous vous intéressez aux poèmes?” After my affirmative reply, she told me: “revenez dans une semaine. Nous avons des choses qui peuvent vous intéresser.”

When I returned the following week, I was escorted by the \textit{tourière} to another part of the convent, to an office which I was told would be my workspace. I was also informed that I would be taking my mid-day meal there, precisely at twenty minutes past noon. The \textit{tourière} left, and a few minutes later Anne-Thérèse appeared, this time in the same room, apparently no longer feeling the need for us to be separated into inside and outside spaces. What she carried with her was (unbeknownst to me at the time) the beginnings of this project, two primitively bound manuscript volumes of poems composed by 17\textsuperscript{th}- and 18\textsuperscript{th}-century Carmelite nuns, in all hundreds of poems from the years between the founding of the first Carmelite convent in Paris in 1604 to the French Revolution at the end of the 18\textsuperscript{th} century. What had been completely absent from all of the records I had been able to see in libraries thus far was abundantly in evidence in these manuscripts – the traces of a vigorously maintained tradition of \textit{coplas/cantiques} in the style of those of John of the Cross and Teresa of Avila.

For weeks, I returned regularly to my “office” in the convent of Pontoise, continued to take my mid-day meal at twenty past noon, read poems, took notes, and tried to understand the significance of the contents of the two volumes of manuscripts Anne-Thérèse had given me.

\footnote{“you’re interested in poems?...come back here in a week, then. We have some things that might interest you.”}
When at the end of a month or so of visits I told Anne-Thérèse that I was indeed interested in this group of mostly unpublished and (outside Carmel) essentially unknown poems, she responded in what I came to know as her typical fashion, apparently having once again decided that I was ready for the “next step”. “Si c’est ça que vous voulez, il faut que vous alliez à Beaune, à Chartres, à Sens, à Compiègne, et aussi à Bruxelles et à Anvers. Chacun de ces couvents a des archives comme les nôtres; je vous mettrai en contact avec les prieures et vous pourrez consulter leurs manuscrits.”

And so, as Anne-Thérèse put it, les portes du Carmel were opened to me, and my visits to the convents she had listed yielded more of the same, volume after volume of poems in French, Spanish and Flemish by 17th- and 18th-century Carmelite nuns living in France and the Spanish Netherlands, in all thousands of compositions, many more, in fact, than have been discovered and attributed to the 16th-century Spanish Carmelites who began the poetic tradition in their order. For the moment, the two cancioneros, or songbooks, of Valladolid and Medina del Campo (Spain) are the only widely known collections of their kind, researched and published by the Spanish scholars Victor García de la Concha and Ana María Álvarez Pellitero. But the archives of the convents of Pontoise, Créteil, Sens, Nevers, and Beaune (France) and Brussels and Antwerp (Belgium) contain between them fourteen such volumes of poetry, as well as numerous loose manuscript poems, in all over two thousand pages of poems spanning the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, a “response” that dwarfs the Spanish model that it imitates.

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2 “If this is what you want, then you must go to Beaune (near Dijon), to Chartres, to Sens (southeast of Paris), to Compiègne (to the North), and also to Brussels and Antwerp. Each one of these convents has archives like ours; I’ll put you in touch with the prioresses and you’ll be allowed to consult their manuscripts.”
Just as the poems of French and Flemish\(^3\) nuns are a sort of response to those of their Spanish predecessors, the present study is itself in part a response to the work of García de la Concha and Álvarez Pellitero, and demonstrates that what at first appeared to be a vital but short-lived Carmelite poetic tradition was in fact both vital and vigorously maintained after Carmel spread from Spain into France and the Spanish Netherlands in the 17\(^{th}\) century, and beyond. But as it became clear to me that the more interesting story to tell might lie in the obscure manuscripts of Carmelite nuns rather than in the published translations of John of the Cross, it also seemed that a shift in approach to the project was in order – both John of the Cross, and to a lesser extent Teresa of Avila, are today recognized as accomplished poets whose work is placed alongside that of the great poets of Spain’s Golden Age. For their part, the Carmelite nuns of France and the Spanish Netherlands, like their Spanish counterparts who are represented in the *cancioneros* of Valladolid and Medina del Campo, neither aspired to, nor achieved literary greatness, and few appear to have had any notions of sharing their poems beyond the intimate – and closed – world of Carmel. What we do see in their poems, however, is a heretofore unglimpsed reflection of the life of a human community largely isolated from the world around it, and the increasingly important function that Carmelite poetry served for the members of that community, faced with the societal changes of the 17\(^{th}\) and 18\(^{th}\) centuries. Following in the footsteps of their Spanish founders, the “authors” (a term they likely would not have used to describe themselves) of the poems presented and analyzed here left behind documents of historical, anthropological and at times literary value, which allow us to see life in 17\(^{th}\)- and 18\(^{th}\) century Carmelite convents in a way that other existing records cannot. While the convent chronicles and annals of some of these communities still exist (as any Carmelite *archiviste* will tell you, most of what they had was lost in the Revolution), the poems often express things that these other documents do not, and do so in a

\(^3\)In this study, I use the term “Flemish” to refer to Carmelites from the Spanish Netherlands and also poems written in Flemish.
different and more personal voice. In a carefully maintained tradition with roots in 16\textsuperscript{th}-
century Spain, 17\textsuperscript{th} and 18\textsuperscript{th}-century French and Flemish Carmelites found a supplemental
mode of expression that in turn gives us a more complete view of their reality and their
responses to a world whose order was en route to being turned upside down.

This glimpse into Carmelite life in the centuries before the Revolution is made possible by
the poems themselves, but my personal view of that way of life would not have been possible
without the happy accident that led me to Pontoise, and more importantly, the support and
generosity of Sister Anne-Thérèse and the other archivistes of French and Belgian Carmel, to
whom this work is dedicated.
I

Introduction:
The Field of Convent Literature – The Tradition of Teresa of Avila

Book-length, in-depth studies of the literary production of women religious living in convents remain relatively few, and there are not many specialists in the area of convent literature. As such, the present study is part of a comparatively small group – but it is a group that is growing, both in size and importance. In recent years, literary scholars have increasingly turned toward the seemingly silent *intra muros* spaces of convent communities, and discovered there original voices and bodies of work worthy of analysis, publication and inclusion alongside better-known contemporary texts. This is especially true in the areas of Spanish and Italian literature, where convent writings have served as the partial or total basis for a number of important studies. In *Writing Women in Late Medieval and Early Modern Spain: The Mothers of Saint Teresa of Avila* (1995), Ronald Surtz examines the work of Spanish women writers of the generations previous to Teresa of Avila, and in *Untold Sisters: Hispanic Nuns in Their Own Works* (1989), Electa Arenal and Stacey Schlau present and analyze the work of Spanish nuns of Teresa’s time and later generations. In *Convent Theatre in Early Modern Italy: Spiritual Fun and Learning for Women* (2002), Elissa Weaver demonstrates the importance of theater in Italian convents, and Craig Monson has dedicated a number of publications to the topic of the literary and artistic production of early modern Italian nuns. This list is of course not exhaustive, but it serves to demonstrate a certain interest in and dedication to the areas of Spanish and Italian convent literature. Yet an analogous study that would represent the literary production of French women religious is, thus far, lacking; indeed, in the conclusion to *Convent Theater in Early Modern Italy*, Elissa

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Weaver calls specific attention to the fact that while research similar to hers has been done in the area of Spanish literature, no such book-length studies have focused on French convent literature (Weaver 235).

This is not, however, to say that the French sub-field has gone completely unaccounted for. In “From the Cloister to the World: Mainstreaming Early Modern French Convent Writing – an Etat Présent”, an introduction to a collection of essays on early modern French convent literature, Thomas Carr takes account of the present state of French convent writing as compared to other contemporary literary production, and specifically calls for the “mainstreaming” of convent literature, suggesting that it be given a place in French studies and recognized as an important area for scholarly inquiry (Carr 7-26). Given this state of the field, the present study is intended as a French counterpart to the work of scholars of Spanish and Italian literature like Surtz, Schlau and Arenal, Weaver and Monson, and also a response from within French literature itself to Thomas Carr’s call. Yet French (and Flemish) though this response may be, it cannot be properly situated without recognition of the debt it owes to Teresa of Avila, the Spanish predecessor of the nuns whose work is presented here.
I know a person who though not a poet suddenly composed some deeply-felt verses well expressing her pain. They were not composed by the use of her intellect; rather, in order that she enjoy the glory so delightful a distress gave to her, she complained of it in this way to God.

- Teresa of Avila, *Libro de la Vida* 16:4 (ICS 1: 149)\(^5\)

When Teresa of Avila founded the Order of Discalced Carmelites in mid-16th-century Spain, she sought a return to the earlier, stricter rules of the Carmelite Order, rules which she felt had been ignored, resulting in the moral decline of the Order. Indeed, the term “discalced”, or “barefoot”, is applied to distinguish one branch of a religious order from another, usually as a sign of reform or return to primitive traditions. The Order of Discalced Carmelites was a new branch of the already existing Carmelite Order, and was founded in a time and place in which such reforms, and such returns to more primitive and more stringent rules were increasingly common. The latter part of the 16\(^{th}\) century in Spain saw the creation of a number of “offshoot” orders both masculine and feminine whose members identified themselves as *discalzos* (discalced) or *recoletos* (literally “recollected” or reformed) – the establishment of the *franciscanos descalzos* (Discalced Franciscan men) in 1561, Teresa’s *carmelitas descalzas* (Discalced Carmelite women) in 1562, the *agustinas recoletas* (Recollect Augustine women) in 1596, and the *cistercienses recoletas* (Recollect Cistercian women) in 1594 all reflected the desire for renewal in the Catholic Church following the Council of

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\(^5\) “Yo sé persona que, con no ser poeta, que le acaecía hacer de presto coplas muy sentidas declarando su pena bien, no hechas de su entendimiento, sino que, para más gozar la gloria que tan sabrosa pena le dava, se quejava de ello a su Dios.” (TOC 94)
Trent (1545-1563). Yet when Teresa sought to return Carmel to its original degree of discipline and austerity, she tempered that austerity with an element of *alegría* – joyfulness. As a means of enlivening the otherwise sober atmosphere of the convent, Teresa composed devotional poems, or *coplas*, to be sung at daily recreations and on other occasions, including holy days and celebrations for the professions of novices or for the election of a new prioress. In a letter to María de San José, the prioress of the Carmelite convent of Seville, Teresa explained the function of *coplas* in the new convents she had founded: “Do not fail to write me regarding your spiritual state [...] and keep the poems coming as well. I want to be sure that the sisters remain joyful, they are in need of it…”

Teresa’s poems draw upon and interact with the culture of the world beyond the convent walls, in that her devotional lyrics are frequently set to the melodies of contemporary popular songs, and sometimes borrow refrains from those same songs. Perhaps the best-known example of this is her poem *Muero porque no muero*. *Muero porque no muero* is a poem with numerous secular antecedents, as Victor García de la Concha explains, citing a “proliferation of compositions” which precede Teresa’s text and from which she could have borrowed the melody and refrain for her poem (García de la Concha 341–342). As is common in Teresa’s poems, there is a short opening stanza that is borrowed from contemporary popular song (and would have followed the melody of the original, which is unfortunately not known today):

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6 While Teresian Carmel was but one of several such “new branches”, the success of Teresa’s reform encouraged similar endeavors and helped to propel the movement of Catholic Reformation in Spain and beyond (see Isabelle Poutrin, *Le voile et la plume: autobiographie et sainteté féminine dans l’Espagne moderne*, Madrid: Casa de Velázquez, 1995, 27-30). For a discussion of the relative austerity of reformed vs. unreformed houses in France, see Barbara B. Diefendorf, *From Penitence to Charity: Pious Women and the Catholic Reformation in Paris*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004, 142-143.

7 The term *coplas* has a variety of usages in describing poetry. It can be defined as “a metric or strophic composition”, “a poetic composition consisting in brief metric combinations, usually as lyrics to a popular song”, or simply, “verses” (*Diccionario de la Real Academia Española*). Spanish Carmelites commonly referred to the majority of their poems as *coplas*, regardless of their form.

8 “De cómo le va en lo spiritual no me deje de escribir […] y las poesías también vengan. Mucho me huelgo procure que se alegren las hermanas, que lo han menester…” (TOC 1352). English translation mine.
Vivo sin vivir en mí, I live without living in myself,
Y de tal manera espero, And in such a way I hope,
Que muero porque no muero. I die because I do not die.

(ICS 3: 375, v. 1–3)

In the verses that follow, the themes borrowed from secular versions of the song – in this case, a lover who is only able to live “outside herself” in her beloved, and who is languishing or dying of love – are adapted “a lo divino” and acquire a sacred meaning:9

Vivo ya fuera de mí, Since I die of love,
Después que muero de amor, Living apart from love,
Porque vivo en el Señor, I live now in the Lord,
Que me quiso para Sí. Who has desired me for Himself.
Cuando el corazón le di He inscribed on my heart
Puso en él este letrero: When I gave it to Him:
Que muero porque no muero. I die because I do not die.

(ICS 3: 375, v. 4–10)

As a religious poet who wrote sacred adaptations of popular song, Teresa was certainly not alone. In her time, the practice of composing “a lo divino” contrafacta was a common one in Spain, France and in Europe generally.10 Borrowing existing melodies and adapting or

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9 While Spanish popular song can rightly be identified as an immediate source for Muero porque no muero – the textual similarities to known examples being as many and as close as they are (see García de la Concha) – Teresa may have been referencing Biblical sources as well. The ‘dying of love’ motif figures in the Song of Songs 2:5, and that of ‘living outside oneself’ in Galatians 2:20: “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me, and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” (King James Bible)

10 Bruce W. Wardropper’s Historia de la poesía lírica a lo divino en la cristiandad occidental (1958) was the first in-depth study of ‘a lo divino’ poetry, and remains a principal reference on the subject. More recently John Crosbie has refined some of Wardropper’s methods and conclusions, specifically granting more importance to the difference between borrowing the melody and some part of the text of a song, and borrowing only the melody as a vehicle for a textually unrelated poem. Both Wardropper and Crosbie cite important predecessors to Teresa, Spanish poets who composed sacred versions of secular popular songs (see John Crosbie, A Lo Divino Lyric Poetry: An Alternative View, [Durham]: University of Durham, 1989).
replacing existing lyrics (thereby altering the relationship between “tone and text”, as Richard Freedman neatly puts it) in the composition of new songs was widespread, and the “shifts” operated in such compositions were multidirectional, so to speak: secular songs were adapted \textit{a lo divino}, but sacred songs were themselves adapted \textit{a lo humano} as well, and in the wake of the Protestant Reformation, Catholics and Protestants alike modified one another’s songs, creating \textit{a lo católico} and \textit{a lo protestante} versions of songs which originated from the opposing “camp” (Freedman, Preface).

Thus, as a practitioner of contrafacta in 16\textsuperscript{th}-century Spain, Teresa was one of many. As the founder of a religious order who granted poetry a privileged place in the spiritual life of the convents that she established, she is worthy of special mention. As Victor García de la Concha explains, “the singing of poems…came to have a predominant role” in Teresian Carmel (García de la Concha and Álvarez Pellitero ix), and Emilio Orozco Díaz has suggested that both Francis of Assisi (1181-1226), and perhaps Alfonso de Liguori (1696-1787) may be comparable to Teresa in both their usage of popular sources and in their insistence upon the function of poetry in spiritual life (Díaz 148). Indeed, the examples of Francis and Alfonso are useful in understanding Teresian poetic practices, both for what the three had in common as religious poets and as leaders as well as for what set them apart. Like Teresa, both Francis and Alfonso composed poems using popular forms and may have set them to familiar melodies (Saturno 580).\footnote{Paolo Saturno explains that like most missionary songwriters of his time, Alfonso left no indication of the melodies to which his songs were sung, but speculates that they may have been sung to tunes “already known to the people”. In the case of Francis, some distinctions must be made between the forms and musical settings of his poems and those of Teresa. Francis composed \textit{laudae}, and as Alessandro Vettori explains, in Francis’ time (the 13\textsuperscript{th} century) the lauda “was a popular form of prayer. The Latin lauda had its roots in liturgy [and] derived from the Gospel acclamation, the Hallelujah, during Mass.” (\textit{Poets of Divine Love: Franciscan Mystical Poetry of the Thirteenth Century}, New York: Fordham University Press, 2004, xiv) Vettori adds that “the lauda gradually acquired independence from the liturgical context” (xvi), but as its roots were in sacred songs of praise, it differs from Teresa’s poems, which formally and melodically grew out of secular song. As for the question of melody in Franciscan song, Vettori cites a “lack of reliable information” regarding the circumstances of the composition of Francis’ only attributable song in the vernacular, the \textit{Cantico di Frate Sole} (“Canticle of Brother Sun”), but cites an early Franciscan text, the \textit{Mirror of Perfection}, which describes Francis...}
are important differences in the function of these compositions. All three poets wrote their devotional verse with their fellow religious in mind: Teresa would sing her poems with her fellow nuns at daily recreations (TOC 651), Francis is known to have given his poems to nuns in Clarissian convents so that they could be sung (Eiján 5), and Alfonso composed songs “for the people and for his brethren” (Saturno 581). But for Francis and Alfonso, poetry also served to carry a devotional message beyond the confines of their respective communities. As Paolo Saturno emphasizes, Alfonso’s poems were not just for his confratelli, but also for il popolo, and Orozco Díaz recalls that Francis wished his friars to “go forth into the world, accompanying their predication with song”, and that the songs should serve “to attract the people” (Díaz 149). By contrast, the spiritual message of Teresa’s poems appears to have been destined primarily to be heard within the convent walls. The few indications that Teresa left regarding the status and function of coplas in her convents (some of which will be cited further along) suggest that poems were circulated amongst the Carmelites themselves and sung at recreations, but she makes little mention of their having been sung or recited extra muros.  

To some extent, this difference between public and private diffusion of poems was to be expected: one of the final measures passed at the Council of Trent resulted in the enforcement of enclosure for female religious communities, which meant that nuns were to live apart from the rest of the world, and to only leave the convent in extraordinary circumstances. This was a measure that Teresa, for her part, supported; indeed, she cited the lack of enclosure as one of the flaws in the original Carmelite Order which made her feel the need for reform. By edict as well as by choice, Spanish Discalced Carmelites lived largely composing a melody for his Cantico: “He composed a melody for these words and taught it to his companions so they could recite and sing it” (65). Whether Francis routinely composed his own melodies or borrowed existing ones is unclear.

As an exception to this general “rule”, the poems of the Spanish Carmelites Cecilia del Nacimiento and María de San Alberto (presented in Arenal and Schlau, Untold Sisters) were in fact recognized to some extent beyond the walls of their convent: both of these Carmelites won poetry contests with their work, and two of the poems of Cecilia del Nacimiento were for years attributed to John of the Cross, the first male Discalced Carmelite and a renowned poet.

For some of Teresa’s comments on enclosure, see her Libro de la vida, 7:3.
in isolation from the outside world, and in this context Teresa’s poems appear to have been created and sung primarily in an enclosed space of intimacy, suggesting that the principal audience of her poems would have been her fellow Carmelites.  

One difference, then, between Teresa’s poetic practices and those of religious leaders like Francis of Assisi and Alfonso de Liguori is that while their poems projected outward toward the faithful (and the potentially faithful) as a whole, Teresa’s poems tended to project inward, staying principally inside the cloister where they would be heard and sung by a private audience. What distinguished her poetic practices further still is that she specifically desired that her poetic voice not be the only one heard within the walls of Carmel. Teresa intended the practice of composing poetry to be a shared one, and encouraged her fellow sisters to do as she had done and write their own verse, as in the letter to María de San José cited above. Whereas poetry like that of Francis and Alfonso transmitted a message which could in turn be repeated by their followers, Teresa’s poetry asked for a reply, and an original one. Indeed, she is known to have gently reprimanded her sisters when they did not keep up their end of the exchange. In Teresian Carmel, nuns frequently traded their coplas in letters, requesting and sending the latest compositions to their sisters in other convents. On one occasion, when the sisters of the Seville convent had failed to send poems, Teresa made it known that their contribution was missed: “I have seen how you send me no villancicos,” normally there are  

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14 The few extant explanatory references to poems in Carmelite convents (some of which will be cited further along) suggest only that the poems were destined for and performed at daily recreations inside the convent. But as Arenal and Schlau explain, some Spanish Carmelites engaged in certámenes, or poetry contests outside the convent, and they explain that the audience for certain types of poems, including those written for the taking of religious vows, could include family member as well as worshippers of the parish where the convent’s church was located (Arenal and Schlau 13). Further, both Monson and Weaver have shown that the plays written by Italian nuns did sometimes reach a lay audience, as guests from outside the convent were invited to performances.  

15 This is not to suggest that the followers of Francis and Alfonso did not compose their own poems. Indeed, in Nuestros Juglares del Señor, Samuel Eiján documents a long tradition of Franciscan poetry written by men and women in the space of several centuries. The point regarding Teresa of Avila is that she specifically desired and called for her fellow Carmelites to compose their own verse. No such evidence appears to exist regarding the intentions of Francis of Assisi or Alfonse de Liguori.  

16 Generally defined, the villancico is a “brief popular song, frequently incorporating a refrain” (Diccionario de la Real Academia Española). In this case, Teresa may be referring to poems generally, or to poems composed
many at election time, I am in favor that you should celebrate in your house with moderation.”. While clearly not everyone responded to Teresa’s satisfaction, scholars of Spanish literature have identified a number of Carmelite poets whose writing suggests that in Spain, Teresa’s poetic practices survived at least as far as the end of the 16th century. In Untold Sisters, Arenal and Schlau present poems by Cecilia del Nacimiento (1570-1646) and María de San José (1568-1640), two Carmelites who were accomplished poets. And in one of her poems, the Carmelite nun María de San Alberto (1568-1640) celebrated the sandals – *alpargatas* – which were the typical footwear for Discalced “unshod/reformed” Carmelites:

> Más quiero la alpargata del Carmelo
> que cuanta plata y oro cría el cielo
> I love the Carmelite sandal more
> than all the gold and silver Heaven yields
> [...]
> Amor quitando todo impedimento
> por medio de alpargata y pie descalzo…
> Love, removing all impediments
> by means of sandals and bare feet…

(Arenal and Schlau 147)

Additionally, two relatively recent discoveries attest to the continuation of communal poetic activity in Spanish Carmelite convents: the *Libro de romances y coplas del Carmelo de Valladolid* (c.1590-1609) and the *Cancionero del Carmelo de Medina del Campo* (1604-1622). These two “songbooks” contain hundreds of pages of poems that document a poetic activity very similar to that instigated by Teresa of Avila. And yet – valuable though they are...
– these sources attest to fewer than forty years of consistently maintained poetic practice in Spanish Carmel. Based on this evidence alone, the Teresian poetic tradition appears to have been active but relatively short-lived.

It is at this point that the archives of French and Belgian Carmelite convents necessarily change our perspective on Teresian poetic practices. When the poems of Teresa’s descendants north of the Pyrenees are taken into account, a long arc of Teresian tradition becomes visible, and it becomes clear that several generations of French and Belgian Carmelites were indeed aware of and contributing to – while also modifying, as we shall see – the Teresian poetic legacy, as much as and perhaps even more than their Spanish predecessors. Where Teresa’s poetry asked for a reply, French and Belgian Carmelites answered, and resoundingly so. Indeed, it is the poetry of these daughters of Teresa that ultimately makes it possible to speak of a Teresian poetic tradition in a much broader sense, and it is their work, taken from the archives of the convent of Beaune, Brussels and Antwerp, Saint-Denis and Compiègne, in chronological fashion from the mid-1600s to the French Revolution, that serves to demonstrate the important and changing function of Carmelite poetry in the course of the 17th and 18th centuries.

18 In the preface to the Libro de romances y coplas del Carmelo de Valladolid (xiii), Victor García de la Concha references the lack of a “basic corpus” of Carmelite poetry, based on the fact that thus far only the two cancioneros mentioned here (plus a limited number of loose manuscripts from the same archives) have been found, and suggests that much more such poetry is yet to be discovered in the archives of Spanish Carmelite convents. Though they come from French and Flemish convents rather than Spanish ones, the texts presented in this study represent a substantial contribution to such a “corpus” and suggest that García de la Concha may be right to suggest the presence of undiscovered archival material.

19 In keeping with a tradition in English-language scholarship, I use the term “convent” to refer to the houses of women religious. In French and in Spanish, the terms convent/convento and monastère/monasterio can all refer to either masculine or feminine communities, depending on the nature of the establishment in question. The feminine branch of the Carmelite Order is a “contemplative” one, meaning that Carmelite nuns are cloistered and take prayer and meditation as their primary duties. As such, the French and Belgian Carmelites studied here are considered moniales, or “Religieuse contemplative, ayant prononcé des vœux solennels et vivant généralement cloîtrée” (“Contemplative [female] religious, having pronounced solemn vows and generally living cloistered”, Trésor de la langue française) and use the term monastère rather than convent to describe their houses. The use of the term “convent” to describe a community of women religious in this study is therefore reflective of a usage particular to English-language scholarship and does not correspond to the French and Spanish convent/convento and monastère/monasterio in all cases.
Of the many studies on Teresa of Avila and her writings, few have focused specifically on her poems and the tradition of composing verse in Carmelite convents, and none have examined the extended posterity of this tradition, beyond the Spanish border and the temporal frontier of the 16th century. The present study aims to do just this, and to show that Carmelite poetry with a strong Teresian influence was not a short-lived practice limited to 16th-century Spain, but rather a vital tradition that extended beyond national borders and across multiple centuries. As such, this study should represent a significant and original contribution to studies of Teresa of Avila and her influence outside of Spain. But the aim of this study goes beyond documenting the existence of a previously unstudied literary tradition. It is also intended to demonstrate that through poetry, a literary form favored and encouraged by Teresa of Avila, the Carmelites of France and the Spanish Netherlands found a tool for self-expression, one that they would use in ways that likely exceeded what Teresa herself ever imagined. The poetic practice that Teresa left as part of her legacy created a space in which future generations of Carmelite nuns could write with a relative degree of freedom from censorship, a privilege that Teresa herself had enjoyed only partially, as her own writings were often subject to control, redaction and even investigation by the Spanish Inquisition. It will be seen that French and Flemish Carmelites took full advantage of this literary space, adapting the poetic practices they had inherited from their founding mother to suit their expressive needs in new and challenging circumstances. This, in turn, will

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20 It is important to note that scholars of Spanish literature have paid attention to Teresa’s poems, usually within the context of an analysis with a broader focus, not specifically concentrated on poetry. But this study aims to show how Teresa’s poems, and more importantly the poetic practice she instigated in Spanish Carmel, have a meaning that extends far beyond her time. See in particular Víctor Garcia de la Concha, *El arte literario de Santa Teresa*, 317-376.

21 While this study focuses on the Teresian tradition, it is important to acknowledge that the poetic activity of French and Flemish Carmelites was also part of a larger French tradition of composing songs in a convent setting, and that women religious of other orders also engaged in this tradition. Hélène Bordes has written on the *cantiques* of 17th-century Visitandines, which are similar in many ways to the poems found in the collections presented and discussed in this study. It is to be hoped that further research into French convent poetry will reveal this to have been a more widespread practice. See Hélène Bordes, “‘Chansons spirituelles’ du XVIIe siècle à la Visitation”, in *Mélanges à la mémoire de Franco Simone, IV, Tradition et originalité dans la création littéraire*, Slatkine: Genève, 1983, 283-299.
demonstrate that the poetry of Teresa of Avila had repercussions and significance beyond its own age. For Teresa’s prose writings, this has already been amply established, as the numerous critical works on Teresa’s *Libro de la Vida, Castillo Interior* and *Camino de Perfección* show. But Teresa’s poetry, always (at least in the last century) faithfully reproduced in her collected works, represented in anthologies of Spanish Golden Age poems and even published separately on occasion, appears most often as a sort of an addendum to her other writings, the poetic production of a literary figure who is known for her prose. In this study, it will be shown that Teresa’s poems, and more particularly the poetic practice that she instigated in Spanish Carmel, encouraging her fellow sisters to follow in her footsteps, have a meaning that obliges us to consider them as an essential part of her literary production.

**Presentation of the Manuscripts**

Most of the poems to be presented here appear to exist only in their original manuscript form. With few exceptions, these manuscript poems have not been the object of scholarly study, and are discussed here for the first time in the context of an historical and literary analysis that takes Carmelite poetry as its principal object. In each chapter of this study a poem or set of poems from a particular convent or archive will be presented and examined for its connections to the Teresian tradition and for its relevance within its own time and place. In chapter two, one of the earliest sets of manuscripts, those

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23. The poems of the Carmelites of Compiègne (to be discussed in chapter five) were published and commented by William Bush in *La relation du martyre des seize Carmélites de Compiègne: aux sources de Bernanos et de Gertrud von Le Fort*; the poem *Vol d’esprit* (to be discussed in chapter two) appeared in some editions of the *Cantiques spirituels* of Jean-Joseph Surin, as did the poem from the convent of Brussels that begins “rien ne m’attire” (to be discussed in chapter three). See the notes to these chapters for further information.

24. At present, the earliest French or Netherlandish Carmelite poetry that can be dated with reasonable certainty appears in a collection of poems in the archives of the Brussels convent, which was founded in 1617. In this series, the earliest dated composition is from the year 1633, suggesting that first-generation Flemish Carmelites
of the Carmelite convent of Beaune, demonstrates that 17th-century French Carmelites were not only careful readers of Teresa of Avila, but also imitators, as they composed poems that draw upon both Teresa’s poetry and her prose, in particular her Libro de la Vida. This spiritual autobiography, composed by Teresa at the order of her confessors in 16th-century Spain, served as an inspiration to the Carmelites of Beaune, who wrote their own personal accounts in verse form, at once honoring the Teresian poetic tradition and perhaps maintaining supervision of their own writings by rendering them in verse rather than in prose.

Taking full advantage of the literary space they had inherited from Teresa, the Carmelites of Beaune used their poems to manifest their literary and spiritual authority in their own terms.

In chapter three, the poems of Carmelites in the Spanish Netherlands and in the Dutch Republic display rather different characteristics and mark an important turning point in the function of poetry in Carmelite convents. In the convent of Brussels, 17th- and 18th-century Carmelites of diverse national and linguistic heritage composed poems in both French and Spanish, and occasionally set them to Flemish melodies, reflecting the variety of influences were actively taking part in the Teresian poetic tradition. As a whole, the Franco-Belgian archives are tremendously useful not only in documenting the continuity of this “transplanted” tradition, but also in resolving ambiguities regarding its beginnings: a manuscript now located in the Municipal Library of Lyon, France (ms. 1270) has long been thought to contain the earliest examples of French Carmelite poetry. This document from the Carmelite convent of Bordeaux includes a “récréation” at which a group of nuns discuss various spiritual questions, and end their meeting by singing a short devotional poem, composed by one of the group, sœur Placide, who is said to be skilled at composing such verses. The date given at the end of this text is 1612, placing it prior to any of the manuscripts to be discussed in the present study. But a manuscript discovered in the course of researching this project suggests that the poem in the Bordeaux manuscript may in fact be a translation of a 16th-century Spanish text: the archives of the convent of Champhol (France) contain a copy of the same récréation found in the Bordeaux manuscript, but with the title Récréations faites au couvent de Grenade par 4 novices de la Rde. Mère Anne de Jésus, Carmélite. If this title is to be accepted as accurate, the Bordeaux récréation would seem to be a translation of a recreación from one of the first Teresian convents of Spain, founded by Ana de Jesús (1545-1621), a close associate of Teresa of Avila and one of the leaders of the group of Spanish Carmelites who brought Teresian Carmel to France at the beginning of the 17th century. This does nothing to diminish the interest of this document, however; on the contrary, it helps to strengthen a hypothesis already suggested regarding the Bordeaux convent. In a series of articles dealing with the Bordeaux manuscript, which contains other writings known to be translations of Spanish Carmelite texts, Jean Orcibal suggested that Bordeaux may have been a center for such translation activity, and in particular that the Carmelites of Bordeaux may themselves have been the translators (see Jean Orcibal, Études d'histoire et de littérature religieuses: XVIe-XVIIIe siècles, ed. Jacques Le Brun and Jean Lesaulnier, Paris: Klincksieck, 1997). Indeed, a letter of Isabel de los Ángeles (1565-1644), the founder of the Bordeaux convent (1610), makes reference to a French translation of Muero porque no muero, written for the occasion of Teresa’s beatification (April 24, 1614). If the 1612 récréation and the 1614 French translation of Muero porque no muero were both the product of the Bordeaux Carmel, Orcibal’s hypothesis regarding translation activity by first-generation French Carmelites might be reinforced.
present in a region subject to constant political, military and religious strife. Other poems composed in the Spanish Netherlands were written in French, Flemish and Spanish, and serve as a testament not only to the multi-lingual nature of Carmelite convents in this part of Europe, but also to the changing nature of Carmelite poetry, as women religious began to write about and react to events extra muros, especially as those events threatened their beliefs and traditions. The centerpiece of this chapter is a pastoral poem that represents a formal departure from the typical cantique-style poems more common in Carmel, in which the nuns of the convent of Mol used the Teresian poetic space to write about an important episode of their history, and argue their side of a conflict of spiritual interpretation in which Catholics and Protestants were at odds.

In chapter four, poems from the convent of Saint-Denis (north of Paris) demonstrate a clear continuity of the Carmelite poetic tradition well into the 18th century, but also function as did the poems of their predecessors – no longer just an expression of personal devotion, in troubled times the Carmelite cantique (roughly equivalent to the Spanish coplas of Teresa’s time) takes an increasingly engaged stance with regard to events and attitudes outside the convent walls. For the Carmelites of Saint-Denis, poetry served as a means of defending their existence as they found themselves surrounded by a society that was growing ever more hostile to their way of life. In a play (another formal departure from the cantique-style poems prevalent in Carmelite archives) dated 1751, one Carmelite from Saint-Denis defended the way of life of cloistered women religious and upheld what she saw as her Teresian heritage, in which austerity and alegría (joyfulness) were carefully balanced.

In chapter five, the Carmelite cantique reaches its full potential as a tool for resistance and protest, as women religious of the convent of Compiègne fashion contrafacta of secular songs
that not only defend their way of life, but also take a strong anti-revolutionary stance amid the turmoil of late-18th-century France.

While this study takes the French Revolution as its endpoint, the posterity of Carmelite poetry will be briefly examined in chapter six, and an arc of tradition traced over the course of three centuries, from “La grande Thérèse”, Teresa of Avila, to “La petite Thérèse”, the 19th-century Carmelite Thérèse de Lisieux (1873-1897) as well as other 19th- and 20th-century Carmelites who inherited the Teresian poetic tradition just as it had been handed down across centuries, multiple languages and national borders.25

In the concluding chapter of this study, the texts presented here and their analyses will be situated within the larger field of convent literary studies, and the case will be made for the legacy of Teresa of Avila as related to poetry in Carmelite convents, where an “authority to write” was handed down from one generation to the next, based on Teresa’s model.

The manuscript poems presented here will appear in a French or Spanish original and an English translation. In all cases except where indicated, the English translations of the manuscript poems are my own. Where possible, an image of part of the original manuscript is given along with the poem itself in order to provide the reader with a fuller sense of the text, and also in order to allow a comparison between the original French and the transcription presented here. The date ranges given for each set of manuscripts refer to the earliest and latest clearly legible indications found in each group of documents, and not necessarily to the dates of the selected poems presented in each chapter of this study.

A word on the state of these manuscripts is in order. In some cases, the poems are written in clearly legible handwriting with few grammatical or orthographical flaws, and adhere to a

25 In French Carmel today, women religious speak of “La grande Thérèse” and “La petite Thérèse”, referencing and reinforcing the spiritual continuity between the two women. The poems examined in this study show this connection to be even stronger than previously thought, demonstrating its literary dimension.
consistent and identifiable metrical structure. In other cases, and this is particularly true of the earlier poems (the *cantiques* from Beaune are a good example), the texts offered by the manuscripts are far from “perfect” by modern standards. In cases in which spelling or syntax are problematic but the intended words and meaning seem obvious, the original text is amended for ease of reading and comprehension. In cases in which it is not clear what was intended in the manuscript, a “best guess” has been made, and further information is provided in a footnote. In cases of metrical imperfections (a seven-syllable verse in a poem in which all the other verses have eight syllables, for example), no corrections have been made, and these “errors” are left to stand.

As a general note, in examining these poems it is useful to remember that the *coplas* from the time of Teresa of Avila and the *cantiques* composed by later generations of Carmelites in France and the Spanish Netherlands are texts set to music, and appear to have been intended for singing. It may well be that in some cases, the first version of a “poem” was actually a song, improvised or composed by singing rather than writing, with a textual record – the written verses – only being created later as a way to remember the text in the future. As such, metrical errors may have been built into the text as the composer/singer bent the rules of prosody to make a set of words fit the chosen melody. It should also be remembered that women entered convents with varying degrees of education (sometimes none), and in some cases the authors or copyists of these poems may have had little training in writing and little or no training in versification, and as a result their written texts display errors in both categories. Finally, it should be considered that almost none of these texts were copied out for the purpose of publication or diffusion on a large scale – they appear to have been part of the memory and heritage of their respective communities, and the collections in which they are found seem to have been rather more like “notebooks” than polished volumes prepared for outside readers. In this light, even the “final” version of each text, the one that has come
down to us, cannot be viewed as definitive and cannot be expected in all cases to be free of errors.
II

The Carmelite Convent of Beaune

(manuscript dates: ?-1657\textsuperscript{26})

General Characteristics of the Manuscripts

In appearance and general structure and organization, the manuscripts from the French Carmelite convent of Beaune are very much like those found in the Spanish cancioneros mentioned in chapter one, the Libro de Romances y Coplas del Carmelo de Valladolid (c.1590-1609) and the Cancionero del Carmelo de Medina del Campo (1604-1622). The majority of the extant poems from the convent of Beaune are also bound in two volumes, the Premier livre de cantiques du Carmel de Beaune and the Recueil de cantiques du Carmel de Beaune. A number of general characteristics shared between these four volumes are apparent at a first glance. They are all roughly comparable in size: the Spanish Libro de Romances contains 170 pages of poems, the Cancionero of Medina del Campo 91 pages, and the two French volumes contain 138 pages and 123 pages, respectively. In all four volumes the poems have been composed by a variety of authors, suggesting the sort of communal participation desired by Teresa of Avila in her time (in the Recueil de cantiques from Beaune, twenty-two different members of the community are credited with authorship of individual poems). In each of the volumes, the poems have been copied in a variety of hands, suggesting that not only composition but also compilation was a shared task. Both the French and the Spanish volumes contain poems with a variety of metrical structures: in the case of the Spanish cancioneros, the more cultivated lira form is found alongside more traditional

\textsuperscript{26} In most cases, there are no exact dates explicitly given for individual poems in the Beaune manuscripts, but there are nonetheless some clues which allow approximate dates to be arrived at: Marie de la Trinité, who is identified as the author of some of the poems in the Premier livre, died in 1643; Marguerite du Saint-Sacrement, whose handwriting appears in the same volume, died in 1648; and in the Recueil de cantiques, notes indicate that some of the poems were composed to give thanks for the reconstruction of the convent church, which was completed in 1657.
villancicos, for example (Álvarez Pellitero 539; García de la Concha and Álvarez Pellitero xii), and in the French volumes, a variety of octosyllabic, decasyllabic and alexandrine cantiques are found, and appear in some cases to follow closely the structure of the “borrowed” popular songs on which they are based; this is unsurprising as it is very much in keeping with the composition of contrafacta, but it also may help to explain why irregular structures are sometimes used.27 Finally, in all four volumes, a majority of the poetic texts are devotional ones that celebrate the nativity, being composed for use around Christmastime.

The Premier livre and the Recueil de cantiques from Beaune also benefit from a series of annotations made in the margins of certain pages that provide valuable clues as to the history, organization and function of the poems. It is thanks in part to these annotations, for example, that we can become familiar with the women religious who participated in the composition and organization of the poems: in the Premier livre a note in the margin of the first page

27 For most of the poems in the two volumes from Beaune, the “air” (melody) to which the text is to be sung is indicated; in cases in which the original lyric can be identified, the metric structure of the “contrafactum” (the new text composed by the Carmelites) appears to follow that of the original. An example is found on f. 12 of the Recueil de cantiques, where a poem is set to the tune Ha, que le ciel est contraire. This tune, attributed to the musician François de Chancy (1600-1656), follows a metric pattern of decasyllabic verses and pentasyllabic/quadrisyllabic verses, followed by a hexasyllabic verse:

Ha! que le Ciel est contraire à ma vie
De s’opposer à mon contentement;
Je meurs d’amour pour la belle Silvie,
Sans espérer aucun soulagement;
Si je l’appelle
Pour me secourir,
Cette cruelle
Ne me peut souffrir
Que pour me voir mourir.

Ah! How heaven is against my life
To go against my happiness;
I die of love for the beautiful Sylvie,
Without hope of any relief;
If I call her
To my rescue
This cruel one
Can only suffer me
In order to see me die.

(See http://www.jacobvaneyck.info/quarterly0302.htm, and http://livretsbaroques.fr/Airs_Cour/Bacilly/Bacilly_1661_A.htm)

The poem from Beaune, set to the same melody, follows a similar if not completely identical structure (the last five verses of the version cited above appear to correspond to the last three verses of the version below):

Que j’ai de joie ô divine lumière
De vous loger en cet aimable jour
Pour vous prier d’exaucer mes prières
Et de mon cœur les désirs et l’amour
C’est ô mon prince grand et tout puissant
Que vos mains saintes donnent de l’argent
Pour votre bâtiment.

How I have joy oh divine light
To lodge you on this pleasant day
To ask you to grant my prayers
And the desires and love of my heart
It is, oh my great and all-powerful prince
That your saintly hands give money
For a building.
explains that the *cantiques* were “composé(s) en partie” by Marie de la Trinité, who was prioress of the convent from 1635-1642 (Roland-Gosselin 312), and that Marguerite du Saint-Sacrement, perhaps the member of the convent best known to history – she was a mystic and a visionary who was believed to have foretold the conception and birth of Louis XIV – “les chantait avec la Communauté”. Annotations to the *Recueil de cantiques* state that another of the community’s members, Élisabeth de la Trinité Grozelier (1614-1683; one of two women in the convent of the same name; the other being Élisabeth de la Trinité de Quatrebarbes, who served multiple terms as prioress of the convent) was both an author of some of the poems and also an editor of sorts, as her handwriting is identified in corrected passages of some of the poems. Élisabeth’s particular contribution to the Carmelite poetic tradition will be examined in the final sections of this chapter.

Taken as a continuation of the Teresian tradition, then, these two volumes from Beaune share common traits with the Spanish collections that predate them, and also contain indications that confirm their belonging to that tradition. But certain poems from Beaune resonate with Teresa’s literary and spiritual legacy in a way that goes beyond a general echo of the Carmelite poetic tradition. A selection of these poems, to be presented and analyzed here, demonstrates an intimate knowledge and emulation of Teresa’s writings rarely seen in the work of other 17th-century French authors. It will also be demonstrated that the literary space established by Teresa of Avila was a site in which 17th-century French Carmelites manifested their literary, editorial and spiritual authority.

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28 “First book of cantiques composed in part by our venerable Mother Marie de la Trinité, to be sung at evening recreations, from the 23rd of October until Christmas, the time of the little Advent. Our very honored sister Marguerite du Saint-Sacrement sung them with the community. She signed her name to them in several places.” (“Premier livre de cantiques composé en partie par notre vénérable Mère Marie de la Trinité, pour chanter aux récréations du soir, depuis le 23 octobre jusqu’à Noël, que dure le petit Avent. Notre très honorée sœur Marguerite du Saint-Sacrement les chantait avec la Communauté. Elle y a signé son nom en plusieurs endroits.”) (PL 1)
Literary Imitation of Teresa of Avila in France

Before examining the literary influence of Teresa of Avila in the poems of the Carmelites of Beaune, an acknowledgement of known Teresian influences in France is in order. In *Sainte Thérèse en France au XVIIe siècle, 1600-1660*, Alphonse Vermeylen made a detailed inventory of what he proposed were traces of Teresa’s influence on a number of French figures on the 17th-century spiritual stage. As literary imitation goes, the most important of these appears to be François de Sales, who according to Vermeylen takes up a variety of Teresian themes in his *Treatise on the Love of God*, including the metaphor of the soul as a garden in need of “watering” with prayer (this is a comparison also made use of in the poems of the Carmelites of Beaune, as will be shown further along). Also among those influenced by Teresa, explains Vermeylen, was the Jesuit Jean-Joseph Surin (1600-1665). A number of Surin’s *Cantiques spirituels*, first published in 1655, do make references to Teresa, and one poem that was later printed along with Surin’s *cantiques* is a paraphrase of Teresa’s *Muero porque no muero*. Not mentioned by Vermeylen but also worthy of note here is the...

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29 Vermeylen also cites cases of doctrinal/philosophical influence, which are not specifically literary in nature. See Alphonse Vermeylen, *Sainte Thérèse en France au XVIIe siècle, 1600-1660*, Louvain: Publications Universitaires, 1958.

30 Surin is perhaps best remembered for his role in the Loudun possessions (1634-1637), where he aided in the exorcism of Jeanne des Anges. Posthumous editions of his *Cantiques* were supplemented by a “second livre” which included a large number of poems “choisis dans divers Auteurs bien approuvés” (title page). One of these poems is a paraphrase of *Muero porque no muero* which begins as follows:

Le trait d’union d’amour The link of love
Qui me conserve la vie Which keeps me alive
Rend Dieu captif à son tour Makes God himself captive
Et ma pauvre âme affranchie And my poor soul free
Mais voir sa bonté captive But seeing his goodness made captive
M’est une douleur si vive Is to me such a sharp pain
Que je meurs de déplaisir That I die of displeasure
De ne pouvoir pas mourir… Because I cannot die…


The poem is preceded by this short introduction which clearly identifies it as a translation/paraphrase: *Composé par Sainte Thérèse de Jésus, où se voient les pressants souhaits d’une âme languissante du Divin Amour: sur le chant, L’amour me fera mourir* (Composed by Saint Teresa of Jesus, in which the pressing wishes of a
Capuchin friar Martial de Brive, whose poetic works (published posthumously in 1653) also include a French-language paraphrase of *Muero porque no muero.*

Along with statistics regarding the publication of Teresa’s writings in France, which suggest a public eager to read her work (Vermeylen 72), the examples cited by Vermeylen and the imitation of *Muero porque no muero* by Martial de Brive support the case for a general Teresian presence in 17th-century France, with occasional literary imitations, principally by a small number of male authors. The two volumes of poetry from the convent of Beaune show that French Carmelite women also wrote on a Teresian model, carefully incorporating key elements of Teresa’s spiritual discourse in their own writing.

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*languishing soul of Divine Love can be seen: to the tune, Love will make me die.* See following note on Martial de Brive on the source text for this French version.

31

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><em>Les Soupirs d’une âme exilée</em></th>
<th><em>Sighs of a Soul in Exile</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sur ces paroles de saint Paul:</td>
<td>On these words of Saint Paul:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cupio dissolvi et esse cum Christo</td>
<td>Cupio dissolvi et esse cum Christo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Je vis, mais c’est hors de moi-même,</td>
<td>I live, but it is outside myself,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Je vis, mais c’est sans vivre en moi;</td>
<td>I live, but without living in myself;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Je vis dans l’objet de ma foi</td>
<td>I live in the object of my faith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Que je ne vois pas et que j’aime;</td>
<td>That I do not see and that I love;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Triste Nuit de long embarras</td>
<td>Sad Night of long difficulty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Où mon âme est enveloppée,</td>
<td>Where my soul is enveloped,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Si tu n’es bientôt dissipée,</td>
<td>If you do not soon dissipate,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Je me meurs de ne mourir pas…</td>
<td>I die because I do not die…</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Martial de Brive, *Les Œuvres poétiques et saintes* [1653], ed. Anne Mantero, Grenoble: Millon, 2000, p. 127)

This poem is a paraphrase of *Muero porque no muero* similar to that attributed to Surin, with the difference that Martial’s version more closely translates the original. This “original” must be explained, however: both of these French versions of *Muero porque no muero* are based on a compound poem of which certain stanzas (1-8) come from Teresa’s poem, and others (9-14) come from a similar poem – also with the refrain *Muero porque no muero* – composed by John of the Cross. As Anne Mantero explains in her edition of Martial’s poems (206-207), this was a common editorial tradition, according to which the entire poem was attributed to Teresa of Avila, only later to be “split” when the second part was discovered to be by John of the Cross. Perhaps unknowingly, both Surin and Martial were “translating” both of the poet-founders of Carmel.

32 In the 17th century alone, there were 67 French editions of Teresa’s works, only slightly less than half the number of editions of the extremely popular *Amadis de Gaule* (158) and greater than the number of editions of Cervantes (41) and of Montemayor’s *Diana* (22), and four different translations of Teresa’s multi-volume prose works appeared in the course of the century (Vermeylen 72).
The Arrow of Love/The Flight of the Spirit

Hirióme con una flecha  
Enherbolada de amor  
Y mi alma quedó hecha  
Una con su Criador;  
Ya yo no quiero otro amor,  
Pues a mi Dios me he entregado,  
Y mi Amado para mí  
Y yo soy para mi Amado.  

He wounded me with an arrow  
Poisoned with love  
And my soul was made  
One with its Creator;  
I want no other love now,  
I have given myself over to my God,  
And my Beloved for me  
And I am for my Beloved.

- Teresa of Avila, “Mi Amado para mi”

In the Cornaro Chapel in Rome stands what is undoubtedly the most famous visual rendering of Teresa of Avila, Giovanni Lorenzo Bernini’s Estasi di Santa Teresa, sculpted between 1647 and 1652. The Estasi depicts Teresa, about to have a golden arrow held by a cherub thrust into her heart, and it is perhaps the quintessential Teresian image: the heart pierced by a flaming arrow of love. In her Libro de la Vida, Teresa recounts a vision she has had of an angel who repeatedly pierces her with such an arrow:

I saw in his hands a little golden dart and at the end of the iron tip there seemed to be a little fire. It seemed to me this angel plunged the dart several times into my heart and that it reached deep within me. When he drew it out, I thought he was

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33 TOC 654. English translation mine. The refrain in this poem – Y mi Amado para mí/Y yo soy para mi Amado – functions like that of Muero porque no muero, but its source is biblical rather than popular/secular. The Song of Solomon, a book of the Bible especially dear to Teresa, reads in 2:16: “My beloved is mine, and I am his”. At the same time, Víctor García de la Concha demonstrates that the motif of the hunter/arrow of love has a long history and that again, numerous secular antecedents could likely have influenced Teresa’s choice of metaphor. See El arte literario de Santa Teresa, 332-341.
carrying off with him the deepest part of me; and he left me all on fire with great love of God.34 (ICS 1: 252)

Teresa also renders this image in verse, in her poem Mi Amado para mi, cited above. The “arrow of love” is only one of a rich set of images and metaphors found in Teresa’s poems and prose writings, and as we shall see, the Carmelites of Beaune were sensitive to a wide range of Teresian tropes. But the arrow is perhaps the most well-known among these, and a useful one in understanding the ways in which the Carmelites of Beaune employed Teresian motifs in their own poems. In an undated piece from the Beaune archives, Teresa’s French descendants appealed to God for the same fate their founding mother had known:

L’amour voyant un séraphin
Lui dit prends dans cette fournaise
Le dard le plus beau le plus fin
Pour percer le cœur de Thérèse

Centre des charmes, Dieu du cœur
De l’amour immense fournaise
Perce-nous de ce trait vainqueur
Qui brûle le cœur de Thérèse…

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Centre des charmes, Dieu du cœur
De l’amour immense fournaise
Perce-nous de ce trait vainqueur
Qui brûle le cœur de Thérèse…

(RB 10-11)

34 Libro de la Vida, 29:13. “Víale en las manos un dardo de oro largo, y al fin de el hierro me parecía tener un poco de fuego; éste me parecía meter por el corazón algunas veces y que me llegava a las entrañas. Al sacarle, me parecía las llevava consigo, y me dejava toda abrasada en amor grande de Dios.” (TOC 158)
L’amour voyant un seraphin, bis
Lui dit prest dans cette fournaise
De jadis le plus beau le plus fin
Pour parer le cœur de Thérèse,

L’esprit aîné prenant soudain, bis
Dans la fournaise consumante
Un vif trait de l’amour divin,
Le décoche au cœur de L’amante.

Prise d’un ardent amour, bis
A l’instant Thérèse l’adoucit
On la voit languir nuit et jour
Son plaîtur cause son martyre,

Son cœur dans l’ardeur de souffrir bis
À ses vœux dans cette se livre
Et l’amour qui le fait mourir,
Est le même qui la fait vivre,

Soyez qui brûlés les seraphins, bis
Dans ces demeures invisibles
Comment belas le cœur humain
A tels jeux sont-ils insensibles.

Recueil de cantiques du Carmel de Beaune, Archive of the convent of Nevers, France, 10.
This clear and straightforward reference to Teresa’s arrow shows us that French Carmelites were indeed familiar with this most famous of Teresian images, one that would have been known to most anyone with even a passing interest in Teresa and her life. Yet other poems display a much deeper knowledge of Teresa’s writings, and the principal symbols and metaphors therein: in another passage of the *Libro de la vida*, Teresa attempts to put into words the feeling of ecstasy she experienced at the moment of her mystical union with the divine:

I should like to know how to explain, with God’s help, the difference there is between union and rapture, or, as they call it, elevation or flight of the spirit, or transport, which are all the same. I mean that these latter terms, though different, refer to the same thing; it is also called ecstasy. (ICS 1: 172)

One of Teresa’s preferred metaphors for describing her states of mystical ecstasy was that of the vuelo del espíritu, the “flight of the spirit”. And like her “arrow of love”, the vuelo was also an important theme for the Carmelites of Beaune. A poem from the *Premier livre de cantiques du Carmel de Beaune* adopts Teresa’s “flight” as a vehicle for praising the Holy Trinity, and also incorporates divine love delivered on the tip of an arrow:

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35 *Libro de la Vida*, 20:1. “Querría saber declarar con el favor de Dios la diferencia que hay de unión a arrobamiento u elevamiento, u vuelo que llaman de espíritu u arrebatamiento, que todo es uno. Digo que estos diferentes nombres todo es una cosa, y también se llama éstasi.” (TOC 108)

36 The attribution and publication history of this poem are complex, and remain to be definitively resolved. In *L’ancien Carmel de Beaune* (323), Jacques Roland-Gosselin attributes the poem to Marie de la Trinité, which does seem to be a plausible hypothesis, as a few of the principal images in the *Vol d’esprit* correspond to her spiritual experiences. Convent documents recount for example how in 1631 Marie felt “tirée hors d’elle” (“drawn out of herself”) and that “les trois personnes divines s’appliquèrent à elle d’une manière ineffable et son âme fut toute remplie de la majesté de Dieu” (“the three divine persons applied themselves to her in an ineffable manner and her soul was completely filled with the majesty of God”, quoted by Roland-Gosselin, 40). This, along with the indication, on the first page of the *Premier livre de cantiques*, that the collection was “composé en partie par notre vénérable Mère Marie de la Trinité”, as well as some poems clearly attributed to her in the volume, could be indications that she was indeed the author. Subsequently, the *Vol d’esprit* also appeared, with some changes, in the posthumous editions of Surin’s *Cantiques spirituels* presented above (see footnote 30). While the exact history of this poem requires further investigation, its correspondence to a number of important Teresian themes is nonetheless clear.
Vol d’esprit sur le mystère de la Sainte Trinité, Premier livre de cantiques, stanzas 1/2. Archives of the convent of Beaune, 95.

Vol d’esprit sur le mystère de la Sainte Trinité

34
Un jour qui procède du jour
A day that gives rise to another day

Un Dieu qui de tout participe
A God who participates in everything

Une essence qui n’est qu’amour
An essence that is only love

O gloire et différents effets
O glory and different effects

Que vos miracles sont parfaits
How perfect are your miracles

Vous êtes ma joie et ma peine
You are my joy and my suffering

Car ce ravissement si doux
Because this rapture so sweet

M’est un feu et une fontaine
Is both a fire and a fountain to me

Brûlant mon cœur noyé dans vous
Burning my heart drowned in you

Mais Dieu me voyant sans esprit
But God seeing me without spirit

A lui-même ces mots écrit
Himself wrote these words

Dans mon éternité divine
In my divine eternity

J’engendre mon fils aujourd’hui
I engender my son today

Et rien qu’un instant d’origine
And only an instant of origin

Ne m’a rendu premier que lui
Put me before him

Ne croyez pas ce faible écrit
Do not believe this feeble writing

Ni aux vœux de cet esprit
Nor the vows of this spirit

Mais aux trois qui pour témoignage
But the three who as testimony

Au Ciel et au-delà du lieu
In Heaven and beyond place

Vous disent que c’est le langage
Tell you that it is the language

Non d’une femme mais d’un Dieu.
Not of a woman but of a God.

Enfin dans mon infirmité
Finally in my weakness
J’ai connu ma témérité
Submergée d’une influence
Qui m’empêche de plus parler
Et me contraint par ignorance
D’adorer mon Dieu sans parler.\(^{37}\)

Grand Dieu qui n’avez point de nom
Je consacre à votre renom
Cette liberté de ma plume
J’ai rien dit contre la foi
Ce que le feu consomme\(^{38}\)
Icelle, et mes écrits, et moi.

(PL 95-99)

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\(^{37}\) The repetition of “parler” at the end of verses 4 and 6 of this stanza may be an error – in the version of the poem printed with the *Cantiques spirituels* of Jean-Joseph Surin, the stanza reads:

Enfin dans mon infirmité
Je connus ma témérité
Submergée dans l’influence
Qui m’empêche de plus voler
Et me contraint par ignorance
D’adorer mon Dieu sans parler.

(Surin 393)

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\(^{38}\) Verses 4 and 5 of this stanza are especially problematic, and are “corrected” in the printed version as follows:

Grand Dieu qui n’avez point de nom
Je consacre à votre renom
Cette liberté de ma plume
Si j’ai rien dit contre la foi
Je consens que le feu consomme
Ma plume, mes esprits et moi.

(Surin 397)
This poem serves as an example of the extent to which the poems of the Carmelites of Beaune are saturated with Teresian motifs. In both the *Libro de la Vida* and the *Castillo Interior*, Teresa writes of the spirit in flight as a means of describing its ascension to unity with God. In the fifth chapter of the sixth *morada* of the *Castillo interior* (“dwelling”, or section of the “castle”), she writes: “There is another type of rapture – I call it flight of the spirit…it is such that the spirit truly seems to go forth from the body…”39 (ICS 2: 386-389) But in the *Vol d’esprit* from Beaune, the soul, “Elevée au-dessus de moi…Hors de la masse appesantie”, is not only subject to being lifted out of its corporeal shell toward God. It is also “anéantie” by “un trait puissant”, evoking the Teresian image of the heart pierced by a flaming arrow of love.

While Teresa typically made use of only one metaphor at a time in her writing, with passages exclusively devoted to the arrow of love, or the flight of the spirit, the Carmelites of Beaune fused these images in their poems in overlapping series of Teresian tropes, including the “annihilation of the soul” in the poem cited above. The suffering of the soul is rather forcefully worded in this poem – her “soul annihilated by love” is a powerful phrase, but one that corresponds quite closely to the tone of many of Teresa’s poems which, as Teresa herself explained, were “in order that she enjoy the glory so delightful a distress gave to her”.40 (ICS 1: 149) In her poem *Ayes del destierro* (*Cries of Exile*), Teresa prefigures the “annihilation by love” of the fifth verse of the *Vol d’esprit*:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mi alma afligida</th>
<th>Afflicted, my soul</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gime y desfallece.</td>
<td>Sighs and faints.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>¡Ay! ¿Quién de su Amado</td>
<td>Ah! Who can stay apart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puede estar ausente?</td>
<td>From her Beloved?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acabe ya, acabe</td>
<td>Oh! End now,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

39 *Castillo Interior*, VI:5. “Otra manera de arrobamientos hay, u vuelo del espíritu le llamo yo...es de tal manera que verdaderamente [el espíritu] parece sale del cuerpo...” (TOC 540-542)

40 *Libro de la Vida*, 16:4. “para más gozar la gloria que tan sabrosa pena le dava” (TOC 94)
Aqueste sufrir. This my suffering.
Ansiosa de verte Longing to see you
Deseo morir. Death I desire.

(ICS 3: 383)

The annihilation of the soul, the flight of the spirit and the arrow of love are all present in this sample of the poetry of the Carmelites of Beaune, but even within this densely imitative text, the Teresian overtones do not end there. One of the more frequent and complex Teresian themes is suggested in the last verses of the first stanza of the *Vol d’esprit* — “L’âme d’amour anéantie/Va dire moins qu’elle n’a vu” — one that resonates through the writing of numerous mystics: that of the incapacity of language to express the experience of the divine. Teresa’s writing very often oscillates between declarations of the impossibility of her literary task and attempts to carry it out, and as has been seen, her efforts to explain raptures routinely take the form of metaphors. In a section of the *Castillo interior* in which she is attempting to describe her *arrobamientos*, she evokes the failure of this technique and then proceeds to revive it:

> I have been wanting to find some comparison by which to explain what I’m speaking about, and I don’t think there is any that fits. But let’s use this one: you enter into the room of a king or great lord, or I believe they call it the treasure chamber, where there are countless kinds of glass and earthen vessels and other things so arranged that almost all these objects are seen upon entering. Once I was brought to a room like this… Although I was in that room for a while, there was so much there to see that I soon forgot it all; none of those pieces has remained in my

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41 “The soul annihilated by love/Will say less than it has seen”
memory any more than if I had never seen them, nor would I know how to explain the workmanship of any of them. (ICS 2: 381-382)\textsuperscript{43}

This passage not only cites the difficulty of finding the right words to express experience, it also specifically mentions the impossibility of describing what has been seen, as in the last verses of the \textit{Vol d’esprit}, in which the soul has flown toward God but on returning cannot recount what it saw. In an earlier passage of the same section of the \textit{Castillo interior}, Teresa cites the episode of Moses and the burning bush\textsuperscript{44} in describing this problem of recall and expression: “I don’t know if I am guessing right in what I say, for although I have heard this story about Jacob, I don't know if I am remembering it correctly. Nor did Moses know how to describe all that he saw in the bush, but only what God wished him to describe” (ICS 2: 381).\textsuperscript{45} With her frequent use of phrases such as “I should like to know how to explain”, “it seemed to me”, “I don’t know if I am getting it right”, “I don’t know if I remember correctly”, and so on, Teresa often appears to be emphasizing the instability of her discourse. At the same time, she manages to reinforce her ideas with sources of incontrovertible authority. Moses’ incapacity to fully render in words what he has experienced stands as justification for Teresa’s own struggle for adequate expression, and the fact that he could only say that which the Lord “scripted” for him helps Teresa to also adopt the position of a mouthpiece for God. In Exodus 4, Moses protests to God that he will not be able to convince his people of the authenticity of his message; God responds by saying that he will speak through Moses: “Go

\textsuperscript{43} \textit{Castillo Interior}, VI:4. “Deseando estoy acertar a poner una comparación para si pudiese dar a entender algo de esto que voy diciendo, y creo no la hay que cuadre. Mas digamos ésta. Entráis en un aposento de un rey u gran señor – u creo camarín los llaman – adonde tienen infinitos géneros de vidrios y barros y muchas cosas, puestas por tal orden, que casi todos se ven en entrando. Una vez me llevaron a una pieza de éstas...Y aunque estuve allí un rato, era tanto lo que havía que ver, que luego se me olvidó todo, de manera de que de nenguna de aquellas piezas me quedó más memoria que si nunca las huviera visto, ni sabría decir de qué hechura eran...” (TOC 537-538)

\textsuperscript{44} Exodus 3.

\textsuperscript{45} \textit{Castillo Interior}, VI:4. “No sé si atino en lo que digo, porque, aunque lo he oído, no sé si se me acuerda bien. Ni tampoco Moysén supo decir todo lo que vio en la zarza, sino lo que quiso Dios que dijese.” (TOC 537)
now; I will help you to speak and will teach you what to say” In the *Libro de la Vida*, Teresa cites a similar experience, in which “God enlightened my intellect: sometimes with words, at other times showing me how to explain this favor...His Majesty, it seems, wanted to say what I neither was able or knew how to say” (ICS 1: 160). This narrative strategy was not lost on Teresa’s daughters. Further along in the *Vol d’esprit* poem from Beaune, the author stakes out the same dual position that Teresa takes in her prose writings, at once seeming to undermine the authority of her words and associating them with the highest of authorities, in this case, the Holy Trinity, which was the original object of praise in the poem, drawing on Teresian prose not only for a metaphorical vehicle, but also for an authoritative model:

Ne croyez pas ce faible écrit  
Ni aux vœux de cet esprit  
Mais aux trois qui pour témoignage  
Au Ciel et au-delà du lieu  
Vous disent que c’est le langage  
Non d’une femme mais d’un Dieu.

Do not believe this feeble writing  
Nor the vows of this spirit  
But the three who as testimony  
In Heaven and beyond place  
Tell you that it is the language  
Not of a woman but of a God.

(PL 99)

Using a technique that Teresa herself had used in her writings, the author of the poem seems to disavow her own participation in the text, explaining that it is “…le langage/Non d’une femme mais d’un Dieu”. In the context of Teresa’s own writings, this literary strategy has been documented by Alison Weber, who explains the belief in Teresa’s time in “feminine spiritual inadequacy”, and documents the strategies that Teresa used to “write around” that belief, managing to get her message across without personally adopting a position of

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46 Exod 4:11. *(King James Bible)*  
47 *Libro de la Vida*, 18:8. “Aclaró Dios mi entendimiento, unas veces con palabras y otras puniéndome delante cómo lo havía de decir...Su Majestad parece quiere decir lo que yo no puedo ni sé.” (TOC 101)
authority (*Teresa of Avila* 19). According to Weber, “by allowing the reader to experience her frustration, indeed her failure to find *le mot juste*”, Teresa is able to communicate a message without overtly challenging a prohibition against women’s engagement in theological discourse which was based upon a passage of Paul’s letter to the Corinthians (“Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted for them to speak”\(^{48}\)) and the Epistles (“Let the women learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach”\(^{49}\)). As Weber writes, via the struggle for expression inscribed in her texts, “Teresa succeeds in explaining without teaching” (105). The author of the poem from Beaune assumes the same “slippery” position in the *Vol d'esprit*: that of a woman not permitted to deliver theological discourse but nonetheless transmitting a message. Her poem continues:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French Text</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enfin dans mon infirmité</td>
<td>Finally in my weakness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J’ai connu ma témérité</td>
<td>I have realized my temerity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Submergée d’une influence</td>
<td>Submerged by an influence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qui m’empêche de plus parler</td>
<td>That prevents me from speaking more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Et me contraint par ignorance</td>
<td>And constrains me out of ignorance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D’adorer mon Dieu sans parler.</td>
<td>To adore my God without speaking.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(PL 99)

These references to “my weakness”, “my temerity” and “ignorance” place the author of the *Vol d’esprit* squarely in the space into which Teresa wrote herself, so to speak. As Alison Weber explains, in her writings “Teresa concedes to women’s weakness, timidity, powerlessness and intellectual inferiority” (39), but only in an ironic fashion so as to defend the legitimacy of her spiritual experiences and their literary rendering. Teresa’s declarations of incapacity or lack of expertise aim to compensate for her own audacity, or the force of her


experience and language. The author of the *Vol d’esprit* makes a similar move when she writes that her poem is “…le langage/Non d’une femme mais d’un Dieu” and then continues on to enumerate her “womanly” flaws. But while she performs the requisite acts of contrition for her temerity toward the end of her poem, she does so only after several stanzas of intensely rendered poetry expressing her personal experience of a heightened mystical state. She can move toward silence, having spoken with authority and had her say.

The final gesture of the *Vol d’esprit* is no less Teresian than the ones that precede it. In an episode that would later become famous, Teresa composed, and then burned (at the order of her confessor) a text entitled *Meditaciones sobre los Cantares* (“Meditations on the Song of Solomon”). This story was sufficiently well-known in 17th-century France to be recounted in the following sonnet published in 1670 (and depicted in an accompanying illustration):

Thérèse obéissant écrit sur les Cantiques
Thérèse obéissant jette au feu ses écrits
Un seul fragment sauvé nous en fait voir le prix
Le reste nous fait voir ses vertus héroïques.

Teresa obeying writes on the Cantiques*
Teresa obeying throws her writings into the fire
A sole saved fragment shows us their value,
The rest shows us her heroic virtues.

* - The Song of Solomon
(Brunand, Harbet, and Paulin 347)
The burning of texts composed by nuns was not infrequent\textsuperscript{50}, but as Efrén de la Madre de Dios and Otger Steggink explain, Teresa’s text was a special one, particularly for her fellow Carmelites: “She had drafted [the Meditaciones] several times and copies were circulating in the convents, when she received the order from Padre Diego de Yanguas to burn them”.\textsuperscript{51} A number of copies were subsequently found in Spanish Carmelite convents, indicating that while Teresa may have complied with her confessor’s order, her sisters carefully kept the copies they had come to possess. In 17\textsuperscript{th}-century French Carmel, this story of Teresa’s Meditaciones was likely a familiar one to women religious who sought to imitate Teresa both in her obedience and “heroic virtue” as well as in her capacity as a writer. The last stanza of the poem Vol d’esprit from Beaune gives evidence of just such an imitation:

\begin{verbatim}
Grand Dieu qui n’avez point de nom
Je consacre à votre renom
Cette liberté de ma plume
J’ai rien dit contre la foi
Ce que le feu consomme
Icelle, et mes écrits, et moi.
\end{verbatim}

Great God who has no name
I dedicate to your renown
This liberty of my pen
I say nothing here contrary to faith
That which the fire consumes
This, and my writings, and me.

(PL 99)

Here the poem is suggestive of the kinds of tensions present in most of Teresa’s writings and in the circumstances of their composition. For Teresa, both the order to write and the subsequent approval or criticism of her texts had created complications. As Kieran Kavanaugh explains: “though Teresa wrote her Meditations with the approval of her confessor, a later confessor, upon hearing of the existence of so daring a work, became

\textsuperscript{50} Indeed, the nuns themselves often asked that their writings be burned, or simply burned them themselves. See Isabelle Poutrin, Le voile et la plume, 153-157; also Sonja Herpoel, A la zaga de Santa Teresa: autobiografías por mandato, Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999, 98.

\textsuperscript{51} “Lo había redactado varias veces y corrían las copias por sus conventos, cuando recibió del P. Diego de Yanguas la orden de quemarlo” (TOC 421). English translation mine.
frightened. Gratian\textsuperscript{52} says that this later confessor thought it was a dangerous novelty for a woman to write on the *Song of Solomon* and ‘moved with zeal by the words of St. Paul that women should be silent in the Church’, ordered Teresa to burn it.’ (ICS 2: 211-212) A similar controversy had arisen around Teresa’s *Libro de la Vida*, which she had written at the order of her first confessors. But the *Vida* was not meant to be read by Teresa’s fellow Carmelite nuns, and when copies of it began to circulate in convents, one of Teresa’s confessors, Domingo Báñez, threatened to have the book burned. Whether any of the Carmelites of Beaune ever received orders to burn what they had written, or whether their male superiors even read their poems is not known, but there is a possible hint of “surveillance” in the last stanza of the *Vol d’esprit* cited above, as the author makes a point of declaring that “nothing contrary to faith” has been said. Having incorporated a wealth of Teresian motifs and adopted Teresa’s “inferior” feminine stance (ex post facto and without actually retracting anything she had written, of course), the author of the *Vol d’esprit* may well have extended her emulation of her spiritual mother to include a reference to constraint and obedience, and a literary “auto-destruction” like that imposed upon Teresa herself. The *Vol d’esprit* introduces multiple levels of imitation, not only of the Teresa whose soul took leave of her body in the mystical *vuelo*, but also of Teresa the writer, readily assuming the difficulties and contradictions involved in expressing the inexpressible and recounting in authoritative language an experience of the divine in a time and place in which spiritual authority – particularly in written form – was a contested right for women religious.

This literary imitation is visible in other poems from the Beaune collection; like the *Vol d’esprit*, another unattributed poem from the archives of the convent entitled only *Autre cantique du petit [Jésus] sur l’air de toutes parts* suggests close imitation of Teresa’s *Libro de la vida*:

\textsuperscript{52} Jerónimo Gracían (translated as “Jerome Gratian” in the ICS edition), who edited and published the first edition of the *Meditaciones* in 1611.
Petit Jésus dedans la crèche  
Little Jesus in the manger  

Les âmes que vous choisissez  
The souls that you choose  

Pour honorer votre innocence  
To honor your innocence  

Et votre grande pureté  
And your great purity  

Vous les mettez  
You bring them  

Dans les celliers  
Into the cellars  

De votre vin très doux et délicieux  
Of your most sweet and delicious wine  

Pour réjouir dans votre sacré cœur  
To rejoice in your sacred heart  

[...]  

Vous prenez toute leur puissance  
You take away all of their powers  

Leur intellect et volonté  
Their intellect and will  

Elles n’ont ni vue ni entendre  
They have neither sight nor hearing  

C’est vous qui en elles agissez  
It is you who acts in them  

En tout ceci  
In all of this  

Jésus petit  
Little Jesus  

Elles n’ont rien c’est vous qui agissez  
They have nothing it is you who act  

Et les menez tout comme vous voulez.  
And lead them exactly as you desire.  

(PL 8-9)  

In chapter twenty-five of the *Libro de la vida*, Teresa makes an attempt to give an explanation of her *arrobamientos*, or divine raptures, in language remarkably similar to that used in the final stanza of the poem cited above:  

…while the soul is united in the rapture itself…all the faculties are completely lost and, in my opinion, one can neither see nor understand nor hear. The soul is
completely under the power of another, and during this time, which is very short, it
doesn’t seem to me the Lord leaves it any freedom at all.\textsuperscript{53} (ICS 1: 215)

While the poem cited above remains centered on the infant Jesus, a particular focus of
devotion for the Carmelites of Beaune\textsuperscript{54}, in the last stanza the correspondence to Teresa’s
\textit{Vida} is striking: below are segments of Teresa’s prose followed by segments of \textit{Petit Jésus
dedans la crèche}:

\ldots while the soul is united in the rapture itself\ldots all the faculties are completely lost /
\textit{Vous prenez toute leur puissance}; and, in my opinion, one can neither see / \textit{Elles} 
n’ont ni vue; nor understand / \textit{Vous prenez}\ldots \textit{leur intellect}; nor hear / \textit{ni entendre}.

The soul is completely under the power of another / \textit{Elles} n’ont rien c’est vous qui
agissem; and during this time, which is very short, it doesn’t seem to me the Lord
leaves it any freedom at all / \textit{Et les menez tout comme vous voulez}.

Of the imitations of Teresa’s prose apparent in the poems of the Carmelites of Beaune, this
one is the most detailed and precise, adhering closely to a sequence of ideas from Teresa’s
autobiographical \textit{Vida} in a way that suggests a willful reworking of what was surely an
influential text for the women of that community. The authors of this poem and the \textit{Vol
d’esprit} appear to have identified strongly with Teresa, to have experienced something like
her \textit{arrobaimientos}, and to have engaged in the same sort of literary expression she gave to

\textsuperscript{53} \textit{Libro de la Vida}, 25:5. “\ldots en tiempo que está unida el alma en el mismo arrobaimiento\ldots del todo se pierden
todas las potencias y, a mi parecer, allí ni se puede ver ni entender ni oír. Está en otro poder toda, y en este
tiempo, que es muy breve, no me parece la deja el Señor para nada libertad.” (TOC 135)

\textsuperscript{54} The devotion to the infancy of Christ was common in 17\textsuperscript{th}-century Carmel, but in Beaune its heightened
importance was in large measure the result of the personal passion of one member of the community in
particular, Marguerite du Saint-Sacrement (1619-1648). Having entered the convent at the age of twelve,
Marguerite felt early in life that she had been called to worship the Holy Infant. Considered by her fellow sisters
to be a prodigy with special gifts, including the ability to receive divine revelations, Marguerite quickly became
the center of attention in the convent, and the infant Jesus became the principal object of devotion for the entire
community. The poems in the Beaune manuscripts clearly reflect this emphasis. On the Carmelite devotion to
the Holy Infant and its origins, see Barbara B. Diefendorf, \textit{From Penance to Charity}, 147-148.
these experiences; perhaps fittingly, the literary “place” they chose for the telling of these experiences was the one inherited from Teresa herself, the poem.

**Watering the Garden of the Soul**

Let us now return to our garden, and see how these trees are beginning to bud so as to blossom and afterwards give fruit – and also the flowers and carnations so as to give forth their fragrance…

- Teresa of Avila, *Libro de la Vida*, 14:9 (ICS 1: 137)

You are a garden enclosed, my sister, my Bride, a closed spring, a fountain sealed.

- Song of Solomon, IV:12

Besides the flight of the spirit, other Teresian metaphors figure prominently in the poems of the Carmelites of Beaune, and among these the “garden of the soul” as a symbol for the soul in prayer and the various ways in which it may be “watered” is one of the most important. Beyond identifying with Teresa the mystic and Teresa the writer, all of the sisters of Beaune must also have identified with Teresa as “brides of Christ”, a role granted them by their vows as Carmelite nuns. By metaphorical extension, their souls were prepared like fertile and pleasant gardens in anticipation of the entry of the divine presence, like the “Beloved” of the Song of Solomon:

> I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse: I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey; I have drunk my wine with my milk: eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.

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55 “Ahora tornemos a nuestra huerta u vergel, y veamos cómo comienzan estos árboles a empreñarse para florecer y dar después fruto, y las flores y claveles lo mismo para dar olor.” (TOC 86)
Teresa’s predilection for the Song of Solomon is well-known and evident particularly in her prose. The garden evoked in the passages above appears as an important metaphor in the *Libro de la Vida*, where Teresa likens the process of prayer to that of tending the earth and making it fertile:

Beginners must realize that in order to give delight to the Lord they are starting to cultivate a garden on very barren soil…Now let us keep in mind that all of this is already done by the time a soul is determined to practice prayer and has begun to make use of it. And with the help of God we must strive like good gardeners to get these plants to grow and take pains to water them so that they don’t wither but come to bud and flower and give forth a most pleasant fragrance to provide refreshment for this Lord of ours. Then He will come often to take delight in this garden…

(ICS 1: 113)

Teresa’s evocation of the garden in the *Libro de la Vida* is more than a reprise of the Song of Solomon – it serves as a powerful metaphor for describing four stages of mental prayer, progressive steps in which the garden is “watered”, first by conscious effort on the part of the one praying, and later by God himself, who brings water to the garden in the form of rain:

It seems to me the garden can be watered in four ways. You may draw water from a well (which is for us a lot of work). Or you may get it by means of a water wheel and aqueducts in such a way that it is obtained by turning the crank of the water wheel. (I have drawn it this way sometimes – the method involves less work than the other, and you get more water.) Or it may flow from a river or a stream. (The

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56 Solomon, V:1. *(King James Bible)*
57 *Libro de la Vida*, 11:7. “Paréceme a mí que se puede regar de cuatro maneras; u con sacar el agua de un pozo, que es a nuestro gran trabajo; u con noria y arqueduces, que se saca con un torno – yo lo he sacado algunas veces –; es a menos trabajo que estotro, y sácase más agua; u de un rio u arroyo; esto se riega muy mejor, que queda más harta la tierra de agua y no se ha menester regar tan a menudo, y es a menos trabajo mucho del hortelano; u con llover mucho, que lo riega el Señor sin trabajo ninguno nuestro, y es muy sin comparación mejor que todo lo que queda dicho.” *(TOC 71-72)*
garden is watered much better by this means because the ground is more fully soaked, and there is no need to water so frequently – and much less work for the gardener.) Or the water may be provided by a great deal of rain. (For the Lord waters the garden without any work on our part – and this way is incomparably better than all the others mentioned.) 58 (ICS 1: 113)

One in particular of the Carmelites of Beaune, Françoise de la Mère de Dieu (1614-1694) took up the metaphor of soul as garden in her own poetry:

[...]

Je me tiens si glorieuse I consider myself to be so glorious
De mon saint et heureux sort For my holy and blessed fate
Que pour être ainsi heureuse To be blessed in this way
Je ferai tous mes efforts I will make all my efforts
Par mes supplications By my supplications
Mes souhaits et mes désirs My wishes my desires
Afin que vous reveniez So that you will return
En moi prendre vos plaisirs Into me to take your pleasures
Vous trouverez pour y faire You will find to make there
Un agréable jardin A pleasant garden
J’y cultiverai la terre I will cultivate the earth there
Et de votre doigt divin And with your divine finger

58 Libro de la Vida, 11:7. “Parécceme a mí que se puede regar de cuatro maneras; u con sacar el ague de un pozo, que es a nuestro gran travajo; u con noria y arcaduces, que se saca con un torno – yo lo he sacado algunas veces - : es a menos trabajo que estotro, y sácase más agua; u de un rio u arroyo; esto se riega muy mijo, que queda más harta la tierra de agua y no se ha menester regar tan a menudo, y es a menos trabajo mucho del hortelano; u con llover mucho, que lo riega el Señor sin trabajo ninguno nuestro, y es muy sin comparación mijo que todo lo que queda dicho.” (TOC 71-72)
Vous y mettez les plantes\textsuperscript{59} You will place the plants
Que vous aimerez le mieux You like best
Et pour les faire avancer And to make them grow
La pluie tombera des cieux The rain will fall from the skies
Toutes les fleurs seront vôtres All of the flowers will be yours
Les fruits y seront à vous The fruits there will belong to you
Ne voulant pas qu’aucun autre Not wishing that another
En ait seulement le goût Should have so much as a taste
Il sera toujours fermé It will be forever closed
Personne n’y entrera No one will enter
Et si vous le tenez clos And if you keep it sealed
Rien du tout n’en sortira Nothing at all will come out
Les célestes influences The celestial influences
Y darderont leurs ardeurs Will let fly their ardors there
Mais en douceur et clémence But in sweetness and mercy
Pour faire jeter l’odeur To spread the fragrance
Au baume et à l’encens Of balsam and incense
À la cinamome aussi And cinnamon as well
Pour faire de tout ce lieu To make of this place
Un petit ciel raccourci A minature heaven
Une fontaine très belle A very beautiful fountain
Vous y ferez rejaillir You will make spring forth there
Jusqu’à la vie éternelle Until life eternal

\textsuperscript{59} In the manuscript: vous y mettere les plans. I understand “plans” as “plantes”, which is consistent with the theme of the poem, but the line may allow for other readings.
Afin de ne défaillir
Dans les chemins épineux
Qui nous mènent en la patrie
Où il faut que nous allions
En sortant de cette vie
Si je suis la jardinière
Vous serez l’agriculteur
Jetant les ronces en arrière
Vous y cuillerez des fleurs
Pour vous faire des bouquets
Et votre chef couronner
O combien j’aurai de joie
De vous voir ainsi orné

[...]
Teresa writes, “God is so good that when for His reasons...the well is dry and we, like good gardeners, do what lies in our power. He sustains the garden without water and makes the virtues grow” (ICS 1: 114).\(^{61}\)

In sections of the poem not so directly inspired by passages from Teresa’s writings, Françoise de la Mère de Dieu nonetheless continues to imitate Teresa in a sense, as she borrows from the Song of Solomon as Teresa herself had done: Teresa’s usage of the garden motif does not emphasize the enclosed nature of the space or the fact that it is a private domain for God, but the Song of Solomon – and Françoise – do. Solomon VII:13 reads: “The mandrakes give a smell, and at our gates are all manner of pleasant fruits, new and old, which I have laid up for thee, O my beloved.”\(^{62}\) Je me tiens si glorieuse echoes this passage in the third stanza cited above:

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Toutes les fleurs seront vôtres
All of the flowers will be yours
Les fruits y seront à vous
The fruits there will belong to you
Ne voulant pas qu’aucun autre
Not wishing that another
En ait seulement le goût
Should have so much as a taste
Il sera toujours fermé
It will be forever closed
Personne n’y entrera
No one will enter
Et si vous le tenez clos
And if you keep it sealed
Rien du tout n’en sortira
Nothing at all will come out
```

Françoise incorporates other elements from Solomon, including the fountains from IV:12 ("A garden enclosed [is] my sister, [my] spouse; a spring shut up, a fountain sealed.”\(^{63}\)) and IV:15

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\(^{61}\) *Libro de la Vida*, 11:9. “Y es Dios tan bueno que...quiere que esté seco el pozo, haciendo lo que es en nosotros como buenos hortolanos, sin agua sustenta las flores y hace crecer las virtudes.” (TOC 72)

\(^{62}\) *King James Bible*.

\(^{63}\) Ibid.
(“A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon.”64) and the herbs and cinnamon of IV:14 (“Spikenard and saffron; calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense; myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices.”65).

These texts demonstrate that among the Carmelites of Beaune, there were writers well-versed in the descriptions of raptures and prayer found in Teresa’s prose works, and that the poetic space established by Teresa served as a site for the composition of their own (albeit heavily influenced) spiritual messages. But the way in which this space was used by French Carmelites is evidence of more than just a reworking of themes from the Libro de la vida and the Castillo interior – although this fact in itself is important enough to warrant attention to these poems –: the poems of the Carmelites of Beaune also help us to understand the extent to which poetry in their convent was a showcase for women’s authority, where poems were written, compiled and even edited by Carmelite women, seemingly independent of male supervision.

**Literary and Editorial Authority**

Teresa of Avila composed her prose works, including the Libro de la vida and the Castillo interior, at the order of her male confessors. These texts were subsequently inspected as well as edited by those same authorities, who decided what was appropriate and what was not in the accounts of Teresa’s prayers and raptures. As the poem cited earlier that recounts Teresa’s burning of her writings on the Song of Solomon demonstrates, conflicts and controversy famously surrounded her literary output. This seems not to have been the case with Teresa’s poetry, however. In January of 1577, Teresa wrote a letter to María de San José,

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64 Ibid.
65 Ibid.
the prioress of the convent of Seville and an active poet herself\textsuperscript{66}, thanking her for some coplas María had sent, and telling her that “I think you can show these to the ‘old saint’; say that this is how you spend the recreations, that all of this is a language of perfection…”\textsuperscript{67} The “old saint” in question was Hernando de Pantoja, the prior of the monastery of Las Cuevas in Seville and a friend of Teresian Carmel.\textsuperscript{68} Pantoja was apparently not a superior or confessor to either Teresa or to María de San José, but his mention in Teresa’s letter is perhaps telling in that Teresa seems to feel free to instruct María to show the coplas she has composed to Pantoja, with no mention of supervision or approbation of the texts. Further, she appears to be telling María to show the poems to Pantoja and to inform him that recreations are spent singing them and that they are a “language of perfection”, suggesting that Pantoja may have been unaware of the tradition and also giving a defense or justification of the practice. Given the high degree of control that was exercised over Teresa’s prose writings, her apparently relaxed attitude regarding the possibility that male religious (even if friendly to her cause) might see María’s poems suggests that even from its origins, poetry in Carmelite convents may have been controlled by the very women who composed it, rather than by any overseeing male authority. Indeed, in 1578, the year after Teresa’s letter to María de San José, two of the principal authorities in the Order of Carmel, Fernando Suárez and Diego de Coria, expressed surprise and dismay that in Teresa’s convents “they teach the nuns…to write coplas and verses and they send [to each other] the ones that they write”.\textsuperscript{69} These two citations suggest that the poetic activity in Teresa’s convents went on for some period of time before male superiors learned of it. They also show that in spite of at least some early


\textsuperscript{67} Letter 172, January 9, 1577. “Creo las podrían mostrar al santo viejo; decir que en eso pasan las recreaciones, que todo es lenguaje de perfección…” (TOC 1071). English translation mine.


\textsuperscript{69} “a las monjas que han fundado enseñan que hagan coplas y versos y ellos les embian las que hazen”. \textit{Monumenta Historica Carmeli Teresiani}, vol. II. Cited in Álvarez Pellitero, 525. English translation mine.
opposition to the practice, it flourished among Teresa’s followers, as seen in the Spanish *cancioneros* and now in the French *Premier livre de cantiques du Carmel de Beaune* and the *Recueil de cantiques du Carmel de Beaune*.

The hypothesis that Carmelite women controlled this literary activity in their convents is strengthened by the 19th-century annotations to the *Premier livre* and the *Recueil de cantiques*. According to annotations in both volumes, the aforementioned Élisabeth de la Trinité Grozelier was not only an author of some of the poems, but also an editor of sorts, responsible for changes to some of the texts and perhaps also for their organization. Notes in both volumes of poetry identify Élisabeth’s handwriting in a number of poems that have been amended, with one or more words or verses crossed out and replaced, and in one case an entire stanza crossed out and eliminated entirely from the body of the poem. Further, it may be the case that Élisabeth was the organizer and editor of a specific set of poems from the *Recueil de cantiques*, written to ask for financial support for the rebuilding of the church on the convent grounds, which was begun in 1655, a likely date of the composition of these texts.

In this series of poems, each written by a different member of the community, a prayer for monetary aid is made; the series gives evidence that a deliberate decision was taken, either executive or collective, to compose poems on a common theme. Further, the poems follow a common structural template to some degree – they are general poems of devotion to God and the Infant Jesus, until the last few stanzas, in which the authors come to the point and ask for money, suggesting perhaps some common set of instructions for composition, and supervision of some kind to ensure a certain level of conformity. In one of the poems, composed by a Sister Françoise de Saint-Joseph, Élisabeth de la Trinité Grozelier is credited

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70 An introductory note to this series of poems suggests this as well: “…tous les soirs l’on tira un billet et celle à qui il arrivait gardait tout le jour cette sainte image en sa celle et faisait un petit cantique en réjouissance, où elle n’oubliait pas les besoins de l’Église” (“…every night a billet [ticket, slip of paper] was drawn and the one who picked it kept this holy image [of the Infant Jesus] in her cell and wrote a little cantique of rejoicing, in which she did not forget the needs of the Church”, *Recueil de cantiques*, 67).
with two edits, one at the outset of the poem in which she specifies the tune to which the poem is to be sung\textsuperscript{71}, and another in the sixth stanza of the poem where she is to have added the words \textit{de l’argent} (some money) to the sixth verse:

\begin{verbatim}
Faites qu’elles nous donnent Make them give us
Dans le pressant besoin In the pressing need
Où maintenant nous sommes In which we now find ourselves
Et nous ôtent le soin And relieve us the concern
Donnant à notre Mère Giving our Mother
Promptement promptement \textit{de l’argent}\textsuperscript{72} Promptly, promptly \textit{some money}
Pour achever de faire To finish making
Votre \textit{cher} \textit{saint} bâtiment… Your \textit{dear} \textit{holy} building…
\end{verbatim}

\textsuperscript{RC 32}

The annotation next to \textit{de l’argent} reads: “deux mots écrites par Sœur Élisabeth de la Trinité Grozelier”\textsuperscript{73}. In this case, the edit made in the sixth verse clarifies exactly what the purpose of the poem was, Françoise de Saint-Joseph perhaps having left the message too vague. This poem is also edited in the last verse of the stanza cited above, where \textit{cher} (“dear” or perhaps “expensive”) is crossed out in favor of \textit{saint} (holy). Perhaps the editor in this case (who may well have been Élisabeth: although this last correction \textit{cher-saint} is not specifically attributed to her, the handwriting is similar to that of the attributed corrections) felt that the building should not be described as “expensive”. In any case, this and other poems in the series were clearly subject to some perfecting, which is in many cases attributed to Élisabeth de le Trinité.

\textsuperscript{71} The name of the tune given is \textit{Nous étions trois hermites} (We were three hermits), and an annotation to this title reads “4 mots écrits par sœur Élisabeth de la Trinité Grozelier” (“Four words written by sister Élisabeth de la Trinité Grozelier”).

\textsuperscript{72} The crossing out that appears in the last verse of this stanza should perhaps also have been applied to the repetition of “promptement” in verse 6, which would have left a verse of 6 syllables instead of 9.

\textsuperscript{73} “two words written by sister Élisabeth de la Trinité Grozelier”
It seems then that Élisabeth may have been responsible for editing some of these poems, particularly when the financial message was in need of fine-tuning. She is also credited with being the author of two poems on the subject of the reconstruction, one of which is the first in the series, set to the tune of “little garden” (sur l’air du petit jardin), and concludes with the general message common to all of the poems in the series:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French Text</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Envoyez-nous pour achever</td>
<td>Send us in order to finish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le bâtiment de votre temple</td>
<td>The building of your temple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afin que chacun y contemple</td>
<td>So that each one can contemplate there</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Et reçoive vos dons sacrés.</td>
<td>And receive your sacred gifts.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(RC 6)

The second poem attributed to Élisabeth is from 1657, the year the construction project was finished. Her poem commemorates this, as an introductory note indicates:

Cantique pour remercier le saint Enfant Jésus de nous avoir fait la grâce par notre très chère Mère Élisabeth de la Trinité [de Quatrebarbes], notre prieure, de rebâtir notre église. 1657.

(RC 104)

In this poem, Élisabeth de la Trinité Grozelier thanks God for having acted through Élisabeth de la Trinité de Quatrebarbes (the prioress) to rebuild the church. The poem is of substantial length, twenty-four stanzas long, and in the ninth stanza makes its message clear:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French Text</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elle a enfin bâti Votre Maison</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Très bien ornée et rendue toute belle</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

74 This poem is composed by Élisabeth de la Trinité Grozelier, in honor of Élisabeth de la Trinité de Quatrebarbes, who was the prioress that led the reconstruction effort.
75 “Cantique to thank the holy Infant Jesus for giving us the grace through our very dear Mother Élisabeth de la Trinité [de Quatrebarbes], our prioress, of rebuilding our church. 1657.
Élisabeth de la Trinité Grozelier begins and ends the poetic project, writing the first poem in the series requesting financial help, and authoring the poem that commemorates the church reconstruction’s successful completion. If Élisabeth de la Trinité de Quatrebarbes (the prioress) was the organizer and leader of the reconstruction effort, Élisabeth de la Trinité Grozelier (the poet) may have served in a similar role in the poetic project. Both efforts, it appears, were managed by Carmelite women.

**Spiritual Authority**

The fact that in the convent of Beaune Carmelite women seem to have been the composers, compilers and editors of their own poetry is itself significant, as it is consistent with what appears to have been an analogous level of control in the time of Teresa of Avila. But the poems from the archives of the convent of Beaune are suggestions not only of compositional and editorial control of Carmelite literary activity, but also of a certain spiritual authority according to which nuns could determine and express in writing their own spiritual truths. We have seen in the poem entitled *Vol d’esprit* how the author establishes the veracity of her claims by citing the authority of the Holy Trinity and by declaring that the poem is “the language/not of a woman but of a God”. One interpretation of such a statement is that the
author, a woman, declares herself incapable of rendering such a message, and relies upon God to speak for her. This would be consistent with the analyses of Alison Weber and others of the “feminine discourse” of Teresa of Avila, as cited earlier in this chapter. But in the *Vol d’esprit*, the author is not only declaring the words on the page to be the work of God; the poem as a whole relates a mystical encounter with God in which the soul has left the body – a rapture like those experienced by Teresa of Avila and recorded in her *Libro de la vida*. This is clear in the first two stanzas:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French Phrase</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dans le triomphe de la foi</td>
<td>In the triumph of faith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elevée au-dessus de moi</td>
<td>Elevated above me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hors de la masse appesantie</td>
<td>Out of the burdensome mass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Par un trait puissant non prévu</td>
<td>By a powerful arrow, unexpected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L’âme d’amour anéantie</td>
<td>The soul annihilated by love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Va dire moins qu’elle n’a vu.</td>
<td>Will say less than it has seen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Au-delà de l’éternité</td>
<td>Beyond eternity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Je vis un être vérité</td>
<td>I saw a being truth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Un principe sans nul principe</td>
<td>A beginning with no beginning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Un jour qui procède du jour</td>
<td>A day that gives rise to another day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Un Dieu qui de tout participe</td>
<td>A God who participates in everything</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Une essence qui n’est qu’amour</td>
<td>An essence that is only love</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The author declaring as she does that the words of the poem are the work of God, one may by extension assume that the experience recounted by the words is itself also God’s doing. One of the chief preoccupations of superiors and confessors faced with apparently supernatural experiences on the part of women religious was that of deciding the origin of the experience, determining whether it came from God or from some less holy source. Such preoccupations,
it turns out, were very much on the minds of the superiors charged with overseeing the convent of Beaune at certain moments in the convent’s history. Cynthia Cupples documents a “scathing response” given by Guillaume Gibieuf, one of the superiors of the Discalced Carmelites in France, to a letter that came from Marie de la Trinité (an elder member of the convent of Beaune) and Élisabeth de la Trinité de Quatrebarbes describing the mystical states experienced by the young Marguerite du Saint-Sacrement, the Carmelite who had supposedly foreseen the birth of Louis XIV. As Cupples explains:

He [Gibieuf] was clearly not prepared for the manuscript account of Marguerite's graces that he received in 1644. His scathing response highlights as it denounces the prioress's effective authority in spiritual discernment:

All persons charged with a subject extraordinary in the ways of God have been accustomed to mistrust themselves and to ask for advice. This subject is one of the most extraordinary, and yet the two mothers who have been responsible for guiding her have never been seen to have doubted nor asked for advice.76

Marie de la Trinité and Elisabeth de la Trinité de Quatrebarbes had decided for themselves, apparently without asking for advice, that there was something of the supernatural in the experiences of Marguerite du Saint-Sacrement, and having made that determination on their own – having decided in effect that her experience came from God –, they felt the backlash of, as Cupples puts it, “the forceful reassertion of male clerical authority”. For women religious to make such determinations, to practice “spiritual discernment”, was for them to make decisions that were generally left to male superiors. The author of the Vol d’esprit (whether it

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be the prioress Marie de la Trinité or another of the sisters of Beaune) appears to perform such an act of spiritual discernment upon herself, and to render this judgment in the form of a poem that declares not only the words used to convey the mystical state but also the mystical state itself to be the work of God. Interpreted this way, the poem is a declaration of authority that is both literary in its freedom to write and spiritual in its freedom to experience, recount and attribute to God an extraordinary mystical event. In this light, the “freedom of the pen” (to quote the poem) and the freedom of the soul appear to be granted and enjoyed by the same Carmelite woman.

Another possibility exists, one that also strengthens the hypothesis that not only Carmelite poetry but also Carmelite spirituality may have been managed, so to speak, by women. As Cynthia Cupples explains, the “reassertion of male clerical authority” by Guillaume Gibieuf in the case of Marguerite du Saint-Sacrement was in fact exceptional for the convent of Beaune: Marie de la Trinité and Élisabeth de la Trinité de Quatrebarbes had “considerable autonomy” in the management of matters spiritual in their convent, and it was only after Gibieuf had had no news of Marguerite’s state for some time77 that her immediate female superiors wrote to him giving their assessment of the situation. The autonomy that these two women apparently enjoyed was not unheard of in other places: Cupples cites the example of the Benedictine prioress Marie de Saint Joseph and her role in the determining of the nature of “ecstasies, transports and raptures”78 experienced by one of the nuns in her convent, Sister Anne-Marie de Jésus Crucifié; and Alison Weber and Barbara Diefendorf have given other such examples of women religious in supervisory positions who made similar evaluations of

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77 “Superior Gibieuf wrote to Élisabeth de la Trinité at Beaune in 1643 that ‘it has been a long time since I have received her particular news, and I think it very appropriate that you send the principal points of what has happened to her in the last few years.’” Gibieuf to Marie de la Trinité, 30 Sept. 1639 and 25 June 1642, and Gibieuf to Élisabeth de la Trinité, 19 June 1643, in Marguerite du Saint-Sacrement, Correspondance, 125-6, 177, 223 (Cited in Cupples 130)

78 Ibid., 126.
their charges who appeared to experience supernatural “graces”. Looked at with this in mind, the *Vol d’esprit* might be read as the work of a Carmelite nun whose experiences have been validated “internally” by a fellow member of the convent and who has perhaps been given permission to write about them in a way that ascribes the phenomena (and even their telling) to God.

Whichever (if either) of these interpretations might be accurate, the various indications of the independence with which Carmelites appear to have composed, compiled and edited their poems (in the time of Teresa of Avila and in Beaune) and the apparent freedom of spiritual discernment enjoyed by the female leaders of the convent of Beaune (by design or by negligence on the part of the male superiors of French Carmel) would seem to point toward a relationship between the two activities. Literary and spiritual freedom may indeed have coincided in Beaune, such that what was experienced in the spiritual realm found an exceptional outlet in the realm of the literary, in the poetic tradition carried on and apparently supervised by Carmelite women since the time of Teresa of Avila.

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When the first French Carmelite convent founded on Teresa of Avila’s Spanish model was established in Paris in 1604, much of the work was carried out by two nuns who had been close associates of Teresa in Spain: Ana de Jesús (1545-1621) and Ana de San Bartolomé (1549–1626). The arrival of the “two Anas” in Paris was much heralded, and from the seeds they planted, French Teresian Carmel grew rapidly in the course of the 17th and 18th centuries. But both Ana de Jesús and Ana de San Bartolomé stayed a shorter time in France than was initially intended. The elder of the two, Ana de Jesús, was a strong leader with firm ideas about how convents should be founded and governed. These ideas were soon to be challenged, however, and she quickly found herself embroiled in conflict with the French male clergy who oversaw the establishment of convents, most especially with Cardinal Pierre de Bérulle, who mandated compromises and changes to Teresian rule that Ana found unacceptable. Frustrated, Ana de Jesús declared that she would return to Spain, having given up on the French “experiment”. But a number of factors dissuaded her from doing so, among them an offer from the Infanta Isabela, co-sovereign of the Habsburg Netherlands, to allow the establishment of Teresian Carmelite convents. Ana accepted, and went north to found convents in Brussels, Louvain and Mons, and remained in the Spanish Netherlands for the rest of her life. Thus the celebrated arrival of Teresian Carmel in France was, for one of the Spanish nuns who had been closest to Teresa of Avila, rather more like a stop-over between Spain and the Netherlands, and of her years as a Carmelite nun, Ana de Jesús would

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spend thirty-four in Spain, just three in France, and fourteen in the Spanish Netherlands, where she died in 1621.

Ana de San Bartolomé followed a similar path, and for similar reasons. When Ana de Jesús left Paris, Ana de San Bartolomé replaced her as prioress of the Carmelite convent there. Ana de San Bartolomé was of a temperament different to that of her predecessor, more inclined to submit to the will and wishes of Pierre de Bérulle, and as a result lasted somewhat longer under his supervision. Ana felt a strong commitment to the mission in France, as she believed that Christ had appeared to her in a vision, showing France to her as a country full of “heretics” in need of salvation (Ana de San Bartolomé, Autobiography 46). But she too eventually came into conflict with Bérulle, also moved away from Paris (she was prioress of the French convent of Tours from 1608-1611), and also finally moved north to found the Carmelite convent of Antwerp in 1612. Like Ana de Jesús, Ana de San Bartolomé never returned home to Spain, and she died in Antwerp in 1626. Of her years as a Carmelite nun, thirty-six were spent in Spain, seven in France and fifteen in the Spanish Netherlands. And so, the two principal emissaries of Spanish Teresian Carmel in France had unintended final destinations, Ana de Jesús settling in Brussels and Ana de San Bartolomé in Antwerp. As a result, Teresian Carmel and its traditions were given the chance to spread and take root not only in France, but also beyond, and the new convents flourished and multiplied as their French counterparts had done. And Carmelite poetry, which had taken hold so strongly among the Carmelites of Beaune, also found eager practitioners in the convents of Brussels, Antwerp and other cities. While the work of establishing Teresian Carmel in the Netherlands was a shared effort, with Ana de Jesús and Ana de San Bartolomé each playing an important part, it was the younger Ana de San Bartolomé who most closely imitated Teresa of Avila, and who most vigorously carried on the tradition of Carmelite poetry in convent life.
Literal and Literary Imitation

In a poem she composed during her years in Paris and Tours, Ana de San Bartolomé plainly expressed the anxiety and suffering she felt during her time in limbo, having left Spain and not yet arrived in Antwerp:

Si ves mi pastor, If you see my lord,
Háblale, Llorente Speak to him, Llorente
dile mi dolor tell him my pain
mira si lo siente. see if he feels it.

[…]¿Cómo me has metido How have you put me
en tan fuerte breña in such a wasteland
y te has escondido and have hidden yourself
dejándome en ella, leaving me in it,
y en una estrecha senda and in such a narrow path
sin saber dónde voy?81 not knowing where I am going?

(Ana de San Bartolomé, Obras 757)

Ana de San Bartolomé’s uncertainty was soon to be resolved, however, when it was agreed that she would leave France and found a new convent in Antwerp, and the time following this foundation in 1612 until her death was among the happiest of her life, and certainly the most productive in literary terms. Having learned to read as a child, it was not until she became the secretary and companion to Teresa of Avila that Ana de San Bartolomé began to write. Accounts of her relationship with Teresa have it that one night in 1579 (Ana was by now

81 English translation mine.
twenty-nine years old), Teresa asked her to make a copy of a letter she had written. Loyal to her “mother” but inexperienced at writing or copying, she took the letter, and one character at a time, imitated Teresa’s handwriting until a legible copy was made. Teresa later attested to the energy that Ana dedicated to her literary tasks; in a letter from December 1581, she wrote: “Ana de San Bartolomé no cesa de escribir; harto me ayuda.” (“Ana de San Bartolomé never stops writing; she helps me tremendously”).82 From her initial imitation of Teresa’s script to her subsequent literary production, Ana de San Bartolomé was a faithful copyist to and of Teresa of Avila, in every sense: to Teresa’s spiritual autobiography, the Libro de la Vida, corresponds Ana’s Autobiografía; to the over 450 letters written by Teresa correspond more than 650 written by Ana de San Bartolomé; and to Teresa’s body of coplas-style poems (thirty-five have been definitively attributed to her) correspond fifteen poems by Ana de San Bartolomé, in all over 900 verses, the majority of them composed during her time in Antwerp.

Ana’s poems bear important similarities to those of Teresa and those of other Spanish Carmelites of her generation: like Teresa’s Ayes del Destierro (cited in chapter two), some of Ana’s poems are “complaints” to God recounting her suffering (as does the one cited above); others reflect happier experiences, such as the taking of the habit or the veil by new Carmelites:

Dos palomas vuelan hoy
con un vuelo soberano
hasta el nido del amor
adonde se han reposado.

[...]

No piensan lo que vendrá

Two doves fly today
with a superb flight
to the nest of love
where they have come to rest.

They do not think of what is to come

82 TOC 1365. English translation mine.
This poem composed for the veiling of new Carmelites in the convent of Antwerp and others like it from the same time period show that Ana de San Bartolomé was not only imitating Teresa of Avila but also setting an example for her new “daughters” in the convent she had recently founded. The poems that follow will show that in the hands of the Carmelites of the Spanish Netherlands, the Teresian poetic tradition evolved significantly.

Overview of the Manuscripts and Selected Poems

Just as Ana de San Bartolomé had learned and copied the Carmelite poetic tradition in Spain from Teresa herself, the new Carmelites of the Spanish Netherlands learned, copied, and even modified this same tradition as they saw it modeled by their Spanish prioress. The archives of the convents of Brussels and Antwerp house abundant evidence of this: multiple bound volumes and numerous loose manuscripts contain hundreds of poems in the style of those of Ana de San Bartolomé and Teresa of Avila, and also reflect the unique setting in which they were composed. In the predominantly Flemish-speaking but Spanish-controlled Southern Netherlands, with France for a southern neighbor, the new Carmelite convents were multilingual environments in which a mix of French, Spanish and Flemish would have been spoken. In the poems of these convents, these same languages and their respective cultures

83 English translation mine. Poems for the veilings of new Carmelites were common; Teresa of Avila composed a number of such poems (see El Velo and En una profesión, TOC 663). As this poem shows, this tradition survived in the Low Countries as well, and a set of unpublished poems from the archives of the convent of Malines, composed by Leonor de San Bernardo, another of the Spanish Carmelites who came to France and the Netherlands, also celebrates the profession of novice nuns.
are tied together and combined, as French poems are set to Flemish airs, Flemish poems set to French melodies, and in one case, a Flemish poem honoring the Moeder (mother, or prioress) of the convent is set to the tune O, que incendia... (“O, it sets afire…”), such that Flemish poem meets Spanish song.

Of these poems in which the Carmelites of the Spanish Netherlands provide a literary reflection of their multicultural communities, two are dedicated to a Sister Godelive-Angélique du Saint Esprit, a Carmelite from Gistel (in the region of Brugge) and the author of some of the poems in Spanish.⁸⁴ The two poems dedicated to Godelive form a sort of trilingual gesture of affection – the first stanza of the first poem is in French, and the first stanza of the second poem is composed in Spanish, and both gloss the Flemish name “Godelive”:

Que ce beau nom est mystique  
Qui vous dit aimée de Dieu  
Godelive Angélique  
Permettez qu’en ce cantique  
On réitère à qui mieux  
Que ce beau nom est mystique  
Qui vous dit aimée de Dieu  

(BRU 247, stanza 1)

Angelica esposa muy querida  
Del alto Dios el Divino Señor  
Dicha tan grande y nombre honrosa

Angelica most beloved spouse  
Of the great God the Divine Lord  
Happiness so great and honored name

⁸⁴ A Spanish composition by Godelive-Angélique, Hoy un Dios ha nacido (“Today a God has been born”) is found on f. 6 of the Recueil de poésies du Carmel de Bruxelles.
Ninguna alabanza se puede dar mayor
A quien guste de Dios tomo vos mi madre
Esposa del hijo del eterno padre.  

No higher praise can be given
To one who loves God I take you my mother
Bride of the son of the eternal father.

(BRU 248, stanza 1)

Recueil de poésies, Archives of Brussels Carmel, 247-8.

These and other poems (one 19th-century poem from the Brussels archive is quadrilingual, written in alternating verses of French, Spanish, Flemish and Latin) display the cultural and

85 Nombre honrosa would seem to be a deliberate (!) alteration of adjective agreement for the sake of rhyme.
linguistic mixing present in the Carmelite convents of the Spanish Netherlands, but at the same time the Teresian aspect of the pieces is never lost. The following poem, a copy of which still hangs in the foyer of the Brussels convent, was and is one of the better-known of Teresa’s compositions:

Nada te turbe,  Let nothing trouble you,
Nada te espante,  Let nothing scare you,
Todo se pasa,  All is fleeting,
Dios no se muda.  God alone is unchanging.
La Paciencia  Patience
Todo lo alcanza;  Everything obtains;
Quien a Dios tiene  Who possesses God
Nada le falta.  Nothing wants.
Sólo Dios basta.  God alone suffices.

(ICS 3: 386)

An unattributed poem in the Brussels collection entitled *Chanson d’une âme dégagée* (“Song of an unburdened soul”) seems to respond to Teresa’s message of tranquility, incorporating a number of refrains that answer the opening and closing verses of *Nada te turbe*:

Rien ne m’attire…  Nothing attracts me…
Rien ne me blesse…  Nothing hurts me…
Rien ne me choque…  Nothing shocks me…
Rien ne m’est digne…  Nothing seems worthy to me
Rien m’étonne…  Nothing surprises me…
Rien ne me force…  Nothing forces me…
Rien ne me gêne…  Nothing bothers me…
Apart from their Teresian tone and influence, these poems play an important role in the longer history of Carmelite poetry in France and the Low Countries, as they bridge a crucial gap between the Beaune archives of the early 17th century and those of Saint-Denis, which date from the mid- to late 18th century. Without the archives of Brussels and Antwerp, it would be more difficult to speak of real and unbroken continuity between the time of Teresa of Avila and the French Revolution; with them, that continuity is amply demonstrated. But the demonstration of Teresa of Avila’s poetic practices having been extended across national borders, multiple languages and more than two centuries is only one feature of the poems of Netherlandish Carmel that makes them worthy of attention.

86 These refrains come at the beginning and the end of each stanza, and are arranged in an “alphabetical” order, in that the verbs attire, blesse, choque, etc. follow an alphabetical sequence. This poem, like the Vol d’esprit discussed in chapter two, also appeared in the posthumous editions of Surin’s Cantiques spirituels, raising the question of the relation between the Brussels manuscript and these printed versions. In the version included with Surin’s Cantiques spirituels, two additional stanzas are included, one beginning and ending with “Rien ne me reste” and another beginning and ending with “Rien ne me verse” (See Surin 361-363). Further, in the manuscript version, there are lines indicating the end of the poem after the “Rien ne me trouble” verse, and then one additional verse that appears to begin and end with “Rien ne m’oppose” (BRU 274).
Poetry and Posterity

In 1682, a pastoral poem was composed in the convent of Mol (in the southern part of Brabant, approximately sixty kilometers east of Antwerp) that traces a critical period in the development of Netherlandish Carmel between the time of Ana de San Bartolomé in the early 1600s and the last quarter of the 17th century. At the outset of the poem, the shepherdess Amynthe, who may perhaps be viewed as a proxy for the future readers of this history, asks her companion Ménalque87 to tell her part of the story of the “faithful flock” of Carmelite women in the Netherlands:

Faites-moi le récit de ce Troupeau fidèle,
Qui quitta malheureux cette plaine si belle,
Où Odolphe88 autrefois a nourri ses Agneaux,
Et où l’on voit d’Oirschot les prés et les coupeaux…

Tell me the story of that faithful Flock,
Who unhappily left that beautiful plain,
Where Adolph in the past fed his Lambs,
And where one can see the meadows and peaks of Oirschot…

(EG 2)

87 Menalcus and Amyntas are male characters in Virgil’s eclogues; in the poem by the Carmelites of Mol, Amynthe has been converted to a female bergère (shepherdess).
88 A note in the manuscript identifies Saint Adolph as “the patron of the convent of Oirschot”.
Monastère des Carmélites de Mol, Archives of Antwerp Carmel, 1.

Eglogue du monastère des Carmélites de Mol, Archives of Antwerp Carmel, 1.
The episode in question is alluded to only allegorically in the poem as the time during which “…ce Troupeau fidèle/quitte malheureux cette plaine si belle”, but the history that lies behind this allegorical representation was indeed an important, if unhappy, one for the Carmelites, and one that they may well have wanted to document for posterity in their own words and interpretation. The crucial event in this history, and the one that sets all others in motion, was not the exodus of the Carmelites from the “beautiful plain” near Oirschot (just outside the city of Eindhoven, in the northern part of Brabant), but rather the fact that the “flock” ever went there in the first place.

In 1642, Sylvester Lintermans, a native of Oirschot and a Catholic, obtained permission from Prince Frederik Hendrik of Orange, the stadtholder (head of government) of the Calvinist Dutch Republic, to use land and a house that he owned for the establishment of a Carmelite convent in his home town. This project had been deemed by Catholics and Protestants alike to be difficult if not impossible to realize, since it called for the establishment of a Catholic convent in territory that was under the control of the Protestant Dutch Republic. But Lintermans felt called to see the project completed despite the odds against him, and to this end he enlisted the help of the Carmelites of Antwerp, who in turn asked the help of the Carmelites of Cologne, who took the idea to Marie de Medicis (Queen of France and wife of Louis XIII, then residing in Cologne), who in turn persuaded Frederik Hendrik of Orange to grant special permissions for a group of Carmelites from Antwerp to travel to Oirschot and establish a new convent there (Loyac 86-93; Hoffelize 224). This was, of course, a quite different venture than that of establishing a convent in Catholic territory, so to speak – in the

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89 Lintermans wished for his daughter to be received into the new convent as a Carmelite nun.
90 The territory that includes Oirschot, known as the Meierij and centered on the town of ’s-Hertogenbosch, was disputed but effectively under Dutch control in 1644. With the Peace of Westphalia the Meierij, along with the rest of what was designated as the Generality Lands, was given officially to the Dutch Republic; while Oirschot was thus not yet officially Calvinist in 1644 when the Carmelites moved there, it became so a few years later in 1648.
Spanish Netherlands, Carmelites could count on the full support of both the state and the Church, and they had already founded a number of convents. In the territory controlled by the Calvinist Dutch Republic, Catholicism had been essentially outlawed, but also “tolerated” to varying degrees, for more than half a century, which created a precarious, even potentially dangerous situation for the Catholic Carmelites. And so it was in these circumstances that in 1644 a small group of Carmelites from Antwerp and Cologne ventured into Dutch-controlled northern Brabant and established a convent in the town of Oirschot. This group was led by the Carmelite Margriet van d’Engelen (1605-1658), referred to in the pastoral poem as “la très sage Bergère” – “the very wise Shepherdess”:

La très sage Bergère Marie Marguerite
Trouvant dedans Oirschot une place d’élite,
Et où que son troupeau pouvait être nourri,
Y fit faire l’enclos pour serrer les brebis.

The very wise Shepherdess Marie Marguerite
Finding in Oirschot a privileged location,
And where her flock could be nourished,
Made there a pen to close in her sheep.

(EG 2)

Before leading her flock to Oirschot, Margriet van d’Engelen had begun her life as a Carmelite at the convent of Antwerp in 1624, and was the last of that convent to receive the habit from Ana de San Bartolomé herself. When Margriet entered Carmel, the close bond that

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91 “…from 1581 penal laws excluded Catholics from full citizens’ rights and hampered their organisation as a religious community […] [Like the Remonstrants] Both were formally denied all forms of religious organization and church services in all but the most private settings because of the potentially political character of their organizations.” Joke Spaans, “Religious policies in the seventeenth-century Dutch republic”, in Hsia, R P, and Henk F. K. Nierop, Calvinism and Religious Toleration in the Dutch Golden Age, Cambridge, U.K: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
Ana had shared years before with Teresa of Avila appears to have been reborn between the Spanish prioress and her Flemish novice. As Ménalque explains in the pastoral poem:

Elle était la dernière, mais la plus chère Fille  
Et l’Agneau le plus doux de toute la famille  
Que la grande bergère de Saint Bartholomé,  
Avait dans son troupeau reçu et élevé.

She was the last, but most cherished Daughter  
And the sweetest lamb of the whole family  
That the great shepherdess of Saint Bartholomew  
Had welcomed and raised in her flock.

(EG 3)

The poem continues, recounting Margriet’s early years in Antwerp, and how when the time was right, God “La tira de la ville, pour la placer aux champs”92, referring to Margriet’s founding of the convent of Oirschot. As the poem tells it, the existence of the Carmelites of Oirschot was essentially a peaceful one, at least for a time. But Margriet also understood that their position was a potentially precarious one, even with the official protection of the stadtholder. As Willem Frijhoff explains,

The Union of Utrecht, unifying the provinces who wished to separate from the Spanish Netherlands, stipulated that the United Provinces should fully recognize individual freedom of conscience but left each individual province free to do as it wished within its frontiers concerning religious affairs (Frijhoff, “Religious toleration” 38),

92 “took her from the city and placed her in the field”, f. 6.
and Christine Kooi stresses the mutable character of any tolerance granted to non-Calvinist groups:

Sometimes…Dutch Protestants and Catholics simply lived with each other in unremarkable daily life, while at other times confessional conflict seemed to permeate the entire culture of the [Dutch] Republic. Whatever degree of sufferance Catholics experienced in this society was subject to constant renegotiation and readjustment: it could not be counted upon (Kooi 88-89).

Indeed, despite the initial permissions and protections that had been extended, the situation in Oirschot was sufficiently precarious as to necessitate a re-issuing of these protections, a request which was granted by Frederik Hendrik on February 6, 1646, with the help of Henrietta Maria of France (daughter of Henri IV and wife of Charles I, King of England), who lobbied Frederik on behalf of the Carmelites (Loyac 117-118). It is also indicative of those “troubled times” that after another period of two years, following the death of Frederik Hendrik, the protection was once again in need of renewal. The renewal was granted by Frederik’s son Willem II, with very specific instructions as to how the nuns were to be respected:

…[Willem] donna [une protection] du vingt-quatrième avril 1648, par laquelle il déclare ouvertement et en termes exprès, qu’il prend en sa protection, et celle des États, les religieuses du Mont-Carmel, leur Chapelain et famille demeurant à Oirschot en la Mairie de Bolduc; comme aussi leur maison, jardins, vergers, fruits, grains, et tous autres meubles et immeubles, et fait défense à toute la cavalerie et infanterie, sous grièves peines, et punition corporelle de les molester, voulant par exprès, que les religieuses carmélites, et tout ce qui leur appartient, soient libres et
exemptes de toute violence, pillage, rançon, logement et feu, afin qu’elles exercent sans interruption aucune les fonctions et exercices de leurs Règles.\footnote{\textquotedblleft[Willem\textquotedblright \ issued \ [a protection] \ on \ the \ twenty-fourth \ of \ April \ 1648, \ by \ which \ he \ declares \ openly \ and \ in express terms, \ that \ he \ takes \ under \ his \ protection, \ and \ that \ of \ the \ States \ [the States General of the Dutch Republic], \ the religious of Mount Carmel, \ their Chaplain \ and \ family \ residing \ in Oirschot \ in the bailiwick \ of \ ‘s-Hertogenbosch; \ as \ well \ as \ their \ house, \ gardens, \ orchard, \ fruits, \ grains, \ and \ all \ other \ movable \ and \ immovable property, \ and \ prohibits \ all \ cavalry \ and \ infantry, \ under \ grave \ sanction, \ and \ corporal \ punishment \ from \ disturbing \ them, \ wishing \ expressly, \ that \ the Carmelites, \ and \ all \ that \ belongs \ to \ them, \ be \ free \ and \ exempt \ of \ all violence, pillage, ransom, occupation and fire, in order that they exercise without any interruption whatsoever the functions and exercise of their Rules.	extquotedblright} (Loyae 119)

And so in the first four years of the convent’s existence, official permissions for its presence in the Dutch Republic were granted or re-iterated three times, apparently out of concern that the Carmelites of Oirschot might become the victims of persecution. What exact persecutions\footnote{Most accounts of persecution of Catholics in the Dutch Republic center around disruptions of worship services and sometimes extortion in the form of “recognition money” paid to local authorities to look the other way when Catholic masses were being celebrated in their districts. Both Henk van Nierop and Catherine Kooi document such conflicts in Hsia and van Nierop, \textit{Calvinism and Religious Toleration}; see van Nierop “Sewing the baliff in a banket: Catholics and the law in Holland” and Kooi “Paying off the sheriff”.} or threats thereof existed for the Carmelites of Oirschot is not known, but the poem – in its usual metaphorical fashion – suggests that there was in fact some consistently troublesome presence that interfered to some degree with their lives, but that in spite of this they managed to flourish:

On y vécuit en paix: le Thym et la Fougère
Étaient de ses Agneaux le repas ordinaire:
Et quoique l’Aubépine s’y mêla bien souvent,
Les Roses en sortirent plus agréablement.

They lived there in peace: the Thyme and the Ferns
Were for her Lambs the ordinary meal:
And although the Hawthorn crept in quite often,
The Roses came out all the more beautifully.

(EG 3)
It seems that for a time, the (Catholic) Roses and the (presumably Calvinist) Hawthorn managed to coexist, in spite of the difficulties hinted at by the poem. Indeed, real trouble for the Carmelites of Oirschot would not come for over a decade, after the death of Margriet van d’Engelen, but when it did come, it recalled the preoccupations that Margriet had experienced during her first years in the Dutch Republic, and the conditions that had given rise to those concerns.

**Catholic Miracles**

After she had capably led the convent of Oirschot for fourteen years, Margriet van d’Engelen’s passing in 1658 would have been a difficult event for her fellow Carmelites in any circumstances, peaceful or otherwise. But apart from the sadness and mourning to be expected in such a situation, it was in fact Margriet’s death – or more precisely, the events that followed her passing – that changed the fate of the Carmelites of Oirschot, such that Margriet’s posthumous influence on her community was at least as great as the one she had had during her lifetime. As the pastoral poem from Mol describes it:

La Bergère mourut pleine de sainteté
Et laissa par sa mort son troupeau désolé.
Pan le vrai protecteur des bergers et bergères,
Ouït leurs tristes cris et leurs plaintes amères,
Il transforma son âme en un Ange parfait,
Dont elle avait porté et le nom, et l’effet.
Il conserva son corps souple et incorruptible,
Et en fit rejaillir une liqueur sensible,
Qui avait la vertu de guérir tous les maux,
Des bergères et bergers, des Brebis et Agneaux.

The Shepherdess died full of saintliness
And left her flock desolate by her death.
Pan the true protector of shepherds and shepherdesses,
Heard their sad cries and their bitter laments,
He transformed her Soul into a perfect Angel,
Of which she had borne the name and the effect.
He kept her body supple and incorruptible,
And made a perceptible liquid flow from it,
Which had the virtue of healing all ills,
Of shepherds and shepherdesses, of Sheep and Lambs.
(EG 3-4)

According to the poem, even after her death, Margriet’s body was “supple and incorruptible”, and according to her seventeenth-century biographer, Margriet having died on the third of February, “Le premier jour de mars, ce corps beau et coloré devint aussi flexible qu’auparavant”(Loyac 189). As such, in the view of the Carmelites and other Catholics, Margriet joined the group of “incorruptibles”, men and women religious whose bodies did not decompose normally after death. But in Margriet’s case, the unusual phenomena had already begun before her passing. According to de P.F.X. de Ram’s Notice sur la vénérable Marie-Marguerite des Anges:

95 “The first day of March, this handsome body, healthy of color, became as flexible as it had been before”
96 Teresa of Avila was said to have died “in odor of sanctity”, the body of John of the Cross was believed to have remained uncorrupted for some time after his death, and Marguerite du Saint-Sacrement of Beaune, like Teresa, was said to have died accompanied by pleasant odors. The 19th-century doctor Antoine Imbert-Gourbeyre “documented” a number of these cases in two works, Les stigmatisées (1873) and La stigmatisation (1894), both of which attracted significant attention, positive and skeptical. See preface of Joachim Bouflet in Imbert-Gourbeyre, La stigmatisation: 1894, Grenoble: Millon, 1996.
Un jour, sept mois environ avant sa mort, on remarqua que de nouvelles plaies s’étaient produites sur les jambes et que sur ses pieds, comme sur ceux de sainte Thérèse, se trouvaient la marque, la figure et la cicatrice de clous semblables à ceux par lesquels Jésus-Christ avait été attaché à la croix…Marie-Marguerite des Anges fut contrainte alors de déclarer qu’il y avait plus de trois ans que le Ciel lui avait envoyé cette faveur et qu’elle portait ces stigmates.97 (de Ram 13-14)

The most striking of these extraordinary phenomena was the final one, however – the "liqueur sensible" referred to in the poem and also mentioned by de Ram:

Le dix-sept avril, le corps s’ouvrit de soi-même en deux endroits différents. De l’une de ces ouvertures sortit du sang et de l’autre un liquide huileux. Le quinze juin, on aperçut que pareil liquide coulait de la bouche et des oreilles. Depuis ce jour jusqu’au vingt-quatre juillet, on aperçut que pareil liquide coulait de la bouche et des oreilles. Depuis ce jour jusqu’au vingt-quatre juillet, on aperçut que pareil liquide coulait de la bouche et des oreilles. Depuis ce jour jusqu’au vingt-quatre juillet, on aperçut que pareil liquide coulait de la bouche et des oreilles. Depuis ce jour jusqu’au vingt-quatre juillet, on aperçut que pareil liquide coulait de la bouche et des oreilles.98 (de Ram 18-19)

The oil emanating from Margriet’s body, already remarkable enough for anyone inclined to interpret such phenomena as divine in origin, was, it seems, foretold, already a part of the lore surrounding Margriet van d’Engelen before her death: in conference one day with a priest who was visiting Oirschot, Margriet is said to have asked the priest if he had ever experienced the desire that, after his death, his remains could somehow serve to light the

97 “One day, roughly seven months before her death, it was noticed that new wounds had appeared on her legs and that on her feet, as on those of Saint Teresa [of Avila], there was the mark, the figure and the scar of nails similar to those with which Jesus Christ had been attached to the cross…Margriet van d’Engelen was then obliged to declare that it had been over three years since Heaven had sent this grace and that she bore these stigmates”

98 “The seventeenth of April, the body opened itself in two different places. From one of these openings issued blood and from the other an oily liquid. The fifteenth of June, it was noticed that such a liquid was flowing out of the mouth and the ears. From that day until the twenty-fourth of July, which was the day of the burial, there flowed from the entire body a prodigious quantity of oil which was gathered by soaking it up with cloths and with which a great number of vials were filled”
lamp in the sanctuary, as a final homage to Christ. The priest answered that such a thought had never occurred to him, and Margriet replied:

Oui, dit-elle, je l’éprouve très souvent. Brûler d’amour pour Jésus-Christ est un si doux martyr en cette vie, que je souhaite d’être après ma mort consumée pour sa gloire. Est-il pour mon corps un sort meilleur que celui que je désire à mon âme pour l’éternité? (Hoffelize 300)⁹⁹

After Margriet died, it seemed that what she had wished for may have indeed come true. Citing a report from the diocese of ‘s-Hertogenbosch, Antoine Imbert-Gourbeyre wrote in La Stigmatisation: “A peine Marguerite des Anges fut-elle morte, qu’il s’opéra une foule de miracles et surtout celui-ci : de son corps découla une liqueur huileuse et de suave odeur : appliquée à plusieurs malades, elle leur rendit la santé” (Imbert-Gourbeyre 303).¹⁰⁰ The “oil” emanating from Margriet’s body was used to attempt to cure the sick, and was also added to the lamps burning in the convent of Oirschot, in keeping with Margriet’s wish that both her body and her soul would “burn for God”. A Flemish poem set to the Spanish tune O, que incendia from the archives of Antwerp celebrates this seemingly supernatural occurrence and also demonstrates that for decades after Margriet’s death, her “miracle” was still part of Carmelite discourse. The poem was composed for the fiftieth anniversary of Margriet’s death (circa 1708):

Wysse: O, que incendia
Tune: O, it sets afire

Wat hoor ik voor geklanck
What sound do I hear?

Mij dunkt ‘t is Engels Zanck
I think it is angels singing

⁹⁹ “I have experienced such a feeling often. To burn with love of Christ is such a sweet martyrdom in this life that I wish, after my death, to be consumed for His glory. Could there be a better fate for my body than the one I wish for my soul for eternity?”
¹⁰⁰ “Soon after the death of Marie-Margriet van d’Engelen, there occurred a series of miracles and above all this one: from her body flowed an oily liqueur with a sweet odor: given to several ailing people, it restored them to health.”
Die God hier geven dank
Who give their thanks to God

Dat gegeven, is het leven en in’t geniet
Given, is the life and in joy

Is ons Moeder Mari Margriet
Is our mother Marie Margriet

Den hemel is verblijdt
Heaven rejoices

Zinght godts bermhertigheijt
Sings the mercifulness of God

Die van der eeuwigheijt
Who throughout eternity

Daartoe haer heft bemint berijt
To this end has loved her, prepared her

Door zijn liefden bermhertighijt
By his love and mercifulness.

Tis bevrijdt nu vijftigh jaer
It has been free for fifty years

U bruigoms stem zoo claer
The voice of your groom so clear

U riep in’t openbaer
You called openly

Komt beminde,
Come, my love,

laet u vinden en komt
let yourself be found and come

Met vlijt
With enthusiasm

Komt de bruiyloft die
The wedding that has been prepared

is berijt
is coming

Geluck g’hadt in u handt
You had happiness in your hand

Een lamp die eeuwighe brandt
A lamp that burns forever

Door liefdens ondestant
By love supported

Eeuwig eeuwig door liefde gij brant
Eternally, eternally, with love you burn

Eeuwig eeuwig door liefde gij brant…
Eternally, eternally, with love you burn…

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101 O que incendia… Poem included in documents on the life of Margriet van d’Engelen, archives of the convent of Antwerp, Belgium.
Had all of this taken place in a country with Catholic sympathies and an accompanying acceptance of things supposedly supernatural, Margriet’s case may well have retained a place among the “incorruptibles” and other religious figures believed to have been graced with miracles, and otherwise provoked no particular conflict or debate. But it must be recalled once again that this was an area controlled by the Dutch Republic, not the Spanish Netherlands, and that these “miracles” took place in predominantly Calvinist territory.

Wars of Interpretation

In the Calvinist Dutch Republic of the 17th century, which after the peace of Westphalia in 1648 included the town of Oirschot, the question of supernatural phenomena was highly problematic. As Moshe Sluhovsky explains:
According to common knowledge, Protestant theology dismissed the reliability of post-Biblical miracles and argued the cessation of miracles by the time of the apostles. Comparing Catholic priests to Egyptian magicians, Calvin himself attributed all contemporary miracles to ‘sheer delusions of Satan’. And although Sluhovsky goes on to explain that in practice the rejection of miracles by Calvinists was not quite as wholesale as might be believed, it is clear that Dutch Calvinists were generally little inclined to acknowledge Catholic miracles, or anything else that might have been deemed supernatural. Indeed, as Willem Frijhoff explains, “the denunciation of ‘papist’ superstitions remained a favourite pastime of zealous [non-Catholic] ministers”, and in the course of the century a number of publications appeared with exactly that same purpose – calling out and invalidating “papist” superstitions and beliefs. From Walich Sywaert’s 1604 *Roomsche Mysterien (The Romish Mysteries)* to Jacobus Hondius’ “colorfully” titled *Swart register van duysent sonden (Black register of a thousand sins, 1679)*, a constant battle of theological interpretation was waged throughout the Dutch Republic’s Golden Age (Frijhoff, “Signs and Wonders” 137).

In a climate so resistant to belief in the supernatural, the Catholic authorities dealing with the case of Margriet van d’Engelen wasted little time in having their own interpretation of events validated – by experts from their own camp, of course. As de Ram explains:

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As in the case of the convent of Oirschot, geography is important in understanding this declaration of the faculty of medicine of Louvain. Louvain, or Leuven in Flemish, lies roughly thirty kilometers east of Brussels, and well south of Antwerp, and as such securely within the Spanish-controlled southern part of Brabant. With a medical opinion solicited from a sympathetic quarter, Church authorities were able to corroborate what they were no doubt already convinced of. Further declarations followed, including the following one three years later by Louis de Sainte-Thérèse, a supervisor of the Carmelite missions in the Low Countries:

Nous Frère Louis de Sainte-Thérèse...certifions à tous ceux qu’il appartiendra, qu’au mois d’août de l’année passée [1660]...nous fimes lever de terre le corps de ladite Vénérable Mère qui est entier et incorrompu...Déclarons de plus avoir vu l’attestation de la Faculté de Médecine en l’Université de Louvain, signée par Michel de Ophem, P. Dorlinx et F. Plembius Docteurs et Professeurs en Médecine, en date du 11 juin 1658 qui témoignent les choses arrivées sur ce corps audit temps, tant pour son incorruption que pour la privation de la puanteur qui sort ordinairement des corps morts, excèdent les facultés de la Nature, et ne devaient être attribuées qu’à une puissance supérieure.¹⁰⁴ (Loyac 194-195)

¹⁰³ “…the faculty of medicine of Louvain, by a judgment of 11 June 1658 [four months after Margriet’s death], declared that the incorruption of the body of the Carmelite could only be attributed to a supernatural intervention”
¹⁰⁴ “I, brother Louis de Sainte-Thérèse...certify to all concerned, that in the month of August last year [1660]...we had the body of the Venerable Mother raised from the ground and found it intact and uncorrupted...I also declare that I have seen the attestation of the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Louvain, signed by Michel de Ophem, P. Dorlinx and F. Plembius, Doctors and Professors of medicine, on the date of 11 June 1658, who give witness that the things that happened to this body at the cited time, as much for its incorruption as for the absence of any bad odor, which normally emanates from dead bodies, exceed the faculties of nature, and should only have been attributed to a higher power”
Formally and for the record, Catholics had declared Margriet’s incorruption to be the work of God, and specifically an intervention that “exceeded the faculties of nature”. The importance of such statements, and the act of officially classifying such an event as supernatural was, more than a matter of routine, a significant move in the contest between Catholics and Calvinists in the Dutch Republic. As Christine Kooi explains, “Perhaps the most singular armour against intolerance that Dutch Catholics felt they could rely upon was the supernatural” (Kooi 98). Citing one rather spectacular story from the Dutch town of Edam, Kooi recounts how a group of Dutch soldiers had dressed up as Catholic clerics and mockingly paraded about the streets of the town, shouting *Dominus vobiscum* and even staging a mock burial of one of their number. On the third day of their revelry, however:

A bolt of lightning struck the church, releasing an evil spirit in the form of a fire-breathing serpent that roared *Dominus vobiscum*. The fire from the beast’s mouth burned down the church tower and sixty homes in the vicinity, except for one, which had been the pastor’s house in Catholic times and in which several Catholics still lived. The moral of the story was clear: God would not suffer the ridiculing of the true Church by drunken, malicious heretics. (Kooi 100)

Kooi explains the significance of such a story for embattled Dutch Catholics:

The vividness of such a tale, complete with fire and serpent, emphasized both the hostility Catholics faced in this Protestant society and their faith in ultimate vindication. God was on the side of the persecuted... (Kooi 100)

Indeed, the assertion of meaning and the rendering of a vindicating interpretation of events was of paramount importance in the struggle between Catholics and Calvinists in the Dutch Republic – in the time of Margriet van d’Engelen, the territorial war between Dutch
Calvinists and Catholic Spain was well on its way to being won, in favor of the Calvinists\textsuperscript{105}, and as the Republic was declared an officially Calvinist state, there was little left to be won for Catholics in terms of territorial, national or legislative recognition. But this likely made the battle for religious truth all the more important since, as Kooi puts it, Catholics sought an “ultimate vindication” of their position and beliefs.

Assertions of supernatural veracity on the part of Catholics did not always go unchallenged, however. Not only unwilling to believe that God would intervene on behalf of Catholics, Calvinists were also unwilling to allow Catholics to go too far in their claims of such intervention. As an example of a Catholic-Calvinist conflict of interpretation, Willem Frijhoff cites one case of a “sign” given to Catholics in the village of Bloemendaal (approximately twenty kilometers west of Amsterdam), which was interpreted first as an indication that the tide in the war between the Dutch and the Spanish might be turning in favor of Catholics:

On that day [New Year’s Eve 1627 or New Year’s Day 1628], an old dead apple tree was sold and cut down in the village of Bloemendaal, a place where the Catholics were still very numerous. By cutting the wood in two, the new owner claimed to have seen strange figures, which soon were interpreted as images of bishops, priests, nuns, and musical instruments foreshadowing the public restoration of the Catholics’ faith. News of the wonder spread quickly, not only by public rumour, but also through historized images.

In his letter of February 11, 1628 to the abbot of Saint-Cyran barely a month after the discovery of the sign, the bishop of Ypres, Cornelius Jansenius, wrote about the emotion evoked in his native country by the wonder:

\textsuperscript{105} The Peace of Westphalia in 1648 marked the end of the Eighty Years’ War against Spain and the formal recognition of the Dutch Republic.
All of Holland, all the way to the States themselves, is astonished by a tree that was found cut since last year, whose insides are all shaped like diverse sacred images, particularly of Our Lady, of a mitred bishop in his seat, a priest dressed for mass, monks, nuns, and musical instruments that are used in Catholic churches. It is something very real and printed by the Dutch themselves, and written by priests whom I know and various others that saw it since it is being shown for money with an incredible concourse of people…Everybody takes this as a wonder and prediction of the future…[italics mine] (Frijhoff, “Signs and Wonders” 141)

The attention garnered by the miraculous woodcuts, the “incredible concourse of people” referred to by Jansenius, not only demonstrated a curiosity on the part of the public for such spectacle, but also threatened to become overly significant – Catholics were already persuaded that the figures were a sign that their religion was soon to be officially restored, and this, above all things, was what the Dutch state feared most from Catholics. Under suspicion of possible treason since the revolt of the United Provinces against Spain, Catholics were consistently regarded as allies and potential agents of the enemy (Frijhoff, “Religious Toleration” 33-34). The possibility that some seemingly supernatural event might lend credence to Catholic beliefs and strengthen their position with the public or allow them to aid the enemy was considered a dangerous one, and required a decisive response. In the case of the apple tree of Bloemendaal, Frijhoff explains:

…the Protestant adversary took the matter seriously. The consistory became involved. The painter Pieter Jansz Saenredam also made a survey of the figures. A militant Protestant, he published his own visual interpretation accompanied by a text

106 Henk van Nierop has shown how such suspicions of treason were not always unfounded; in “Catholics and the law in Holland”, he documents late-16th-century counter-revolutionary plots by Catholics in Haarlem, Delft, Gouda and Dordrecht. See Hsia and van Nierop, Calvinism and Religious Toleration, 106.
denying the resemblance between the shapes and the Catholic figures. In his opinion…the drawings of the figures published by the Catholics excessively emphasized the resemblance to Catholic symbols…an impartial observer ‘even wearing glasses of crystal’ could only see shapeless spots and figures as one usually sees at the heart of dead apple trees and cherry trees. (Frijhoff, “Signs and Wonders” 142–143)

The spectacle of the woodcuts and its power to captivate, as Jansenius put it, “all of Holland”, tested the tolerance of Protestants. Too threatening to be grudgingly overlooked, the Catholic version and visual representation of the phenomenon had to be countered by a Protestant rendition of the same event. Any such event with the potential to fortify faithful Catholics, attract curious Protestants and possibly influence those whose religious affiliations were weak or undecided had to be dealt with. This was especially true in a case like that of Bloemendaal, where Catholics had not only laid claim to the supernatural character of the happening but had also gone so far as to document it in such a way as to confirm the interpretation of their side, as the first set of “Catholic” drawings of the figurines demonstrates (See Frijhoff, “Signs and Wonders” 142, figure 6-1). The Protestant painter Saenredam responded not only by refuting the Catholics’ conclusions, but by producing his own drawings that showed what the figurines “really looked like”. Such dueling interpretations and renditions of events would also have their place in the case of the Carmelite Margriet van d’Engelen.

The Protestant Autopsy

Like the apple tree of Bloemendaal, the body of Margriet van d’Engelen became an attraction, both for Catholics inclined to view it as a sign of God’s power vindicating their beliefs, and also for Protestants whose position would be threatened by such a divine manifestation. In the
years immediately following Margriet’s death, more declarations of the miraculous nature of
the state of the body (which had been disinterred and could therefore be inspected more easily)
were made, with the same sorts of partisan endorsements as had been given by the medical
faculty of Leuven:

Des actes notariés du 13 janvier 1661 et du 10 juin de la même année, ainsi qu’une
déclaration faite à Bruxelles, le 12 juin 1662, par le docteur Antoine Dausque,
médecin et conseiller de la reine Christine de Suède, confirment en tous points
l’attestation du Père Louis de sainte Thérèse [that the state of Margriet’s body was
the result of supernatural intervention].\(^{107}\) (de Ram 22)

The declaration of the personal physician of Catherine of Sweden (who had recently abdicated
the throne in her predominantly Lutheran homeland and converted to Catholicism) that the
state of Margriet van d’Engelen’s body was the work of God can only have complicated a
situation in which events declared by Catholics to be supernatural ones were attracting too
much attention for the comfort of Protestant authorities. According to de Ram, “Le
protestantisme s’alarma de la pieuse ferveur avec laquelle les catholiques continuèrent à se
réunir autour de la tombe de la vénérable Carmélite d’Oirschot”\(^{108}\) (de Ram 22), and
according to another account, the miraculous news had traveled as far as Paris, where Louis
XIV is said to have requested that some of the mysterious oil that had emanated from
Margriet’s body be sent to France, where his newborn daughter Anne-Élisabeth was suffering

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\(^{107}\) “Notarized acts of 13 January 1661 and 10 June of the same year, as well as a declaration made in Brussels,
the twelfth of June 1662, by doctor Antoine Dausque, physician and counselor to Queen Christina of Sweden,
confirm on all points the attestation of father Louis de Saint-Thérèse [that the state of Margriet’s body was the
result of supernatural intervention]”.

\(^{108}\) “Protestantism became alarmed by the pious fever with which Catholics continued to gather around the tomb
of the venerable Carmelite of Oirschot”
an ailment that might respond to the oil’s curative powers (Hoffelize 377). According to Antoine Imbert-Gourbeyre in *La Stigmatisation*:

[Louis XIV] s’adressa aux États-Généraux de la Hollande pour avoir un peu de cette huile merveilleuse. Cette demande irrita les députés protestants qui voulurent mettre fin à ces *superstitions romaines*. (Imbert-Gourbeyre 303)

Again in allegorical fashion, the pastoral poem of the Carmelite convent of Mol recounts what happened next:

Un lustre se passa dans une paix profonde,
Quand les loups enragés, dont le Pays abonde,
Se joignirent en troupe, et cent cinquante deux
Attaquèrent furieux ce troupeau malheureux.

Five years passed in a profound peace,
When the enraged wolves, which abound in this country
Banded together, and one hundred fifty two
Furiously attacked this unfortunate flock.

(EG 4)

The account given by de Ram of the attack on the convent of Mol only differs in the number of soldiers involved:

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109 Anne-Élisabeth de France was born on November 18, 1662 and died on December 30 of the same year.
110 “[Louis XIV] addressed himself to the States General of Holland in order to obtain some of the miraculous oil. This request irritated the Protestant deputies who wished to put an end to these *Roman superstitions.*”
Par suite d’un ordre émané des États Généraux, un délégué du magistrat de Boisleduc, accompagné de cent soixante soldats bien armés, envahit à l’improviste le couvent d’Oirschot, dans la nuit du 10 juillet 1663.111 (de Ram 22)

As in the case of Bloemendaal, the Calvinists were getting involved, and in aggressive fashion. And also as in Bloemendaal, they did not limit themselves to a disruption of the parade of faithful and curious who came to witness the goings-on. Like Saenredam’s re-drawing of the supposedly miraculous woodcuts that showed them to be (from a Calvinist angle) what they really were, there needed to be an equivalent re-assessment of the phenomena surrounding Margriet’s body. And so, as the poem recounts, to that equalizing end:

Lýcaon conducteur de cette bande fière,
Enleva le saint corps de la sainte Bergère
Le transportant ailleurs pour être déchiré
Cinq Ans, Cinq Mois, Cinq Jours après de son décès.

Lycaon the leader of this proud band,
Made off with the saintly body of the holy Shepherdess
Transporting it elsewhere to be torn apart
Five Years, Five Months, Five Days after her passing.

(EG 4)

The “tearing apart” of Margriet’s body was, in fact, a Protestant autopsy:

On y enleva de force le corps devenu l’objet de la vénération publique, et on le transporta à Boisleduc, où il fut enfermé dans une pièce secrète de la maison de ville.

111 “Following an order that came from the States General, a delegate of the magistrate of Boisledue ['s-Hertogenbosch, to the north of Oirschot], accompanied by one hundred sixty well-armed men, unexpectedly invaded the convent of Oirschot, during the night of 10 July 1663”
The invasion of the convent of Oirschot and the subsequent Protestant autopsy (with its conclusion that the state of Marguerite’s body was nothing but a physiological oddity) would have seemed to give the last word to the Protestants, and to have settled the score, so to speak. But even these events were read by the Catholic Carmelites as divine signals: as Amynthe points out to her companion in the eclogue from Mol, the fact that the abduction of Margriet’s body had taken place five years, five months and five days after her passing (a calculation

112 “They took by force the body that had become the object of public veneration, and transported it to Boisleduc, where it was locked away in a secret room of the town hall. This act of such violent intolerance desolated the Catholics. But the would-be Reformed, who adopted as dogma the negation of miracles and the cult of saints, believed it was to their advantage to give the lie to their adversaries and put an end to the pious demonstrations that they referred to as Roman superstitions. Above all they wanted to prove that the long preservation of the body of the Carmelite was due only to tricks and the use of certain balsamic substances. To that end, they gathered at the town hall a commission composed of delegates of the magistrate and of several doctors and surgeons, almost all Protestants. In their presence, a Protestant anatomist who in that time enjoyed a certain fame, Louis Bilsius, Lord of Coppensdamme, proceeded to carry out a new autopsy. Following this examination, he signed, 20 July 1663, a declaration stating that the preservation of the body was artificial and that the oil, which had emanated from it, was nothing but a soft and fatty substance originating in the bone cavities”
which is exact if the dates in the cited sources are correct) was a sign from God in the guise of a tragedy:

Reconnaissez Menalque dans ces tristes nouvelles

Du Grand Pan\textsuperscript{113} le vrai nombre des cinq plaies mortelles

Et par ce même nombre, par trois fois redoublé

Reconnaissiez aussi la Sainte Trinité.

Recognize, Menalque, in this sad news
Of the Great Pan the true number of the five mortal wounds
And by this same number, repeated three times
Recognize also the Holy Trinity.
(EG 4)

Thus for the Catholic Carmelites of Mol, even the most violent episode of the story could be interpreted as a sign in their favor, as the time of five years, five months and five days for them was a reference to the Holy Trinity, the mortal wounds of Christ, and God’s hand in the matter. As Ronald Surtz writes, “…supernatural phenomena often incorporate into their verbal message a defense of the authenticity of the experience that generated them.” (Surtz 18)
This is clearly the case in the poem from Mol, as the “miracles” surrounding Margriet van d’Engelen extended even to the most painful episodes of the story.

On the other side, meanwhile, with their own autopsy of the body of Margriet van d’Engelen concluded, the Calvinists, satisfied with the conclusion of their own investigation into the matter, and no doubt satisfied to have “debunked” a high-profile Catholic miracle, allowed the body to be buried the night of August 4th, 1663, at the church of Saint John in ‘s-

\textsuperscript{113} In a note in the margin of the first page of the poem, “Pan” is identified as God.
Hertogenbosch. The Carmelites of Oirschot would surely have wanted to have a say in choosing the time and place of Margriet’s burial, but they were not allowed a voice in the matter, as Protestants dictated the final chapter of the story. Where they did have a voice, of course, was in their poetry: like the other actions taken by the Protestants, the burial at Saint John’s church was subject to criticism in the context of the pastoral poem from Mol. The church had formerly been Catholic, but was now controlled by Calvinists, who had removed many of the Catholic ornaments and icons from it, “calvinizing” the space, in a sense, to make it conform to a new religious ethos. The poem describes Margriet’s final resting place in pejorative language that decries the state of the church and the “doctrine” that is taught within it:

Mais, hélas, à présent, place toute dépouillée
De ce dont elle était autrefois si ornée
Et où l’on voit plus rien ni de saint ni de beau
Et où que l’on enseigne la doctrine d’un Veau.

But, alas, today, a place completely bare
Of all that with which it was once adorned
And where one no longer sees anything holy, nothing beautiful
And where is taught the doctrine of a Calf.

(EG 6)

These last remarks on the situation by the Carmelites of Mol are, in fact, remarkably relevant to and representative of the larger conflict in which they were engaged, focusing as they do on the place in which Margriet was finally laid to rest. For in the end, the struggles in which they
engaged were about *spaces* – territorial, conventual and corporeal – and it was in another “space”, that of Carmelite poetry, that they were best able to assert their views.

**Spiritual Space**

Not long after the struggle for control of Margriet van d’Engelen’s body had been lost by the Carmelites of Oirschot, their effort to maintain a Catholic home in the Protestant Dutch Republic was also abandoned. In August of 1663, just one month following the raid on their convent and the taking of Margriet’s body, the Carmelites of Oirschot retreated to safer, more friendly ground, founding the convent of Mol, only fifty kilometers south of Oirschot but securely within Catholic-controlled territory. Much as the contested land they had chosen for their convent had been lost to the Calvinists, so too had their own space, the convent, been lost, abandoned in favor of a safer place. Also left behind (at the Calvinist-controlled church of Saint John) was Margriet’s body, itself a sort of confessional territory argued over by two opposing factions, each of which saw in it a manifestation of spiritual truth. In a certain sense, after all of this, one of the few spaces remaining for the Carmelites of Oirschot and Mol was a literary one.

In the time of Teresa of Avila, the *coplas*-style poems with short verses and short stanzas described in chapter one were the norm. This remained the case in Carmelite convents in France and the Spanish Netherlands; the *cantiques* of the Carmelites of Beaune (the rough equivalent of the Spanish *coplas* of Teresa’s time) demonstrate this, as do the majority of the poems in the archives of Brussels and Antwerp and the later sets of archives from Saint-Denis and Compiègne to be discussed in chapters four and five. The eclogue from the convent of Mol is an exception to this general rule regarding poetic form. The poem is a
Virgilian dialogue between two shepherds who sit talking on the banks of the river Nethe.\textsuperscript{114} This scene, set in the first verses of the poem, suggests a typical pastoral location and surroundings, a \textit{locus amoenus} like that found in countless texts of the genre. The creation of such an ideal or pleasant site for the telling of the story of the Carmelites of Oirschot might at first seem incongruous, as much of what is told in this account is, from a Carmelite/Catholic point of view, a tragedy of sorts. But when one considers the “locations” in which this story is played out, the choice of the pastoral form acquires a heightened significance.

First and most obviously, the site that the Carmelites tried (and ultimately failed) to create to exercise their faith within Calvinist territory was every bit a Catholic \textit{locus amoenus}, in their eyes a place for God’s flock to live and prosper. The comparison of the location of a convent or monastery to a pastoral \textit{locus amoenus} was in fact a common one in the medieval era\textsuperscript{115}; that the Carmelites of Mol might have seen their former home as such a place would not have been without precedent. One reading of the poem might therefore be that it shows that a pastoral \textit{locus amoenus} (to be read here as a Catholic \textit{locus amoenus}) was ultimately not possible in the Calvinist Dutch Republic: the first space – the Carmelite convent – could not exist within the second one, the Dutch Republic. But beyond this, this story also spatializes another element, that of Margriet’s body, which becomes both a \textit{locus} of controversy and also a \textit{locus amoenus} for God (the God of the Catholics, at least) to put the truth on display. There is even some indication that Margriet herself conceived of her body as such a “space”: she had come to believe that God had sent her to the Dutch Republic not to expand the Carmelite Order, but rather to fulfill through her some special desire or mission, and on one occasion while praying, she is said to have been told by God: “Je ne t’ai pas conduite en ce lieu pour y

\textsuperscript{114} The Nethe River winds through parts of the territory that was in dispute between the Dutch Republic and the Spanish Empire; it is therefore an “authentic” detail in this story as well as a pastoral device.

augmenter le nombre des religieuses, mais pour prendre mes délices en toi” (Hoffelize 292). As in the Song of Solomon, in which God takes his delights in the “garden” of his beloved (an idea dear to Teresa of Avila, and reflected in the poems of the Carmelites of Beaune presented in chapter two), Margriet’s body served as the ideal **locus** in which to manifest the miraculous (according to the Catholic interpretation) or simply an unusual, but natural set of phenomena (according to the Calvinists).

But it is in the space of the pastoral poem, and poetry generally, that the Carmelites of Oirschot and Mol found an “ideal place” in which to tell their history: here the pastoral form is representative of the issues at stake for the Carmelites, all to do with certain **loci** – the disputed territory between the Spanish Netherlands and the Dutch Republic, the convent in hostile territory, Margriet’s body. It is also, as a continuation of the Teresian poetic tradition, in spite of – or perhaps precisely thanks to – its formal differences from typical Carmelite **cantiques**, a symbol of Carmelite poetry as a whole. This poem shows that, itself a sort of **locus amoenus** for spiritual expression as in the time of Teresa of Avila, fully inhabited by her Spanish, French and Flemish followers, Carmelite poetry was used in diverse and extraordinary circumstances, in multiple countries and multiple languages as a place – indeed, perhaps the only place in some cases – where history and spiritual truths both personal and communal could be told.

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116 “I have not sent you to this place to increase the number of religious, but to take my pleasures in you”
IV

Austerity and Alegría in Equal Measure:

Poetry in the 18th-century Carmelite Convent of Saint-Denis

(Manuscript date: circa 1751)

Teresa of Avila’s reform of the Carmelite Order in 16th-century Spain ushered in a new era of rigor and discipline. At the same time, where Teresa corrected the laxity she saw in the existing Order prior to her reforms\textsuperscript{117}, she also infused her newly founded communities with a spirit of joyfulness, and Teresa’s letters as well as those of Ana de San Bartolomé attest to the place that poetry and song had in maintaining a balance between austerity and alegría (joyfulness) in reformed Spanish Carmel. Teresa herself explained that she and her sisters spent their recreaciones – twice-daily periods of community and conversation during which the normally strict rules of the convent would be relaxed – composing and singing poems, or coplas\textsuperscript{118}, and she was known to defend this practice when it came under criticism. More than one contemporary account tells of Carmelite nuns who questioned the appropriateness of singing poems when it might, as one Carmelite put it, “be a better moment for contemplation”.\textsuperscript{119} But Teresa maintained that both contemplation and recreation were necessary. As she reassured another of her sisters who appeared concerned about participating in poetic activities (Teresa had asked her to make copies of some coplas by hand), “…all things are necessary in passing through this life. Do not be alarmed…”\textsuperscript{120} This dual insistence on rigorous order on the one hand and moments of devout jubilation on the

\textsuperscript{117} In chapter seven of her Libro de la Vida, Teresa criticizes the “lack of observance” of certain rules, notably that of enclosure for female religious, in the (pre-reform) Carmelite convent she had entered as a young nun.

\textsuperscript{118} See letter to M. María de San José, January 9, 1577 (TOC 1070-1072).

\textsuperscript{119} Reforma de los descalzos de nuestra señora del Carmen: de la primitiva observancia, hecha por Santa Teresa de Jesús, en la antiquísima religión, fundada por el gran profeta Elías 2, Madrid: Díaz de la Carrera, 1720, tome I, book VI, chapter XX. Cited in Díaz, Estudios sobre Juan de la Cruz, 168.

\textsuperscript{120} Declaración de la madre Inés de Jesús, Priora de Segovia, en Informaciones de dicha ciudad, B.A.E., Escritos de Santa Teresa, cited in Díaz 168.
other is well-known and has been documented in the extensive research on Spanish Carmel carried out by literary scholars and historians.\textsuperscript{121} And while important contributions have been made in writing the history of French and Flemish Carmel\textsuperscript{122}, it remains the case that these later chapters in the history of the Order are considerably less established, and leave much to be discovered. It is known, for example, that when Carmelite convents were established in France in the 17\textsuperscript{th} century, a reputation for strict observance of stringent rules followed and was maintained. As Geneviève Reynes writes, “certains ordres nouveaux ou particulièrement austères, comme le Carmel, se montraient eux aussi très exigeants” (Reynes 40-41).\textsuperscript{123} It is clear, then, that the discipline set in place in Teresa’s time remained intact. Now, thanks to the poetic manuscripts discussed in this study, it is clear that a counterbalance to the more demanding aspects of Carmelite life also existed in French Carmel. These documents are of value in establishing a clearer picture of life in Teresian convents in France. Yet apart from a few references, including one in a letter of Ana de San Bartolomé in which the Spanish founder of the Antwerp Carmel explains that she uses \textit{coplas} to “cheer” her sisters and that she “has not allowed them to be sad”\textsuperscript{124}, relatively little mention is made in archival documents of the specific function of poems and songs in French or Flemish Carmel (see chapter two for some exceptions to this), and their role in maintaining equilibrium. A striking exception to this general lack of “metapoetic” material comes from the archives of the convent of Saint-Denis in Paris. A play composed around 1751 by the

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{121} On the subject of poetry and song in Teresian Carmel, see Emilio Orozco Diaz and José Lara Garrido, \textit{Estudios sobre San Juan de la Cruz y la mística del barroco}, Granada: Universidad de Granada, 1994 and Víctor García de la Concha and Ana María Álvarez Pellitero, \textit{Libro de romances y coplas del Carmelo de Valladolid}.


\textsuperscript{123} “certain orders that were new or particularly austere, like the Carmel, also showed themselves to be very demanding”

\textsuperscript{124} Letter to Mother Anne of the Ascension, Antwerp, early January 1622/1624. Teresa of Avila also suggested a connection between \textit{coplas} and \textit{alegría} in a letter to María de San José, the prioress of the convent of Seville. See letter 396, November 8, 1581.
\end{footnotes}
French nun Julie de Jésus\textsuperscript{125} is a versified “defense and illustration” of traditional Carmelite poetry and song, and shows the way in which Carmelite cantiques complemented the rigors of a life of contemplation and prayer in a Teresian convent. Further, this document serves as a unique register of events in French Carmel, supplementing and in some cases surpassing more official historical records. At the same time, Julie’s play also demonstrates awareness of and engagement in a number of strongly contested social and spiritual debates alive in 18\textsuperscript{th}-century France. In this chapter, a presentation of the play will serve to show how 18\textsuperscript{th}-century French Carmelites adapted a long-standing practice of devotional poetry to serve not only as a means of recreation, but also as a means of commentary and a degree of engagement beyond the convent walls, defending and defining their Teresian heritage in their own words and in a medium privileged within their Teresian community.

\textsuperscript{125} Julie de Jésus (born Julienne de MacMahon, 1732-1785), enjoyed an especially close friendship with “Madame Louise”, the daughter of Louis XV who entered the convent of Saint-Denis in 1770. Indeed, their friendship was so close and enduring that they became known in the convent as “David et Jonathas”, after David and Jonathan of the Book of Samuel. A poem from the \textit{Recueil Lidoine} in the archives of the Carmel of Sens (see chapter five) celebrates this friendship on the occasion of Julie’s having succeeded Louise as prioress:

\begin{align*}
\text{Depuis qu’en place de Louise} & \quad \text{Since in place of Louise}\\
\text{L’aimable Julie est au timon} & \quad \text{The loveable Julie is at the stern}\\
\text{Par l’ordre du Ciel est assise} & \quad \text{By the order of Heaven is seated}\\
\text{Pour gouverner cette maison} & \quad \text{To govern this house}\\
\text{Si l’esprit qui règne est le même} & \quad \text{If the spirit that reigns is the same}\\
\text{Ce ne doit point être un problème} & \quad \text{It should be no problem at all}\\
\text{Depuis longtemps ne sait-on pas} & \quad \text{For a long time now have we not known}\\
\text{Que c’est David et Jonathas.} & \quad \text{That it is David and Jonathan.}
\end{align*}

\textit{Recueil Lidoine}, 134.

Julie was from a family of Irish descent, and was thus part of an important minority in Saint-Denis: as Bernard Hours explains, “Le Carmel de Saint-Denis était un refuge pour les jeunes Irlandaises dont la famille s’était exilée en France par fidélité jacobite, mais aussi par fidélité à l’Église romaine…Le Carmel de Saint-Denis jouait-il un rôle particulier auprès de l’émigration irlandaise? La question reste posée.” (“The Carmel of Saint-Denis was a refuge for young Irishwomen whose families had been in exile in France due to jacobite loyalty, but also out of loyalty to the Roman Church…did the Carmel of Saint-Denis play a particular role with regard to Irish emigration? The question remains?”) (Hours, \textit{Madame Louise}, 147). See Hours, \textit{Madame Louise}, 215-222 and \textit{Vie de la révérée Mère Thérèse de St Augustin, Madame Louise de France, fille de Louis XV, religieuse carmélite du Monastère de St Denis de Paris par une religieuse de sa communauté}, Autun: Impr. M. Dejussieu, 1857, chapter XIV.
At first glance, Julie’s play appears to be an ordinary Carmelite cantique (see above) without any special annotation or contextualization. The structure and appearance are typical: the melody to which the poem is to be sung (“Maman, dites-moi ce qu’on sent quand on aime”\textsuperscript{126}) is given first, followed by the text, and in this case a two-part musical score indicating melody and harmony. But a closer look at the first page of the manuscript and the continuation of the text on the subsequent pages reveals that this cantique is in fact set within the frame of a larger poem, a play that foregrounds the very act of singing such a song. As the introduction to the play explains, “Un hermite, pressé par la grande renommée qu’a Le Couvent des Carmélites de Saint Denis de venir le visiter est surpris et presque scandalisé de

\textsuperscript{126} “Mother, tell me what it feels like to love”
le trouver dans une grande réjouissance…”\(^\text{127}\) The “rejoicing” that the hermit encounters upon arriving at Saint-Denis is “une jeune religieuse [qui] entre en chantant”\(^\text{128}\). And so the play begins, with the singing of a young Carmelite as its principal object of focus. This all sets the stage for a discussion between hermite and Carmélite regarding the appropriateness of such jubilant activity in a contemplative convent – the hermit raises objections (to which we shall return), and the young nun counters, ultimately convincing him that singing and poems are worthy activities. The visitor is finally so compelled by the Carmelites’ celebration that he encourages them to sing on, and toward the end of the play, the visitor goes as far as to join the Carmelites in song, contributing his own cantique to the celebration, one which he recalls from his days as a young monk and which is similar to the one sung by the young Carmelite at the start of the play.

The piece opens with the cantique of the young Carmelite, and closes with that of the hermit visitor. Using poetry as vehicle (the “super-poem” that is the play), such poetry and song is featured and justified as a legitimate spiritual practice. Already structurally remarkable, the importance of this mise en abyme of Carmelite poetry and song becomes clearer when one considers the forms of written production typical for women religious in Julie’s time.\(^\text{129}\)

Among the types of text found in Carmelite archives are historical texts such as entries into chronicles or annals, and also more personal accounts including letters. Of these types of writing, the first are generally factual accounts of events written on behalf of the whole community. As such, a defense and illustration of Carmelite poetic practice like the one made

\(^{127}\) “A hermit, drawn by the great renown of the Convent of the Carmelites of Saint-Denis to visit it is surprised and nearly scandalized to find it in a state of great rejoicing…”

\(^{128}\) “a young nun [who] enters singing”

\(^{129}\) While relatively little study of modes of writing in early modern French convents has been carried out, important inquiries into the variety of textual genres in the work of nuns in other times and places have been made. See Anne Winston-Allen, *Convent Chronicles: Women Writing About Women and Reform in the Late Middle Ages*, University Park, Pa: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004; Rebecca L. R. Garber, *Feminine Figurae: Representations of Gender in Religious Texts by Medieval German Women Writers 1100-1375*, New York: Routledge, 2003; K. J. P. Lowe, *Nuns’ Chronicles and Convent Culture: Women and History Writing in Renaissance and Counter-Reformation Italy*, Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
in Julie’s play would have been unlikely to appear in these histories. In epistolary form, both Julie and her Spanish predecessors made occasional mention of *coplas* and *cantiques*, but none of these letters situate the tradition of *cantiques* within the larger context of convent life, or give anything like the defense of the practice that Julie makes in her play. In the simplest sense, then, in nearly 200 years of Carmelite tradition this “poem within a poem” appears to stand out as a unique instance of the thematization of Carmelite poetry within what can itself be considered a Carmelite poem (the play).

K.J.P. Lowe has shown that nuns’ chronicles written by 16th-century Italian nuns in the convents of San Cosimato in Rome, Le Murate in Florence and Santa Maria delle Vergini in Venice contain valuable references to nuns’ participation in various literary, musical and artistic activities. Yet the references from these Italian chronicles provide mostly documentation rather than commentary, and in certain cases activities that are known to have been important ones are nearly unrepresented in these historical registers. As Lowe writes,

> The focus of the chronicles allows more to be known about certain aspects of this cultural activity. But the chronicles also offer glimpses and outlines of many other forms without offering much of substance. For example, although theater must have formed an important part of convent life at San Cosimato and Le Murate, Formicini [one of the chronicles’ authors] alludes to it only twice and Niccolini [another author] not at all. The absence of comment by Niccolini on convent theater is sad as it is known from other sources that Le Murate had strong connections to female and male playwrights who composed convent material. (Lowe 263–264)

Like the 16th-century Italian nuns studied by Lowe, French Carmelites also left occasional references in chronicles to their creative and artistic activities, but at least one among them went a step further, thematizing, describing and justifying the practice of convent poetry.
using poetry itself. Few, if any, of the writings of early modern nuns thus far brought to light appear to have done this, as Julie de Jésus did in her “defense and illustration” of the Carmelite *cantique*.

At the same time, this poem and the others examined here must also be understood as examples of a privileged form of literary activity in Teresian Carmel, where a flourishing tradition of poetry provided a third medium of expression, one that differed significantly not just in structure but also in content from chronicles and letters. What could be expressed in a poem was often not expressed in more “official” documents, and as Julie and her predecessors demonstrate, Carmelite poems were sometimes inscribed and cited in epistolary form, but rarely contextualized or defended as they are in this play. In short, thanks to a tradition maintained from Teresa’s time forward, we have a type of documentation that provides information – in this case, a demonstration of the use of poetry in a Teresian convent – to which we would not otherwise have access, and a window into convent life that would otherwise never have been opened.

Literary historians studying women’s convent writing (in particular the chronicle genre) have drawn a distinction between different strata of convent history, opposing accounts written by male outsiders and those composed by the nuns inside the convent itself (Lowe, Introduction). Lowe and Anne Winston-Allen have called attention to these different layers of documentation, suggesting that the latter category – “insider texts” by women – have things to tell us that we may not learn from outside sources. I propose that the same is true here, but that a similar model might also be applied *intra muros*, via an organization into sub-strata of insiders’ texts themselves. Where Carmelite chronicles and annals tend to communicate a rather more factual and less opinion-based version of convent life and history, and letters may render a more personal but still limited degree of commentary on issues faced by women
religious, Carmelite poems in certain instances show what these other modes of writing do not, and as such are deserving of analysis as a special category of historical text. Indeed, most of the writings of women religious presented by scholars of convent literature were to some degree mediated by “outsiders”, or men who supervised and/or redacted the texts produced by women. If, as I propose is the case in chapter two, Carmelite poetry was a literary form instigated and regulated by women, the poems of Spanish, French and Flemish Carmelite nuns might be seen as among the most “inside” of “insider” texts, generally escaping the control of male supervisors and perhaps representative of nuns’ voices in their most unadulterated form.

Les Filles de Thérèse

In addition to its value as an historical record, Julie’s play is also a rather concise representation of the state of documentation of the Reformed Carmelite Order in 17th- and 18th-century France. Like that of Spanish Carmel, the history of French Carmel has been written in our time, if not definitively at least in significant detail. Modern scholars Bernard Hours, Stéphane-Marie Morgain, Jean-Dominique Mellot, Jean-Baptiste Ériaux, Jacques Roland-Gosselin and others have composed detailed histories of the Carmelites in France, with particular emphasis on the early foundations and the spread and development of the Order in the 17th and 18th centuries. Yet to read these documents is at once to appreciate the richness and rendering of this history and, for the student of Spanish Carmel, to wonder what became of certain traditions including that of poetry and song that was such an essential part

130 While studies have been made of the importance of poetry in other religious orders, such studies do not suggest or focus upon the possibility of poetry functioning as a unique category of historical document. In Poets of Divine Love, Alessandro Vettori traces the early phases of poetry’s evolution among Franciscans, and Samuel Eiján made an exhaustive inventory of Spanish Franciscan poetry in Nuestros Juglares del Señor. Yet neither of these studies insists upon the documentary value of poem as historical record. Again, I propose that one value of this analysis of Carmelite poems from France and the Low Countries may be to call attention to an alternate register of convent history that had a special place in Teresian Carmel.

131 This is generally, if not universally, true of the works presented and analyzed by Lowe, Winston-Allen, Surtz and Weaver – in most cases the texts in question were in some way controlled and/or edited by male “outsiders”. 108
of early Teresian Carmel in Spain. What researchers have amply documented in Spanish Carmel\textsuperscript{132} has gone largely unrecognized in French Carmel, whose history has been written with a missing piece, so to speak.\textsuperscript{133} Though it is over 250 years old, Julie’s play is remarkably evocative of this state of documentation. Today’s scholar, relying on histories composed thus far, finds him/herself in a position similar to that of Julie’s \textit{hermite}: “arriving” at French Teresian Carmel with certain notions – accurate but not necessarily complete – of the life of the “filles de Thérèse”. And as the \textit{hermite} demonstrates, the same was true in Julie’s time, in part for the same reasons. The most readily available sources on Teresian Carmel in France in the 18\textsuperscript{th} century included Teresa’s own writings, which themselves suggest an only partially representative image of convent life. When Julie’s male visitor explains his confusion, his description of what he expected to find is a list of Teresian tropes:

\begin{quote}
Je croyais vous trouver en fille de Thérèse
Fervente à l’oraison à deux genoux sans cesse
Dans l’union, l’extase et le beau vol d’esprit
Aux pieds des saints autels adorant Jésus-Christ
Ce qu’on vantait surtout était votre silence
Et je vois chaque sœur prête à faire une danse
On publiait encore…
\end{quote}

I thought I would find you as a daughter of Teresa
Fervently at prayer constantly on your knees
In union, ecstasy and the beautiful flight of the spirit
At the feet of the holy altars adoring Jesus Christ

\textsuperscript{132} See García de la Concha and Álvarez Pellitero.
\textsuperscript{133} It is important to note that some Carmelite poems have been featured in published histories of Carmel, including those of Roland-Gosselin and Hours. These studies do not, however, focus on Carmelite poetry and its function in convent life.
What one praised above all was your silence
And I see each sister ready to do a dance
It was also said…

(CDX 106)

The sense in which the hermit uses the term *publier* in the last verse is likely a general one, meaning to communicate, to make public. But by extension, it is a fitting term for referring to what could have been known about Teresa and Teresian Carmel in the 18th century. As the reader may recall, “union, ecstasy and flight of the spirit” were among the themes taken up by the 17th-century Carmelites of Beaune in their poems, and together constituted one of the images most associated with Teresa in literary and artistic representations, including Bernini’s *Estasi di Santa Teresa*. These themes, taken primarily from well-known passages of Teresa’s *Libro de la Vida*, would have been familiar to a 17th- and 18th-century readership interested in Teresa and her life. And by all accounts, such a readership did exist: by the time Julie composed her play, books about Teresa in French and French translations of her writings had been in publication for over 150 years and included four different translations and editions of her complete works as well as a proliferation of partial translations, biographies, dedicatory poems and other works. Teresa’s story was available to a French public interested to read it, and often in her own words. The Teresian images evoked by the hermit in Julie’s play would have been familiar ones, as would the rule of silence (“What one praised above all was your silence”, as the surprised hermite exclaims) which Teresa instituted and mentioned specifically in her writings. But the Teresa most often “made public” in print did not necessarily include Teresa the poet and advocate of song and

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134 *Constituciones*, 1:11.
recreation as part of convent life. In 1616 Denys de la Mère de Dieu\textsuperscript{135}, one of the first French translators of Teresa, evoked the newly founded French Carmel in a way that did link Carmelites to their song:

\begin{verbatim}
Dis-moi pourquoi dans ces collines                      Tell me why in these hills
J’entends les Nymphes Carmelines                      I hear the Carmelite nymphs
Entonner des nouvelles voix ?                       Singing in new voices?
Invitant les troupes des Anges                       Inviting the flocks of Angels
A chanter nouvelles louanges                        To sing new praises
Au ton de leurs lyriques voix ?                     In the tone of their lyrical voices?
\end{verbatim}

(Teresa of Avila, Histoire des fondations, Introduction, Ode, stanza 3)

But what Denys associated with Carmel would not often be recognized in print in the centuries that followed. In terms of poetry, Teresa’s “complete works” in French rarely included anything more than a translation of her best-known poem \textit{Muero porque no muero}, and when such a translation did appear it would most often be without commentary or explanation. In fact, the most widely published (and likely most widely read) translation of Teresa’s works, that of Arnauld d’Andilly, made a deliberate move of omitting the poem even when it had already been translated and published in earlier editions by other translators; D’Andilly explained the omission by citing Teresa herself:

\begin{verbatim}
Et je n’ai rien omis à traduire de ces trois premiers Volumes que des Vers dont la reprise est : Que muero porque no muero : c’est-à dire : Car je meurs de ne mourir pas ; parce que la Sainte ayant déclaré expressément en la page 83 de sa vie que ces vers étaient une production de son amour et non pas de son esprit, j’avoue n’avoir
\end{verbatim}

\textsuperscript{135} Denys de la Mère de Dieu (1584-1622) was the first French Carme Déchaussé, or male Discalced Carmelite. The masculine branch of Teresa’s reformed order was established when Denys founded the Carmelite monastery of Avignon in 1608.
été assez hardi pour entreprendre d’expliquer des pensées que le Saint Esprit lui a inspirées & fait exprimer d’une manière si élevée et si pénétrante, que quand on pourrait douter de la vérité des paroles de cette admirable Sainte, ce que personne n’oserait faire, il serait facile de juger par le style de ces vers divins qu’elle n’y a point eu de part. (Teresa of Avila, Les œuvres de sainte Thérèse, "Avertissement" 10)\textsuperscript{136}

It is likely, then, that to most outsiders, the Carmelite practice of poetry and song was either unknown or perhaps not very well regarded. Julie’s play suggests that both of these were true, and sets Carmelite song against a more familiar Teresian stereotype of silence and mystical contemplation in order to reconcile two seemingly opposing images of a good Carmelite and combine them in a balanced whole. In doing this, Julie acknowledged the equilibrium between austerity and alegria that had existed in Carmel from Teresa’s time but which was not always reflected in print sources. Upon hearing the reasons for the hermit’s surprise, the young Carmelite intervenes to set the record straight, truncating the hermit’s statement about what was “made public” about the Carmelites of Saint-Denis. Her response and Julie’s poetic rendering of it suggest a correction of public (and published) notions:

L’HERMITE

On publiait encore…

LA JEUNE RELIGIEUSE

…vous n’y comprenez rien.

[…]

\textsuperscript{136} “I have left nothing out in these three volumes [of Teresa’s works] with the exception of the verses whose refrain is Que muero porque no muero: that is to say: Because I die from not dying; because the Saint having expressly declared on page 83 of her life that these verses were a product of her love and not of her spirit, I admit I have not been brave enough to undertake to explain thoughts that the Holy Spirit inspired in her and expressed in such an elevated and penetrating way, that when one might doubt the truth of the words of this admirable Saint, which no one would dare to do, it would be easy to judge by the style of these divine verses that she had no part in them.”
Mais je n’en reviens pas…vous croyez tout de bon
Que nous passons nos jours en contemplation
Quelle simplicité. Vous êtes admirable
Nous goûtons en ces lieux un sort bien plus aimable.

HERMIT
It was also said…

YOUNG NUN
…you don’t understand at all.
[…]
But I can’t believe it…you really believe
That we spend our days in contemplation
What simplicity. You are admirable
Here we enjoy a much more pleasant fate.

(CDX 107)

There can be no doubt about the fact that prayer and contemplation were always a part of Carmelite life, and that the mystical “union, ecstasy and flight of the spirit” associated with Teresa remained an important part of Carmelite heritage for the sisters of Saint-Denis. But in 18th-century France, as in 16th-century Spain, contemplation and recreation were not, it seems, mutually exclusive in Carmel. As a document, and in particular as a poem within a poem that demonstrates and defends the importance of the poetic tradition in Teresian Carmel, this play is unique. It not only sheds light on the practice as it existed within the convent walls,

137 Teresa herself suggests that there is good reason not to dissociate mystical prayer and poetry. It is in chapter 16 of her Libro de la Vida that she first mentions her own poems, precisely while explaining the nature and effects of her “third degree” of prayer in which the intellect plays a decreasingly important role, and the soul begins to receive divine grace in a more passive way (Libro de la Vida, 16: 3-4). Julie’s insistence upon the place of poetry and song in a life of contemplation draws less explicitly upon the mystical than does Teresa, but the association made by Teresa between prayer and poetry is a powerful one, and would have been a familiar reference to French Carmelites.
but also explains a great deal about how nuns’ participation in such activities might have been viewed by certain outsiders. Here again, the distinction between types of documentation becomes an important one. Teresa’s major prose writings give a relatively limited indication of the importance and function of poetry in convent life, yet it is largely from these texts that a significant portion of public perception of Carmelite convents would likely have been formed. Poem as history, different in form, content and distribution from sources more widely known and read, becomes valuable in this context.

Julie’s play would seem to stand as a unique exemplary text in this category, in that it provides perspective and commentary on its own genre. But if the play stands alone as a singular metapoetic defense and illustration of Carmelite poetry and a testament to the balance of austerity and alegría in Carmelite convent life, what explains its appearance in 1751 Saint-Denis, after nearly two centuries of Carmelite poems that had refrained from self-referentiality? Answering this question requires situating the play in its historical context and among other contemporary texts on convent life, and distinguishing the play’s explicit messages about cantiques and spiritual equilibrium from references less obviously stated but no less important.

**In Defense of Convent Life**

If Julie’s play can be considered one of a series of historical documents on life in Teresian Carmelite convents, it also fits into a broader category of written commentary on convent life.

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138 The importance of Teresa’s references in her letters to coplas is not to be discounted. At the same time, such references likely went unnoticed by the majority of those who read her writings in 17th- and 18th-century France. While some of Teresa’s letters were published and translated, these represented a small minority of the texts by and about Teresa available to French readers.

139 The pastoral poem presented in chapter three serves an historical function similar to that of the play from Saint-Denis presented here. The category of “poem as history” that I wish to highlight here is not, of course, the historical poem in general, which has been recognized, studied and commented upon at length. Rather, I am proposing that within the sub-genre of convent literature, documents such as chronicles and letters have been (rightly) privileged as sources of historical information, but that at least in French Carmel, poems can also serve a similar function as historical documents.
In general. In the 18th century, convents and the lives of their inhabitants were represented in a variety of settings and commented upon from varying, often critical, points of view. In novels and plays, convents were depicted, often simultaneously, as prison-like institutions in which young women were held against their will and libertine dens of iniquity in which superiors wielded sexual power over subordinates. A novel like Denis Diderot’s *La Religieuse*, which evokes both of these scenarios and suggests the perils of extremes of repression and loss of self-control, is indicative of 18th-century criticisms directed at religious institutions in general and convents in particular. In this context, a text such as Julie’s that seeks to assert a “healthy” equilibrium between rigors and recreation is an important one. Not only does she show that Carmelite life is not all about austerity and self-denial, she also gives a positive view of the activities that serve as counter-balance to spiritual discipline, offering a model of a convent in which neither extreme repression nor licentiousness can take hold. In doing so, she makes a point of contrasting the happy, laughing demeanor of the young nun and the overly somber character of the hermit, suggesting that on certain occasions, one mode of being complements the other, and that it is this that the hermit fails to understand:

…vous n’y comprenez rien
Pourquoi cet air pensif et ce dévot maintien
Ne venez pas troubler notre vive allégresse
En ce jour chaque sœur ne suit que la tendresse
L’objet en est charmant, ne nous amusez pas
Laissez-nous rire en paix, finissez vos hélas!

140 Mita Choudhury makes a useful overview of these varying representations of the convent in 18th-century French writing and thought in *Convents and Nuns in Eighteenth-Century French Politics and Culture*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2004. See in particular chapter 5, “School of Virtue, School of Vice”.
141 *La Religieuse* tells the story of Suzanne Simonin, a young woman seeking help in renouncing her religious vows and the trials she faces as she is transferred from one convent to another. The character of Suzanne was based upon the true case of Marguerite Delamarre, a nun who sought to have her vows revoked by the courts but ultimately failed.
…you don’t understand at all
Why this pensive air and devout attitude
Do not disturb our lively joy
On this day each sister obeys only tenderness
Whose object is a charming one, do not waste our time
Let us laugh in peace, stop your “alas”!

(CDX 107)

In this, Julie echoes a preoccupation common to both Teresa and to 18th-century French critics of convent culture. Teresa made specific mention in her writings to *melancolía*, against which her sisters were to guard themselves.142 And as Mita Choudhury explains, certain 18th-century French critics of religious institutions saw convents as natural breeding grounds for “hopeless despair”.143 Teresa herself suggested poetry and song as an antidote to melancholy144, and we have seen that at least one of her closest companions, Ana de San Bartolomé, also did so. In the time of Julie’s play, a number of poems from the archives of Saint-Denis attest to the function of poetry and song in “banishing” sadness. One such poem, composed in honor of sister Eléonor de Jésus Crucifié, makes this explicit and even appears to create a contrafactum of both the lyric and message of a popular tune:

Chantons mes sœurs

Let us sing, my sister

142 The seventh chapter of Teresa’s *Libro de las fundaciones* is dedicated to the subject of nuns suffering from *melancolía*, and in a letter to Jerónimo Gracían, she wrote: “Harto más valdría no fundar que llevar melancólicas que estraguen la casa”; “It would be better to found no convents at all than to fill them with melancólicas who ruin the house” (TOC 1409).
143 Citing Diderot’s *La Religieuse* and the Chevalier de Cerfvol’s *La Gamalogie ou de l’éducation des filles*, both of which take critical views of women’s monastic vows, Choudhury writes: “Like Diderot, Cerfvol assumed that women religious suffered from hopeless despair because they were all forced to take vows of lifelong celibacy and isolation” (136).
144 See Letter 396; “…las poesías también vengan. Mucho me huelgo procure que se alegren las hermanas…”; “Keep the poems coming as well. It is important to me that the sisters remain joyful…” (TOC 1352)

116
In her play, Julie sets the hermit’s *hélas!* and *air pensif* against the Carmelites’ joyful release of song and laughter on a special occasion, in a sense reinforcing the analysis of critics but drawing from it a different, more “Teresian” conclusion. An excess of isolation and self-denial can lead to a dangerous state of despair, but the solution is to keep austerity in check with prescribed moments of *alegría*, not to abandon altogether the institution of the convent. Indeed, the *hélas!* with which Julie teases the hermit is more than a passing remark; it is an on-target summary of her interlocutor’s attitude: shock at the contradiction of his fundamental expectation upon arriving at Saint-Denis, to the point that he is unsure whether or not he has arrived at his planned destination:

O Grand Dieu que vois-je est-ce ici le couvent
Que dans tous nos déserts on vante si souvent
Je me trompe, non, non, je ne puis pas le croire
Serait-ce là le lieu dont la brillante histoire
A volé jusqu’à nous ? On n’y voit que plaisirs
Chants, festins, ris et jeux... Où sont donc ces soupirs ?
Est-ce ici Saint-Denis ?
O Great God, what do I see is this the convent
That in all of our deserts is so often praised
I am mistaken, no, no, I cannot believe it
Could this be the place whose brilliant history
Has reached us? One sees only pleasures
Song, feasts, laughing and games...Where then is the sighing?
Is this Saint-Denis?

(CDX 105-106)

Expecting the melancholy *soupirs* of the good Carmelite, he encounters only *plaisirs*. But where the hermit looks exclusively for sobriety, Julie’s Carmelite, like Teresa and her followers, refutes the notion of the convent as conducive to sadness and despair –

Ah! point de vos sermons, nous vivons fort à l’aise
Sans soucis, sans chagrin, nous en sommes très aises…

Ah! None of your sermons, we live quite contented
Without worry, without grief, we are satisfied…

(CDX 107)

– and does so using the very devices that Teresa herself had used to enliven her convents two centuries earlier: poetry and song.\(^\text{145}\) So, then, Julie’s play works not only as a unique

\(^\text{145}\) A further example of the insistence upon “banishing sadness” as part of Teresian heritage in Saint-Denis comes from a poem written by the convent’s superior, Bishop Louis-Bernard de la Taste (1692-1754), *Dialogues d’un directeur avec une religieuse dans la sécheresse*. In his title, la Taste draws upon the Teresian lexicon – Teresa often wrote of having to endure *sequedades*, or spiritual aridity (in this case, *sécheresse*) – and also cites Teresa herself. La Taste not only admonishes the *religieuse* for her *hèles*! :  

Il est honteux qu’une fille à votre âge
Aille chanter ces risibles *hèles* !
It is shameful that a girl at your age
Should go singing those laughable “alas”!
historico-poetic document within Carmel, but also as one of many 18th-century texts that advance a vision of convent life. The play stands out among contemporary renderings of the lives of women religious in that it argues a position contrary to what was fast becoming a majority view – the convent as a decadent and miserable prison – and does so in a minority voice, that of the nun herself. The list of 18th-century novels and plays evoking repression and corruption in French convents is too long to reproduce here. But on one occasion Carmelites themselves were targeted at least in name, in Meusnier de Querlon’s pornographic *Histoire de la tourière des Carmélites (Story of the Carmelite Gatekeeper)*, written in 1745, just six years before Julie’s play. Nothing suggests that the play by Julie de Jésus is a direct response to any one author or publication, or that Julie was consciously engaging in a literary joust. But as in the case of the Carmelites of Mol, it is reasonable to suppose that cloistered nuns were aware of the critical voices in this debate, and to suggest that their messages struck close enough to home that Carmelites might have wanted to take part in the conversation. More such poems of response come decades later from the Carmelites of Saint-Denis and Compiègne, and we shall turn to them in due course. But for the moment, Julie’s text has yet another role to play in yet another mid-18th century French debate.

**Figures of Controversy Present**

In the first half of the 18th century the Carmelite Order, like many others, was divided by a spiritual and political fracture. The publication in 1713 of the papal bull *Unigenitus* reignited the controversy around Jansenism that had begun in the previous century, and from the

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He also makes it clear that this is not what Teresa would have wanted for her daughters:

- Une sœur triste aux autres pèse
- Et tout va la blesser au cœur
- Aussi la prudente Thérèse
- Ne voulait pas de triste sœur…

A sad sister weighs upon the others
And everything will wound her heart
Also the prudent Teresa
Wanted no sad sisters…

*(Bibliothèque Nationale de France, Bibliothèque de l’Arsenal, Ms. 2366)*

146 See Choudhury, ch. 5.
arrival of *Unigenitus* to the mid-century point when Julie composed her play, a newly stoked *querelle janséniste* pitted supporters of the papal decree against those who refused to accept it. In Paris, two Carmelite convents became symbolic battlegrounds in the fight: the convent of Faubourg Saint-Jacques and the convent of Saint-Denis. The convent of Faubourg Saint-Jacques, also known as the *Carmel de l’Annonciation* or simply the *Grand Carmel*, was already important for its place in French Carmelite history. When Spanish Carmelites first came north of the Pyrenees at the beginning of the 17th century, Faubourg Saint-Jacques was the first Teresian convent established in France, and as the root from which all other Teresian convents in France and the Netherlands grew, it held a special place. In the 18th century, Faubourg Saint-Jacques would again become a symbol, but as part of a very different historical and spiritual narrative.

In 1748, Jean-Baptiste Gaultier published his *Lettres apologétiques pour les carmélites du faubourg Saint-Jacques*. In his *Lettres*, Gaultier gave a figurist defense of the resisting Carmelites of Faubourg Saint-Jacques who refused to accept *Unigenitus*, linking them to a long line of other French women religious who had resisted similar anti-Jansenist proclamations for over a century. This lineage of resistance traced back to the 17th-century Benedictine convent of Port-Royal near Paris, the original stronghold of Jansenist support in France, where resistant women religious held out against attempts at suppression until 1709.

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147 *Unigenitus* condemned certain pro-Jansenist propositions of Pasquier Quesnel’s *Moral Reflections* (1692), and was intended to strike the final and fatal blow against Jansenism in France. It had rather the opposite effect of solidifying resistance, which was by the 18th century less based upon the theological tenets of Cornelius Jansen (1585-1638), who had clashed with other Catholics (notably the Jesuits) on the questions of predestination and free will, and had more to do with general resistance to papal and royal authority in matters spiritual. Jansenist nuns viewed themselves as answerable to their faith and conscience rather than to the Pope (or the King), and after *Unigenitus*, dug their heels in deeper against those who attempted to force them to accept the decree.

148 The convent of Faubourg Saint-Jacques was founded in 1604. For a complete history of the early foundations, see Morgain.

149 As Mita Choudhury explains, “figurism suggested a cyclical history in which events in the Old Testament ‘prefigured’ or prophesied the history of the church both in the past and in the immediate present” (35).

According to this view of history, earlier events and figures could be found again in later ones; thus Faubourg Saint-Jacques became for Gaultier and other Jansensists like a new Port-Royal, and its resistant Carmelite nuns like their Benedictine predecessors.
when the last nuns of Port-Royal were expelled, and 1710 when its buildings were torn to the
ground in a final act of eradication. Yet as the Catholic Encyclopedia explains, “Port-Royal
was destroyed, but its spirit lived on” (Lataste), and for a figurist like Gaultier, the potential
symbolism of Faubourg Saint-Jacques as a sort of reincarnated Port-Royal was powerful.\(^{150}\)
He wrote: “with respect to the nuns of Port-Royal, their history is the history of the
Carmelites and other persecuted nuns, the same hate for their sentiments, the same artifices to
seduce them”.\(^{151}\) The Jansenist Carmelites of Faubourg Saint-Jacques, pressured to accept
papal authority and decree, came to represent the resistant nuns of Port-Royal who had stood
firm in similar circumstances a century before.\(^ {152}\) At Faubourg Saint-Jacques, this pressure
was applied – forcefully and successfully – by the Carmelite prioress Catherine-Dorothée de
la Croix (1707-1760), who was sent there charged with the mission of eliminating the
Jansenist influence in the convent. To this end, resistant nuns were either persuaded to accept,
dispersed to other convents where they would have no allies, or in the case of elderly nuns,
simply allowed to live out their years until they died, usually without last rites and buried
without ceremony as punishment for their error (Ériaux, L'anancien Carmel 399). Where French
Carmel’s oldest convent had been a symbol of Port-Royal’s rebirth, it now became a symbol
for its defeat, no doubt as satisfying to the victors as it had been to figurists like Gaultier who
had helped establish its status among Jansenists. But Catherine-Dorothée’s victory at
Faubourg Saint-Jacques was a surprise to nobody, as before being summoned to rescue the
Grand Carmel, she had already done the very same thing at another Carmelite convent in an
identical state of crisis: Saint-Denis. The two convents had thus a common bond; both had

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150 Catherine-Laurence Maire has shown the importance of Port-Royal in 18th-century French Jansenists’
conception of their own identity, in De la cause de Dieu à la cause de la nation: le jansénisme au XVIIIe siècle,
des temps”.
151 Gaultier, second letter in Lettres apologétiques, 70. Cited in Choudhury 46.
152 Other important and high-profile links connected Port-Royal and Faubourg Saint-Jacques. Among them was
Mme de Longueville (1617-1679, daughter of Henri II de Bourbon, Prince de Condé), who exerted her influence
at court to defend Port-Royal and its Jansenist nuns. Longueville had been educated at the convent of Faubourg
Saint-Jacques, and during the last years of her life lived between the convents of Port-Royal and Faubourg
Saint-Jacques, and was a supporter of Jansenists in both houses.
been controlled by a rebellious faction who saw themselves as martyrs in the style of the 17th-century nuns of Port-Royal, and both had been restored to orthodoxy by a prioress who was now something of a hero in French Carmel. All of which brings us back to Julie’s play.

The description given at the head of each page of the play’s manuscript reads: “Jour de Sainte Catherine – Fête de Notre Rêvérènde Mère” (Saint Catherine’s Day – Celebration for Our Reverend Mother), and a letter carried by the hermit and read aloud by the young Carmelite nun reads: “Mon très révérend Père: Je vous écris…pour vous dire que la vénérable Mère Dillon a été, le 4 du mois de Mai dernier, réélue de nouveau dans le monastère des Carmélites de St Denis dont je vous ai si souvent fait l’éloge…” (CDX 109). In 1751, Mother Dillon, or Mother Catherine-Dorothée de la Croix (the abovementioned anti-Jansenist “hero”), had indeed been re-elected prioress of Saint-Denis. She had already held the position years earlier, distinguishing herself by ridding the convent of Jansenists before moving to Faubourg Saint-Jacques to repeat her victory, and then returning once more to Saint-Denis where she was, as the play indicates, again elected to lead the convent. While the text of the play contains no references to Jansenism and no explicit mention of Catherine-Dorothée’s role in stamping it out in either Faubourg Saint-Jacques or Saint-Denis, when read in conjunction with the historical sources cited here, the meaning of key passages is clear. When an elderly Carmelite nun appears and joins her younger sister in defending the celebratory atmosphere that takes the hermit by surprise, she tells him:

Mon Père, je vous dis qu’apprenant les merveilles
Que fit notre Seigneur pour sauver ce couvent
Vous instruisant aussi par quel gouvernement
Il s’acquit tant de cœurs, se fit un sanctuaire

153 “My Most Reverend Father: I write…to tell you that the Venerable Mother Dillon was, the fourth day of the month of May, re-elected in the Monastery of the Carmelites of Saint-Denis that you have so often heard me praise…”
D’un séjour infecté de l’Erreur. Mon Père

Au lieu d’être surpris, vous vous joindrez à nous…

Father, I tell you that learning of the miracles
That our Lord performed to save this convent
Explaining to you also by what government
So many hearts were won, a sanctuary made
Of a place infected by Error, Father

Rather than being surprised, you will join with us…

(CDX 112-113)

As the elder Carmelite nun explains, through a combination of divine influence and successful government, the convent has been cleansed of “Error”. While neither Catherine-Dorothée nor Jansenist nuns are named here, there is no doubt that the former is being credited with good gouvernement and the latter are responsible for l’Erreur. There is no naming of names, so to speak, but for an audience which likely consisted mainly of Julie’s fellow Carmelites, there would have been no need. The references would have been clear. Again, Julie’s text demonstrates its documentary value on multiple levels. First, if it is remarkable as an historical document for its valorization of the tradition of cantiques in Teresian Carmel, its historical value is only enhanced by its first-hand account of Carmelites’ celebration of Catherine-Dorothée’s restoration of two convents “infected” by Jansenism. In her article “Les Carmélites dans la résistance à l’Unigenitus”, Françoise de Noirfontaine explains the scarcity of such accounts and a possible reason for that scarcity: “Aussi les sources du Carmel ne livrent-elles qu’une information lacunaire sur un épisode volontairement occulté de son histoire” (Noirfontaine 379).154 If history is written by the

154 “The sources of Carmel offer only the most fragmented information about an episode of its history that is willfully concealed”
victors (even in the form of a Carmelite poem), in this case, accounts in the victors’ own words are difficult to come by. As Noirfontaine explains, “Même limitée, cette rébellion contre l’autorité du Saint-Siège a pourtant profondément heurté la conscience des Carmélites”\textsuperscript{155}, and it may be that the nuns were inclined to put the Jansenist episode behind them and left few references to it in more “official” accounts. At the same time, non-Jansenist Carmelites might well have wanted to have at least some voice in the debate, particularly since their opponents ran a well-oiled publicity machine while they remained essentially silent. As Noirfontaine explains, Carmelite sources contain little reference or commentary on the struggle. But in the other camp, the Jansenist newspaper \textit{Les Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques}, published from 1728-1803, provided an ongoing and detailed account of the conflict from the dissidents’ perspective. Further, there is even some evidence to suggest that the Jansenist nuns of Faubourg Saint-Jacques may have lent support to the \textit{Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques}, perhaps even aiding in its printing on the convent property itself. After the convent’s “restoration”, secret chambers were discovered which, according to some accounts, contained pro-Jansenist leaflets, and according to one document from the convent’s archives, at Faubourg Saint-Jacques “On y imprimait furtivement dans la maison des libelles contre le roi et l’Église” (Noirfontaine 402).\textsuperscript{156} If resistance propaganda, possibly even the \textit{Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques} themselves, did in fact come from within the walls of Carmel, anti-Jansenist Carmelites may also have wanted to leave at least some written trace of their side of the story – perhaps not in more official records like chronicles or annals, but in a medium like poetry, which had been traditionally practiced in Carmel for centuries but attracted less external attention than other modes of writing. As an entry into the written debate on Jansenism, Julie’s play takes its place alongside pieces like the \textit{Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques}, Gaultier’s

\textsuperscript{155} “Though limited, this rebellion against the Holy See nonetheless profoundly wounded the Carmelites’ conscience”

\textsuperscript{156} “Libelous documents were printed there in secret against the king and the Church”
Lettres apologétiques and other texts that weighed in on the question in 18th-century France.¹⁵⁷

The play’s critique of Jansenism is not, however, limited to a celebration of the victors. In subtle and sometimes humorous ways, it sets up and takes aim at – but also redeems, in a sense – Jansenist targets that would have been recognizable to those familiar with the restorations of Saint-Denis and Faubourg Saint-Jacques and with the legacy of Port-Royal.

Figures of Controversy Past

When Julie’s aging hermit makes his entrance at the beginning of the play, it is not without a certain degree of comic effect: after his initial expression of surprise, his dialogue with the young Carmelite is hindered by his difficulty hearing what she says:

L’HERMITE

…On n’y voit que plaisirs

Chants, festins, ris et jeux...Où sont donc ces soupirs ?

Est-ce ici Saint-Denis ?

LA JEUNE RELIGIEUSE

Oui, mon révèrend Père

L’HERMITE, SOURD

hein ?

LA JEUNE RELIGIEUSE CRIE BIEN FORT

Oui, oui, mon Père…

¹⁵⁷ Mita Choudhury gives a useful overview of 18th-century texts pro- and contra-Jansenism in Convents and Nuns, chapter II, “Martyrs into Citizens”.
THE HERMIT

…One sees only pleasures

Song, feasts, laughing and games…Where then is the sighing?

Is this Saint-Denis?

THE YOUNG NUN

Yes, reverend Father

THE HERMIT, DEAF

eh?

THE YOUNG NUN CRIES LOUDLY

Yes, yes, Father…

(CDX 106)

The same scene is repeated when the elder Carmelite nun appears and enters into dialogue with the visitor:

LA SŒUR ANCIENNE

…Père, remettez-vous

Sachez-en le sujet, calmez votre courroux

L’HERMITE

Hein ?

LA JEUNE RELIGIEUSE

Le bon Père est sourd, criez à ses oreilles…
THE OLD NUN

…Father, get hold of yourself

Know the reason for this, calm your fury

THE HERMIT

Eh?

THE YOUNG NUN

The good Father is deaf, shout into his ears…

(CDX 112)

For Julie’s fellow Carmelites, this would have been both light-hearted fun and a not entirely subtle jab at opponents recently defeated. In both Saint-Denis and Faubourg Saint-Jacques, ridding the convents of Jansenists was not just a question of converting or expelling dissident Carmelites, but also of removing compliant confessors who encouraged Jansenist nuns in their resistance and their beliefs. Before Catherine-Dorothée’s arrival, the nuns of Saint-Denis had just such a confessor in one Père de Brailli, who for his Jansenist sympathies had been relegated to an abbey where he spent nine years writing commentaries on the 101 propositions of *Unigenitus*, at the pace of one per month. When he accepted the charge of confessor of the Jansenist nuns of Saint-Denis, he found a willing audience for his commentaries and teachings, but only for a short time, as he would die just six months later. Yet it seems that in his short tenure, he succeeded in stimulating precisely the type of dissident sentiment that Catherine-Dorothée de la Croix would later work to eliminate. An obituary for de Brailli written by the Jansenist Carmelites of Saint-Denis reads: “Rien n’était plus consolant ni plus capable de nous fortifier dans l’amour de la vérité, c’est-à-dire de la désobéissance à l’Église et aux supérieurs de l’Ordre, que les entretiens que nous avions avec
At Faubourg Saint-Jacques, resistant nuns had access to an equally indulgent confessor, at least when Catherine-Dorothée wasn’t looking on. In March of 1748, Catherine-Dorothée arrived at Faubourg Saint-Jacques to implement the same restoration she had already carried out at Saint-Denis. From the 23rd to the 26th of March, however, she was away on a short trip back to Saint-Denis to attend a profession ceremony. But this was all the time that the Jansenist nuns of Faubourg Saint-Jacques needed to switch from their regular confessor to one who did not require their submission to Unigenitus (Ériau, L’ancien Carmel 196). This confessor, one Abbot Mesnier, also served the nuns of la Salpêtrière, who were described in one historical account as “mad Jansenists” (“jansénistes folles”). As such, Mesnier’s dissident credentials cannot be questioned. He was also, the account states, “octogénaire et sourd de surcroît”.¹⁵⁹ That Julie might have combined two aging and troublesome confessors (one with a hearing problem) in the single figure of her hermite seems plausible. Nuns from each convent would have known the details of the other’s restoration under Catherine-Dorothée’s supervision, and the “cast of characters” would have been familiar. That the Carmelites of Saint-Denis and Faubourg Saint-Jacques would have seen themselves as sharing a common place in the long history of the struggle against Jansenism also seems likely. Both convents had suffered similar internal fractures, and both had been brought under control by the strong governance of the same prioress. This play can and should be read as a commentary that reaches beyond the walls of one single convent, as the figure of the hermit helps to demonstrate. It is also thanks to this same figure, deliberately chosen by Julie as a foil to her young Carmelite nun, that we can

¹⁵⁸ “Nothing was so consoling or more capable of fortifying us in our love of truth, that is to say the disobedience of the Church and of the superiors of the Order, than the sessions that we had with this respectable servant of God”

understand the ways in which her commentary extends beyond the chronological moment in which it was composed.

From the start, the hermit provides clues as to his origins. His initial reaction to the young Carmelite’s singing gives one such clue:

O Grand Dieu que vois-je est-ce ici le couvent
Que dans tous nos déserts on vante si souvent ?

O Great God, what do I see is this the convent
That in all of our deserts is so often praised?

(CDX 105)

Further along, his explanation of what he expected to find at Saint-Denis provides another:

…et quoi ce Monastère
Dont l’austère rigueur confondrait dit-on
Un Antoine, un Macaire, un Saint Hilarion…

…but this Monastery
Whose austere rigor would confound, they say
An Anthony, a Macarius, a Saint Hilarion…

(CDX 106)

The hermit’s use of the term désert identifies him as a resident of a solitary retreat, in this case one dedicated to religious contemplation160, and his reference to Anthony, Macarius and Hilarion associates him with prominent early Christians who lived in such places of seclusion.

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160 In Le Discours de la retraite au XVIIe siècle, Bernard Beugnot traces the evolution of the term désert in 17th-century France from one connoting exclusively religious retreat to one referencing any solitary space for isolation either sacred or secular. In this context, there is no doubt that the hermit’s désert is a spiritual one, as we shall see. See Beugnot 16.
Julie’s choice of such a figure as the opposing voice in the exchange with her young Carmelite over austerity and *alegría* points back to an earlier generation of Jansenists, and again toward Port-Royal. In addition to the convent of nuns in residence at Port-Royal, there also lived a group who came to be known as the *Solitaires*, men who, following the model of early Christian recluses, led Spartan lives separated from the rest of the world. As such, these men constituted ready-made targets for Jansenism’s detractors, who criticized what they viewed as excesses of isolation and asceticism. In part thanks to the writings of a number of important Jansenists among them, these *Solitaires* remained influential in Julie’s time, and given their claims to early Christian hermitic heritage it seems reasonable that her *ermite* might be read as a stand-in for the recluses of Port-Royal. When the hermit explains to the young Carmelite that he has come to Saint-Denis on the advice of a friend, he presents her with a letter from that friend and asks her to read it aloud:

> “Mon très Révérend Père: […] Vous y verriez avec grande satisfaction dans la Mère et ses chères filles les plus fidèles de tout ce que l’antiquité nous a jamais fournie

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161 This criticism intensified in the early 18th-century, when Jansenist extremists known as *convulsionnaires* made public displays of physical self-torture. These *convulsionnaires* were not representative of all 18th-century Jansenist sympathizers, but they attracted significant attention and derision for the public spectacle they created. See Brian Eugene Strayer, *Suffering Saints: Jansensists and Convulsionnaires in France, 1640-1799*, Portland: Sussex Academic Press, 2008, introduction.

162 The Port-Royalist *Solitaire* Jean Hamon (1618-1687) serves as an example: at least five of Hamon’s works were published posthumously in 1734, at a time that Guy Basset describes as “a particularly important period for the diffusion of Jansenist texts”. Among these was his treatise on solitude (*La Solitude*) and his *Principes de conduite dans la défense de la vérité* (*Principles for conduct in defense of the truth*), both of whose publications were heralded in the Jansenist *Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques*. Again, the importance and influence of Port-Royal and its inhabitants in the 18th-century debate is evident. See Guy Basset, “La solitude, un essai de définition. Autour de la *Solitude* de Jean Hamon”, in *La solitude et les solitaires de Port-Royal: actes du Colloque organisé par la Société des Amis de Port-Royal et l’Equipe Port-Royal et la vie littéraire du Centre d’étude de la langue et de la littérature françaises des XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles* (Paris-Sorbonne-C.N.R.S.) au Musée national des Granges de Port-Royal les 20 et 21 septembre 2001, Paris: Bibliothèque Mazarine, 2002, 183-193.

163 The friend who recommends the trip to Saint-Denis signs his letter from *Le Monastère du Mont-Valérien*. Mont-Valérien is situated to the west of Paris and overlooks the Bois de Boulogne; it has a long history as a site for religious hermitage, and it is believed that from at least the tenth century, it was used for such retreats. It remained a place of spiritual retreat until the French Revolution. Julie’s reference to Mont-Valérien and her locating another *ermite* there may be a general evocation of religious reclusiveness, but there is at least one specific connection between Mont-Valérien and the *Solitaires* of Port-Royal: Hubert Charpentier (1565-1650) “founded…the congregation of the priests of Calvary, on Mount Valérian, near Paris. Charpentier became the friend of the abbe of St. Cyran, and had relations with the recluses of Port-Royal” (italics mine). John M’Clintock and James Strong, *Cyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological, and Ecclesiastical Literature*, New York: Harper & Bros, 1889, 905.
d’exemples édifiants de pénitence de silence et d’oraison. Oui, l’heureux siècle des Pauls, des Pacômes, des Jerômes nous aurait enviés de telles Matrônes…”

(CDX 109)

With the addition of the names Paul, Pachomius and Jerome to those of Anthony, Macarius and Hilarion, Julie’s hermit and his correspondent have fully associated themselves with a group known as les pères du désert – “the desert fathers” – that included most of the early Christian recluses mentioned. While Julie would not have been making light of the desert fathers any more than she would have been attempting to devalue contemplation and prayer, she might well have been taking aim at some who co-opted the tradition of the pères and fancied themselves the inheritors of their legacy (and also happened to be Jansenists). The Solitaires certainly met all of these criteria, and one of their number is especially useful in understanding the link between pères and Solitaires. The aforementioned Arnauld d’Andilly, solitaire, Jansenist, writer and translator, first published his translation of the lives

164 “Most Reverend Father: You will see [at Saint-Denis] with great satisfaction in the Mother [Catherine-Dorothée] and her daughters the most faithful of all that antiquity has ever shown us in the way of edifying examples of Silence and Prayer. Yes, the happy era of Paul, Pachomius and Jerome would have envied us such matrons…”

165 A word of clarification regarding the inclusion of Jerome in this group is in order. While known for his asceticism and retreat to the desert, Jerome is not considered one of the “desert fathers” inasmuch as he does not figure among them in published collections of their lives and sayings. He is however believed to have participated in the translation or composition of certain of the Vies des pères du desert, which was later translated into French by d’Andilly.

166 A text entitled Réflexions et instructions sur les principaux devoirs de notre saint état from the convent of Saint-Denis (now housed in the archives of the convent of Pontoise) makes specific mention of the pères du désert, citing their custom of licences, which in this context refers to special permission to suspend the rule of silence, speak more freely than usual or engage in celebration: “on doit ajouter l’exemple des anciens Pères du désert pour qui le jour ou un frère avait fini son pèlerinage était un jour de fête et de jubilation” (“…we should add the example of the ancient desert Fathers for whom the day on which a brother had finished his pilgrimage was a day of celebration and jubilation…”), 11. Again, the target of Julie’s criticism is likely not the pères themselves, but rather Jansenists who had the reputation of adopting their ways in an extreme fashion.

167 While he was not the most extreme of the Port-Royal hermits, Arnauld d’Andilly’s presence was an important one in 17th and 18th-century France. It is to d’Andilly’s translation of Les Vies des Saints pères that Jean de la Fontaine owed the basis for his poem Le juge arbitre, l’hospitalier et le solitaire (The Arbiter, the Almoner and the Hermit) which closes his famous collection of Fables, and in her novel Clélie, Madeleine de Scudéry modeled a character living in isolation upon d’Andilly, a model which in turn served, it has been argued, as partial inspiration for the character of Alceste in Molière’s Le Misanthrope (see Antony McKenna, “Alceste, le faux solitaire” in La solitude et les solitaires de Port-Royal, 314). D’Andilly’s Mémoires were also published at the height of the 18th-century Jansenist controversy, in 1734. For an outline of Arnauld d’Andilly’s divided life between the “world” and the solitude of Port-Royal, see Andrée Villard, “L’Échelle sainte”, in La solitude et les solitaires de Port-Royal, 155: “Arnauld d’Andilly, “Notre cher solitaire” ou le “Solitaire homme du monde”.

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of Paul, Hilarion, Pachomius, Anthony, Macarius and others in his 1647 *Vies des Saints pères des déserts*. Like many other of d’Andilly’s translations, his version of the lives of the desert fathers was widely admired and regularly reprinted for nearly a century. It was also a clear manifestation of a connection that was already well-known between Port-Royal and the legacy of Christian asceticism. The *solitaire* of Julie’s play links this ascetic heritage to his expectations for the sisters of Saint-Denis and to an important part of Teresian legacy:

Don’t l’austère rigueur confondrait dit-on
Un Antoine, un Macaire, un Saint Hilarion
Je croyais vous trouver en fille de Thérèse
Fervente à l’oraison à deux genoux sans cesse
Dans l’union, l’extase et le beau vol d’esprit
Aux pieds des saints autels adorant Jésus-Christ…

Whose austere rigor would confound, they say
An Anthony, a Macarius, a Saint Hilarion
I thought I would find you as a daughter of Teresa
Fervently at prayer constantly on your knees
In union, ecstasy and the beautiful flight of the spirit
At the feet of the holy altars adoring Jesus Christ…

(CDX 106)

This pairing of Teresa with the *pères du desert* is a significant one, and it implicates Arnauld d’Andilly. As early as 1655, d’Andilly was translating and publishing Teresa’s writings, and his translation of *The Works of Saint Teresa* was regularly re-published until the 19th century.

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century. Of all of the French translators of Teresa’s works, d’Andilly was the most famous, the most widely published and quite likely the most widely read. As such, d’Andilly would likely have been known in Carmel, both for his work on the lives of the desert fathers and for his literary association with Teresa and her writings. But after the figurists’ attempts to appropriate Faubourg Saint-Jacques as a “new” Port-Royal, French Carmelites may not have wished to see yet another Jansenist too closely associated with their own heritage. It may be that the character of the hermite is meant to suggest not only recently defeated adversaries, but also more historic ones, and that by “rescuing” Teresian heritage from the hands of the misguided hermite, Julie also slips a wedge between d’Andilly and Teresa, distinguishing Carmelite austerity from the extremes of Jansenist asceticism. For the Carmelites of her play are not making a wholesale rejection of austerity. On the contrary, they are reclaiming it for themselves. At the conclusion of a long tribute to Catherine-Dorothée that finally succeeds in convincing the hermit that a certain period of celebration is in order and appropriate, the elder Carmelite concludes:

Enfin c’est par ses soins que ce saint Monastère
Est devenu fervent, régulier, austère.

In sum, it is by her efforts that this Monastery
Has become fervent, regular, austère.

(CDX 116)

What the Carmelites convince the hermit to accept is a balance, an appropriate dose of alegría that serves precisely to complement the austerity that, by their own account, is

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169 D’Andilly’s translations of Teresa’s writings can be found in the libraries of many French Carmelite convents and monasteries, and there is least one recorded instance in which a French Carmelite is known to have read these translations. A handwritten manuscript from the Carmelite convent of Douai, dated 1695, contains a hand-written copy of d’Andilly’s Sentiments de notre Sainte Mère Térèse de Jésus, along with hand-written notes by a “Carmélite déchaussée du couvent de Douai”. Cited in Christophe Delporte, “La Figure de l’ascète”, in La Solitude et les Solitaires de Port-Royal, 55-56.
characteristic of a “regular” Teresian convent. Their own documents attest to this: an 18th-century manuscript from the archives of Saint-Denis entitled *Sur les Récitations* cites Teresa herself in stating the importance of equilibrium between *austérité* and *gaieté*:

Notre Sainte Mère déclare dans ses Constitutions chapitre 3\(^e\)\(^170\) que la Mère Prieure pourra permettre que toutes les Sœurs parlent ensemble de ce qui leur sera plus agréable, que ce temps employé a se récréer, est bien employé; que nous devons avoir soin de n’y être point ennuyantes les unes aux autres, et d’assaisonner nos discours de gaieté…Concluons de là…que nous ferions mal nous-mêmes, si nous cherchions une retraite farouche, un silence sombre, et continu, une lugubre austérité. […] n’est-il pas vrai…que nous éprouvons…plus de facilité à vaquer à l’oraison, à nous occuper de Dieu dans la retraite, quand nous sortons d’une récréation où la gaieté aura animé la modestie, et où la modestie aura tempéré la gaieté?\(^171\)

The balance sought by the Carmelites of Saint-Denis is, not coincidentally, very much like the one set in place by Teresa herself – and as Julie’s play shows, it is achieved through the same practice of *coplas, cantiques*, poems and songs that Teresa made part of Carmelite convent life in 16\(^{th}\)-century Spain.

\(^{170}\) In the manuscript, it appears that the reference is to the third chapter of Teresa’s *Constituciones*. The text that follows, on the dispensations that can be given by the prioress for sisters to speak together and that no sister should be tiresome to another, corresponds to chapter six, sections 7 and 8 of the *Constituciones* (TOC 829).

\(^{171}\) *Sur les Récitations*. In *Réflexions et instructions sur les principaux devoirs de notre saint état*, pp. 3-6. “Our Holy Mother declares in her Constitutions, chapter 3 [see note above] that the Prioress may permit that all of the sisters talk together of whatever is most agreeable to them, that this time used for recreation is well used; that we must take care to not be tiresome to one another, that we should season our discourse with gaiety…Let us conclude…that we would do wrong ourselves, if we sought an unsociable retreat, a somber and continuous silence, a lugubrious austerity. […] Is it not true…that we experience…a greater ease in preparing ourselves for prayer, in attending to God in our retreat, when we have come from a recreation in which gaiety has enlivened modesty, and modesty has tempered gaiety?”
An Internal Debate

These assertions on the part of the Carmelites of Saint-Denis of the importance of recreation and the use of *cantiques* as part of convent life have clear relevance in the context of the *querelle janséniste*. But the reasons for citing Teresian heritage in this debate become even more apparent when we attend to a less-publicized but nonetheless essential dispute, this time one that was unique to French Carmel. One of the criticisms made by Julie’s *hermite* concerns *licence*:

Mais que je suis trompé qu’y voit-on aujourd’hui
Aucun recueillement une licence extrême
Aussi grande je crois que dans le monde même
Je ne sais qu’en penser…

But I am deceived, what do we see here today
No recollection, an extreme license
As great, I believe, as in the world itself
I know not what to think…

(CDX 112)

In Carmel, the plural *licences* generally referred to special permissions granted to engage in activities not normally encompassed in the habitual rule for daily life. These could range from permission to speak to another nun at a time when the rule of silence was in effect to permission for the organization of a celebration such as the one witnessed by Julie’s visitor. After French Carmel had been established by Spanish nuns at the beginning of the 17th century there was, it seems, some controversy regarding these *licences*. After Teresa’s close associates Ana de Jesús and Ana de San Bartolomé had each served a short term as prioress of the convent of Faubourg Saint-Jacques, Carmel’s first French prioress was elected.
Madeleine de Saint-Joseph (1578-1635) served as prioress of the Grand Carmel from 1608-1615 and again from 1624-1635, and was an influential presence in Parisian Carmel in the early 17th century. In her letters, Madeleine makes specific mention of Carmelite licences, specifically those traditionally granted around Christmas and Easter which, she writes:

ne sont pas un usage qui remonte à Sainte Thérèse: elle n’en parle jamais, ses biographes non plus. – Monsieur de Bérulle n’aimait pas cet usage et l’eût supprimé, s’il avait vécu. – Il a d’ailleurs raccourci de deux jours la durée des licences […]…je vous dirai qu’il [Bérulle] ne croyait point non plus que nous que cette coutume vînt de sainte Thérèse et qu’il la tenait bien plus propre à divertir les esprits et à les dissiper qu’à augmenter la dévotion… (Madeleine de Saint-Joseph, letter CCXI) 172

The 18th-century Carmelites of Saint-Denis take a contrary view of these licences, but like Madeleine de Saint-Joseph, they also lay claim to a “true” Teresian heritage. In a text entitled Des licences, ou grandes récréations, they write:

Quoique la Règle et les Constitutions ne fassent aucune mention des licences, l’usage primitif, et général qui est le meilleur interprète des lois; ne permet pas de douter que Notre Sainte Mère Thérèse n’en ait accordé quelques-unes.

En effet s’il est aisé de marquer le temps où certains de nos monastères du Royaume ont aboli les licences qui y subsistaient auparavant, on ne saurait dire quand elles y ont commencé, ce qui est une preuve indubitable que leur origine est la fondation même des couvents, que c’est par conséquent à nos Mères Espagnoles

172 “[The licences] …are not a custom that comes from Saint Teresa: she never mentions them, and neither do her biographers. Monsieur de Bérulle [superior of the French Carmelites] did not like this practice and would have done away with it, had he lived. He had already reduced the period of these licences by two days [use actual letters]…I will tell you that he did not believe, any more than we do, that this custom came from Saint Teresa and that he believed it to be more likely to distract and dissipate the spirit than to increase devotion.”
qu’on doit en attribuer l’usage et par conséquent que cet usage était conforme à l’esprit, et à la pratique de Sainte Thérèse…

Further along in this same passage, it is explained that of the licences/grandes récréations, the principal ones are

…celles de Noël, et de Pâques, jours où la pénitence qui les a précédés rend le soulagement utile, et presque nécessaire…

Again, a claim is made regarding authentic Teresian heritage and practice, and in making this claim the notion of balance is evoked, as days of licences and relative relaxation of the rule counterbalance periods of penitence. And while neither the passage from the manuscripts of 18th-century Saint-Denis nor Madeleine’s letter from 17th-century Faubourg Saint-Jacques specifically mentions cantiques, it is important to note that a significant portion of poems from Beaune, Brussels, Antwerp, Saint-Denis and Compiègne appear to correspond to the times of licence criticized by Madeleine and defended by the Carmelites of Saint-Denis. It is also worth noting that here too, potential differences between text and tradition are raised.

Both of these passages pro- and contra-licences make similar statements, that “Teresa never mentions” or “the Rule and the Constitutions never mention” the licences, but both also confirm their existence and traditional nature. Madeleine contends that they are traditional but not Teresian, and the Carmelites of Saint-Denis argue that they are both, and that it is by

173 Des licences, ou les Grandes Récréations. In Réflexions et instructions sur les principaux devoirs de notre saint état, pp. 7-11. “Although the Rule and the Constitutions make no mention of the licenses, the primitive custom, which is in general the best interpreter of the laws, leaves no room for doubt that our Saintly Mother Teresa did not allow for some. Indeed, if it is simple to mark the time when certain of our monasteries [convents] in the [French] Kingdom abolished the licenses that had previously survived there, we would not be able to say when they began, which is irrefutable proof that their origin is the very foundation of the convents and that it is therefore to our Spanish Mothers that we must attribute the custom and therefore that this custom was in conformity with the spirit and the practice of Saint Teresa…”

174 Ibid., 9. “…those of Christmas, and those at Easter, days when the penitence that has preceded them makes some easing useful, and almost necessary…”

175 Each of the collections of manuscripts studied here contains a significant number of poems specifically designated as cantiques for Christmas. As Marie-Françoise Grivot explains in her edition of the letters of Marguerite du Saint-Sacrement (of Beaune, see chapter II), “La fin de décembre est la grande période des cantiques au Carmel”; “The end of December is the great period of cantiques in Carmel…” (25).
their very traditional nature that we can be sure they are authentically Teresian. Once again, a conception of Teresian Carmel based upon “official” texts comes into conflict with one unsupported by those sources but suggested in less official documents. This time, however, the more restricted interpretation of Teresian Carmel comes from within rather than from without, and in this light Julie’s reasons for linking Carmelite poetry and song with orthodoxy and truth and setting them in opposition to the perceived falsehoods and excesses of Jansenism become clearer. She takes advantage of a particular moment in the *crise janséniste* at which a defense of *alegría* seems particularly appropriate, and even important, as excesses of austerity have come to be closely associated with (Jansenist) error. And since *alegría* can so easily be defended and justified in this context, Julie avails herself of the opportunity to contest what was apparently regarded in 18th-century Saint-Denis as a misinterpretation of Teresian Carmel put forth in an earlier era. The *hermite*, already representative of a number of erroneous notions, now stands for yet another, this time one that originates within Carmel itself.

**Acceptance and Assimilation**

In restoring equilibrium in Carmel, Julie appropriates a character type linked to Jansenist excesses and shows him the error of his ways – or more precisely, where he has let austerity and *alegría* slip out of balance. But his acceptance of this balance is, in fact, a re-acceptance – and this, like other details of Julie’s text, is charged with a surprising degree of meaning. After a convincing explanation on the part of the two Carmelites, the hermit agrees that their celebration is indeed a worthy one, and pledges his own participation in it:

\[
\text{C’est du plus raisonnable, ha! vraiment que j’ai tort} \\
\text{Continuez, mes sœurs avec vous bien d’accord}
\]
Je m’unirai de cœur à la fête publique
Je mêlerai ma voix à votre doux cantique…

It is most reasonable, ha! How wrong I was
Continue, my sisters, in full agreement with you
I will join whole-heartedly in the public celebration
I will add my voice to your sweet cantique…

(CDX 113)

When he does finally join the nuns in song, he himself explains that rather than accepting an entirely new mode of devotion, he is in fact returning to something that he once knew and actively practiced:

Chantez, aimables sœurs, chantez votre maman
Écoutez, et suivez votre vif sentiment
Mais que je voie avant, j’ai je crois quelque chose
Qui servirait très bien pour cette même cause
Autrefois tous les ans à la St Barnabé
J’étais le boute-en-train pour fêter notre abbé
Voici, je me souviens…

(L’HERMITE CHANTE SUR L’AIR
« QUOI, MA VOISINE… ») :
Dans cette sainte solitude
Chantons sans fin
Interrompons aussi l’étude
Jusqu’à demain…

139
Sing, amiable sisters, sing to your mother
Listen to and follow your keen sentiment
But let me see first, I think I have something
That would serve quite well this same cause
In the past, every year at St Barnaby
I was the most fervent in praising our abbot
Here, I remember…

(The Hermit sings to the tune,
“WHAT, MY NEIGHBOR…”):
In this holy solitude
Let us sing without end
Let us also interrupt our studies
Until tomorrow…

(CDX 117)

As a young monk, he too realized the importance of a counter-balance to the rigors of monastic life. Having lost sight of this for a time, he has now come back to and re-embraced an abandoned tradition. At the beginning of the play, when the young Carmelite asks his name, the hermit identifies himself as votre humble serviteur, frère Marcion (“your humble servant, brother Marcion”). Perhaps more heavily charged than any other reference in Julie’s play, the name Marcion connects the hermite to a figure that predates even those adopted by the Solitaires of Port-Royal as “ancestors”.176 It also labels him as a wayward and unredeemed soul who stands against orthodoxy and truth. While the 18th-century Jansenist

176 Marcion (85-160 A.D.), one of the earliest Christians, was expelled from the Roman Catholic community around the year 140 and founded his own rival church. Condemned for his heretical ideas (for example, he rejected the writings of the Old Testament and taught that Christ was not the son of the God of the Jews, but the son of a different, “good God” of the New Testament), he was considered a most dangerous enemy of the Catholic Church and is one of the most famous heretics in Christian history.
struggle had a significant, indeed predominant, political dimension, for some engaged in it, nothing less than salvation was at stake. On each side there were some convinced of the other’s certain damnation. As one Jansenist Carmelite from the convent of Troyes told a confessor who persuaded her to accept *Unigenitus*, “Vous regardez l’acceptation de la bulle comme la voie du salut et moi je la regarde comme la porte de l’enfer. Ainsi nous sommes très éloignés du compte”. 177 A Carmelite brought back into the fold by her acceptance of the papal decree was likely regarded by the “victors” as saved. The heretic Marcion’s symbolic acceptance of *Unigenitus* – by way of Carmelite poetry and song – signals the return of the wayward, and also does the figurist Jansenists one better, in a sense. While her hermite is something of a hybrid character, representing as he does both an ancient heretic and a group of revered early Christians (as well as a group of 17th-century Jansenist recluses, two 18th-century Jansenist confessors, and possibly even a prominent 17th-century Carmelite prioress), Julie is nonetheless engaging in the same sort of symbolic appropriation of historical figures employed by those who tried to take Faubourg Saint-Jacques as a new Port-Royal and cast 18th-century French Carmelites as the reincarnation of 17th-century dissident nuns. But rather than allowing history to repeat itself as the figurists believed it always would, Julie redeems her heretical figure, persuading him of his error and convincing him to rejoin a group to which he once belonged. As such, the play works as a re-enactment of Catherine-Dorothée’s conquests at Faubourg Saint-Jacques and Saint-Denis, using Carmelite poetry as an unlabelled but decipherable proxy for *Unigenitus*. Carmelite *cantiques* in turn gain by their association with orthodoxy and truth, and are justified as part of a balanced spiritual existence, in accordance with the example set by Teresa of Avila two centuries earlier. To the Jansenist extreme of austerity, a balancing dose of *alegria* is added; where Teresian legacy is misconstrued, the record is set straight; to outsiders with a mistaken notion of convent life, an

177 “You see the acceptance of the decree as the way to salvation, and I see it as the gates of Hell. We could thus not be farther apart”. *Les Nouvelles Ecclésiastiques*, Sept. 25, 1743. Cited in Noirfontaine 390.
edifying and corrective example is given; where the appropriateness of poem and song in spiritual life is questioned, a vigorous defense is made. And finally, Carmelite poetry continues to function as historical register, and to record perspectives and voices rarely heard in Julie’s time (or in ours, for that matter), a voice that initially spoke primarily inward, but begins more and more to project toward objects beyond the walls. As in the poems of the Carmelites of the Spanish Netherlands, the tradition of composing verse in Carmel is evolving and serving a new function, that of leaving a record and interpretation of controversial events and circumstances, and engaging in commentary on those events and circumstances in a way that to date has not been documented in French convent writing, with one exception: that of the Carmelites of Compiègne, whose cantiques engaged even more forcefully than any other Carmelite poems seen so far, and whose poems mark an endpoint in this part of Carmelite history.

End Note: Convent Theater

Although this study takes as its object convent poetry generally rather than convent theater in particular, the play from Saint-Denis – only one of a number of plays contained in the archives of French and Flemish Carmel, which are deserving of their own study with an exclusive focus on theater – serves to confirm a hypothesis that has been proposed in the course of studying early modern convent theater in Europe. In the introduction to Convent Theatre in Early Modern Italy, Elissa Weaver writes that convent theater was a widespread practice in Italy, Spain, the colonies and “probably all of catholic Europe” (Weaver 2). The play composed at Saint-Denis by Julie de Jésus and others like it from Carmelite archives suggest that Weaver is right, at least in the case of France: while there are no annotations to Julie’s text that give clues as to the circumstances of its performance, its very composition shows that French Carmelites, like their Spanish and Italian counterparts, were engaged in
some degree of theatrical activity. This, however, is matter for a study unto itself, and for the moment, the final stages of the evolution of the Carmelite *cantique* remain to be told.
V

La guerre au monde and counter-revolution a lo divino:

The Carmelites of Saint-Denis and Compiègne

(manuscript dates: 1770-1794)

Julie de Jésus, the author of the anti-Jansenist play from the convent of Saint-Denis, was also a prolific writer of shorter cantique-style poems, and when she composed poetry in this mode, she was, like her Carmelite predecessors, an imitator of Teresa of Avila:

Sur l’air “dans ma cabane obscure”  To the tune “In my dark cabin”

Charmante solitude  Charming solitude
Tu fais tout mon Bonheur  You are my entire happiness
Avec toi, mon étude  With you, my study
C’est de plaire au Seigneur  Is to please the Lord
Ici dans le silence  Here in the silence
Je médite la foi  I meditate on faith
Je vis en confiance  I live in confidence
Ne vivant plus pour moi…  No longer living for myself...

The final verse of this stanza of Julie’s poem, ne vivant plus pour moi, is generally evocative of a Christian devotion to God rather than to oneself, and also specifically reminiscent of Teresa of Avila’s muero porque no muero:

Vivo sin vivir en mí  I live without living in myself,
Y de tal manera espero,  And in such a way I hope,

178 Lettres de Sœur Julie de Jésus, Archives Départementales du Nord, Lille, France, ms. 276. Letter from Julie to her godmother, 17 August 1770.
But Julie’s poem recalls Teresa’s *muero porque no muero* in another, less obvious way as well: in the case of *muero porque no muero*, it has been shown that Teresa deliberately took a secular, “worldly” love poem and made a transposition of it *a lo divino*, borrowing some of the verses and the refrain of previous secular versions of the poem and “turning” them to a sacred purpose (see chapter one). In the poems of the Carmelites of Beaune, Brussels and Antwerp seen thus far, while the melodies to which the poems were to be sung are often indicated, the *a lo divino* aspect of these pieces appears in most cases to have been a very general one, adopting popular airs (often the same one used for multiple poems) as melodic vehicles for spiritual verse in combinations that do not suggest any important relationship between tone and text. It would appear, then, that the first generations of Teresa’s French and Flemish daughters stayed true to the practice of adapting popular songs for the settings of their *cantiques*, but may have concerned themselves relatively little with any specific connections between the secular original and the sacred contrafactum. But in the case of Julie de Jésus’ poem on the popular air *Dans ma cabane obscure*, the choice of melody betrays a deliberate choice – one in which a tune is adopted not only for its popularity, but also for its

179 English translation mine.
message and connotations, and their potential to be “turned” to a sacred purpose in line with Carmelite spiritual practices and way of life.

The melody of *Dans ma cabane obscure* is taken from Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s opera *Le devin du village* (“The Village Soothsayer”), first performed in 1752. In the original lyric of the song, the shepherd Colin expresses his desire to have his lover Colette join him in the *cabane*:

Dans ma cabane obscure  
In my dark cabin
Toujours soucis nouveaux;  
Ever new worries;
Vent, soleil, ou froidure,  
Wind, sun or cold,
Toujours peine et travaux.  
Always grief and hardship.
Colette, ma bergère,  
Colette, my shepherdess,
Si tu viens l'habiter  
If you will come live in it,
Colin dans sa chaumière  
Colin in his cottage
N'a rien à regretter.  
Has nothing to regret.

(Rousseau, scene VII)

*Le devin du village* was a great popular success, and Louis XV is said to have enjoyed it so much that he sang tunes from the opera all day long (Gallet-Guerne 118), and even offered Rousseau a pension for life. The tune of *Dans ma cabane obscure* also enjoyed success independent of its original context and reappeared in operas by several composers in the years after the début of *Le devin* (Schneider 236–237). That its melody, even without the original text, would have carried with it connotations of the two lovers in the *cabane* is likely.181 And although Julie does not integrate any mention of the *cabane* into the body of

---

180 “…the king continued to hum the *air* from the opera in the most out-of-tune voice in his kingdom”
181 Charles-Simon Favart, a contemporary of Rousseau’s, used the tune *Dans ma cabane obscure* in his *Tircis et Doristée* (1752) and again in *Annette et Lubin* (1762), where the tune is referred to simply as l’*air du devin* (“the
her poem, this small, dark space is nonetheless the crucial link between the secular original and its sacred contrafactum. The most readily apparent connection between Julie’s *cabane* and that of the shepherd Colin is that while Colin appears to suffer in Colette’s absence, Julie relishes the opportunity for “charming solitude” in the cabin, and thereby effects a transposition of an amorous plea for human companionship, transforming it into a celebration of retreat from the world and communion with the divine. And so with the *cabane* serving as the nexus between two texts, one worldly and one sacred, Julie moves beyond contrafactum as convenience – adopting a popular air solely for its memorability or metric structure – toward the realm of the motivated contrafactum, one that carefully chooses a tune and theme that are celebrated in the world outside the convent and exploits their potential for sacred expression. The deliberateness of this choice is even more apparent when one takes into account specific Carmelite practices of solitude, and the spaces in which spiritual isolation took place in Julie’s time.

In the interior garden of many Carmelite convents, there is a tiny house reserved for solitary retreats, in which each sister is allowed one such retreat of ten days’ time per year. During melody from *le devin*”), suggesting that this may have been the best-remembered melody from Rousseau’s original opera, and perhaps the one that Louis XV was so fond of repeating. The lyric of the 1762 adaptation makes no reference to the *cabane*, but the general amorous sentiment of Rousseau’s original is maintained:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French Text</th>
<th>English Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monseigneur, Lubin m'aime</td>
<td>Your grace, Lubin loves me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sauf votre bon plaisir</td>
<td>Save for your consent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moi je l'aime de même</td>
<td>And I love him the same</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Il fait tout mon désir</td>
<td>He is all my desire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensemble des l'enfance</td>
<td>Together since childhood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nous étions de loisir</td>
<td>We were in leisure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nous fimes connaissance</td>
<td>We met one another</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sauf votre bon plaisir</td>
<td>Save for your consent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(Favart, scene 10)*

The exact date of Julie’s poem is not known, but it appears in a letter written by her in 1770. She likely composed her poem after *Dans ma cabane obscure* had already reappeared a number of times in the work of composers who borrowed from Rousseau. Her usage of the title *Dans ma cabane obscure* rather than *L’air du devin* may reinforce the connection to the original lyric and thus to the lover’s cabin turned into a space of meditation and divine union.

182 This has been customary in a number of religious orders for several centuries. The French Cistercians, for example, also allowed for such a retreat, in keeping with a tradition of Saint Ignatius of Loyola. See Marie-
this time, she has no contact with any members of the community except attending Mass, and dedicates herself to silent contemplation and prayer. The importance of solitude, or more precisely, being alone with God, has been paramount in Carmel since Teresa’s time. In the *Libro de la Vida*, Teresa consistently emphasizes her need to be alone in prayer and she describes her *Castillo Interior* saying that “in this temple of God, in this dwelling of his, He and the soul alone enjoy communion in great silence". In French Carmel, solitude and contemplation continued to be central to the lives of Teresa’s descendants. In an undated poem from the archives of the Carmel of Bordeaux, the community – likely at the time of récréation – greets one of its sisters who has come back from her “desert”:

Ma chère Sœur My dear Sister
que faisiez-vous what did you do
dans votre aimable solitude ? in your pleasant solitude ?
Y goûtiez-vous Did you taste there
de la douceur, of sweetness,
du trouble ou de la quiétude ? of unrest or of stillness ?
Avez-vous trouvé Did you find
votre Bien-aimé, your Beloved,
sur la place publique, in the public square,
ou dans le secret or in the secret
de ce doux cellier of the sweet cellar
qu’on appelle mystique ?


Teresa felt this need from an early age, and wrote of the desire she and her brother Lorenzo had as children to become martyrs and hermits, and to live in solitude (*Libro de la Vida*, 1:6). Elsewhere in the *Vida*, her adult desire for solitude manifests itself frequently (*Vida*, 4:7, 6:3, 7:3, 13:9, 15:22).

*Castillo Interior*, Séptima Morada, III:11.

Poem included in personal letter from Sœur Marie-Jany, Archivist of Carmel of Bordeaux, June 2, 2008. The Carmelites of Beaune also drew upon the image of “the cellars/of your most sweet and delicious wine”, taken
The “cabane” of the Carmelite convent of Sens, France, reserved for solitary retreats.

Sister Marie-Jany, archivist of the Bordeaux Carmel, describes the practice of the ten-days’ solitude and introduces this poem in vivid metaphors: “Nous avons la possibilité depuis le 17e

from the Song of Solomon II:4. This subterranean space is also evoked by John of the Cross in his Cántico Espiritual, in which he links that space to the infusion of mystical knowledge – la ciencia sabrosa (literally, “the savory science”):

En la interior bodega
de mi Amado bevi, y cuando salía
por toda aquesta bega,
ya cosa no sabía,
y el ganado perdí que antes seguía.

Allí me dio su pecho,
allí me enseñó ciencia muy sabrosa,
y lo le di de hecho
a mí, sin dexar cosa;
allí le prometí de ser su esposa.

In the interior wine cellar
of my Beloved I drank, and when I came out
onto that great plain,
I knew nothing at all
and lost the herd I had been following.

There he gave me his breast,
there he showed me the very sweet knowledge
and I gave to him
of myself, without leaving anything;
there I promised to be his bride.

Cántico Espiritual, stanzas 27-28 (Juan de la Cruz, Poesía, ed. Domingo Ynduráin, Madrid: Ed. Cátedra, 1983, 255.)

As mentioned previously, John’s writing would have been a familiar reference for French and Belgian Carmelites. Here the correlation between the solitude sought after by Teresa, the practice of retreats and the mystical experience generally is clear, as both John’s poem and the poem cited above from Bordeaux describe the emergence from a state of divine communion with heightened knowledge or spiritual experience.
siècle de faire chacune une retraite de 10 jours en complète solitude, l’assistance à la messe exceptée. A la première récréation qui suit un retour de retraite, la communauté chante l’ermite afin de lui demander un bouquet spirituel, une fleur de son désert. Il est possible que ce chant, par ses paroles et par son air soit très ancien…”.\textsuperscript{186} Marie-Jany also explains that certain sisters would spontaneously prepare a poem in response, and that “une de nos sœurs anciennes voulait toujours composer des couplets à cette occasion”.\textsuperscript{187}

The motif of the \textit{cabane} thus had special relevance to Carmelites and their spiritual practices, and demonstrates that Julie’s contrafactum was indeed a deliberate one, in the sense that the \textit{tone} was chosen specifically for its potential in converting the amorous message of the original secular song into a sacred song of devotion. As will be shown, this careful choosing of “adaptable” popular airs was to become both more frequent and more sharply directed at specific targets in the poems of French Carmelites of Julie’s time.

\textbf{“Messieurs du monde”}

In a passage from a letter to her godmother in 1764, Julie reinforced one of the messages suggested by any contrafactum \textit{a lo divino} that modifies an expression of secular love for a sacred purpose, namely that divine love and its expression are at least the equal of, if not superior to, their worldly equivalents. Countering the notion that the silence and solitude she references in her poem are among the most difficult burdens that Carmelite nuns are made to bear, she explains:

\begin{flushright}\textsuperscript{186} \textit{Ibid.} “Since the 17\textsuperscript{th} century, each of us has the possibility of taking a retreat of ten days in complete solitude, with the exception of attending Mass. At the first recreation that follows a return from retreat, the community sings to the ‘hermit’ in order to ask her for a spiritual bouquet, a flower from her desert. It is possible that this song, from its words and its melody, may be quite ancient…” \\
\textsuperscript{187} \textit{Ibid.} “one of our former sisters always composed verses on this occasion”\end{flushright}
C’est le silence dit-on qui fait la plus grande pénitence pour les filles, mais je vous assure que c’est une calomnie, car rien ne nous plaît davantage que d’être seule, avec le seul qui peut pleinement et uniquement nous satisfaire, qu’on nous permette de savoir goûter le doux plaisir que messieurs les mondains connaissent et priset si fort, d’être tête à tête avec quelqu’un qu’on aime, nous le connaissons aussi ce plaisir, et nous savons aussi y donner un beau prix…

Making it clear that the bond of love between a Carmelite nun and God is at least as strong as that felt by messieurs les mondains (men of the world) and those (presumably women) that they love, Julie not only underscores one potential message of a contrafactum a lo divino, that sacred love can equal and surpass worldly love, she also takes on an opponent who thus far has not been part of Carmelite discourse – the mondains. It has been shown how, as the world outside the walls of their convent changed, the Carmelites of Mol and Saint-Denis responded in their poems, telling their versions of events and critiquing those whom they viewed as their opponents, or even enemies. Where the Carmelites of the Spanish Netherlands took on their Calvinist foes, the nuns of Saint-Denis sought not only to discredit Jansenists, but also to counter the perceptions and criticisms of another opponent, the mondains. In the 17th and 18th centuries, the term mondain was, depending upon the person using it, indicative of a wide range of possible commentaries. Lewis Seifert gives a concise overview of possible interpretations of the term, both positive and negative; in a positive sense, it could be used to refer to “an elite sociological group and the idea of sociability that exemplified it”, a certain social stratum, often a refined elite with connections to the court. From a religious perspective, the term mondain took on decidedly negative connotations, as “specific aspects

188 Lettres de Sœur Julie de Jésus, Archives Départementales du Nord, Lille, France, ms. 276. Letter from Julie to her godmother, 27 October, 1764. “It is the silence, they say, that is the greatest penitence for nuns, but I assure you that this is a lie, because nothing pleases us more than being alone with the only one who can fully and uniquely satisfy us, that we are permitted to savor the sweet pleasure that men of the world know and value so highly, to be one on one with someone that we love, we know this pleasure as well, and we also know the great esteem in which to hold it…”
of what might be called mondain culture were repeatedly attacked by various conservative religious interests…religious critics railed against everything from fashion to pastimes” (Seifert 69). But for Carmelite nuns, who were not typically in the habit of unprovoked moralizing or criticizing those who had not criticized them, the term mondain is more likely a defensive reaction to some criticism of convent life. And indeed, such criticisms abounded in Julie’s time. In Diderot’s La Religieuse, the convent is a prison, and in La Promenade du sceptique, he compares nuns to caged birds; in the Encyclopédie which Diderot edited, an entry on religious orders by the Chevalier de Jaucourt describes such communities as “familles éternelles où il ne naît personne” (“eternal families that give birth to no-one”)\(^\text{189}\), and we have already seen that Carmelites themselves were targeted in Meusnier de Querlon’s pornographic Histoire de la tourière des Carmelites (Story of the Carmelite Gatekeeper, 1745). Carmelite poetry thus became more and more focused on defending the way of life of the cloistered nun, as convents and nuns became increasingly viewed as prisons and prisoners, or even dens of iniquity and whores.\(^\text{190}\) But striking back at the mondain and his world was, as we shall see further along, indeed reflective of specific criticisms aimed at cloistered Carmelite nuns, as high-profile female members of 18\(^\text{th}\)-century French society became like trophies to be captured or lost in the struggle between the convent and “the world”.

An unattributed poem written in Saint-Denis circa 1751 entitled Pour la réception de ma sœur Thaïs (likely for her taking of the habit, her initial entry into the convent) is, like Julie’s poem set to Dans ma cabane obscure, reminiscent of Spanish Carmelite poetry of Teresa of Avila’s time: the 16\(^\text{th}\)-century Spanish Carmelite poet Maria de San Alberto (1568-1640) had celebrated the sandals – alpargatas – worn by Discalced Carmelites of her era:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Más quiero la alpargata del Carmelo} & \quad \text{I love the Carmelite sandal more}
\end{align*}
\]

---


\(^{190}\) See Choudhury, in particular chapter 5, “School of Virtue, School of Vice”.

152
que cuanta plata y oro cría el cielo
than all the gold and silver
Heaven yields

[...]

Amor quitando todo impedimento
Love, removing all impediments
por medio de alpargata y pie descalzo…
by means of sandals and bare feet...

(Arenal and Schlau 147)

This poem was at once a celebration of the Carmelite habit and a playful reference to a prize that María had won in a poetry competition: a pair of sandals. The poem written two centuries later in Saint-Denis takes up the same theme:

Oui, telles sont nos alpargates
Yes, such are our sandals
Faites de triples rangs de nattes
Made of triple rows of braids
De chanvres tirés au cordeau
Of hemp strands made into cords
Rien n’est si beau
Nothing is so beautiful
La peau d’anguille sèche et nette
The skin of an eel dry and neat
Que l’on ratisse qu’on apprête
That is combed and stretched
En fait le précieux cordon
Goes to make the laces
Rien n’est si bon…
Nothing is so good...

(GRE 438-439, stanza 4)
Recalling earlier Spanish poems with its celebration of Carmelite attire (and use of the term *alpargates*, which itself derives from the Spanish *alpargatas* mentioned by María de San Alberto), and an *a lo divino* contrafactum (a number of French songs had previously used the same refrains *rien n’est si beau – rien n’est si bon* to refer to secular pleasures), this poem also takes its praise of the Carmelite attire and way of life and intensifies it to a level of a defense, and even a “war” against the outside world and its perception of the Carmelite way.

The poem continues:

De nos façons si l’humain gronde  
If humans grumble about our ways
Nous déclarons la guerre au monde  
We declare war on the world
Pour lui pleine opposition  
In full opposition
Rien n’est si bon.  
Nothing is so good.

(GRE 439-440, stanza 7)

The letter written by Julie de Jésus to her godmother and the above-cited poem evince a shift in the tone of Carmelite discourse, pushing back at the criticisms of *le monde* and *messieurs les mondains*, and becoming more aggressive in response to the outside world. Another poem
included in the same volume\(^{191}\), this time by a male author, one “Mr Robinet” (perhaps a friend of the convent) celebrates the profession of sister Thais, and makes clearer what her presence in Carmel represented for the community:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sur l’air, <em>Attendez-moi sous l’orme</em></td>
<td>To the tune, <em>Wait for me under the Elm</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thaïs et Nathalie</td>
<td>Thais and Nathalie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Par un concert heureux</td>
<td>In happy unison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>De manière accomplie</td>
<td>In accomplished fashion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ont prononcé leurs vœux</td>
<td>Have pronounced their vows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Le Carmel s’en étonne</td>
<td>Carmel is surprised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mais c’est avec plaisir</td>
<td>But it is with pleasure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La capture est trop bonne</td>
<td>The capture is too good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pour ne pas consentir</td>
<td>To not agree to it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Une mer orageuse</td>
<td>A stormy sea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Du monde est le portrait</td>
<td>Is a portrait of the world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La pêche avantageuse</td>
<td>Profitable fishing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Très rarement s’y fait</td>
<td>Is rarely done there</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Toutes deux étaient reines</td>
<td>Both were queens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Et d’un bonheur complet</td>
<td>And in complete joy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C’est prendre deux baleines</td>
<td>It is taking two whales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D’un seul coup de filet</td>
<td>With just one fishing line</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On se dit dans le monde</td>
<td>They say in the world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Par forme de secret</td>
<td>By way of a secret</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{191}\) *Cantiques spirituels sur la naissance de notre Seigneur et autres sujets, faits par nos sœurs de Saint Denis et par celles de notre maison rue de Grenelle.*
While sister Nathalie is not named in Robinet’s poem by her secular name, the “worldly” identity of sister Thais – the name by which she was known before entering the convent – is given in the third stanza: Rupelmonde. The Rupelmonde in question was Chrétienne de Gramont-Rupelmonde, a Carmelite novice whose personal piety was not in question, but whose family name had perhaps come to be associated with things worldly. Chrétienne’s mother-in-law, also known as Madame de Rupelmonde, would likely have been forgotten by history entirely had she not caught the eye of a young mondain who became her travel companion and lover for a time – Voltaire. While Charles de Villermont wrote in Les Rupelmonde à Versailles, “Point à craindre qu’elle [Chrétienne] se laissât aller aux mêmes

192 Voltaire’s poem Épître à Uranie, sometimes also called Le pour et le contre, was composed in 1722 while Voltaire accompanied Madame de Rupelmonde on a trip to the Low Countries, and is dedicated to his traveling companion. The poem begins with these verses:

Épître à Uranie, à madame de Rupelmonde
Tu veux donc, belle Uranie,
Qu’érigé par ton ordre en Lucrèce nouveau,
Devant toi, d’une main hardie,
Aux superstitions j’arrache le bandeau…

Epistle to Uranie, to Madame de Rupelmonde
You desire, then, fair Uranie,
That, established by your order as a new Lucretius,
Before you, with a bold hand,
I tear the blindfold away from superstitions…

As Peter Gay explains, “in the Épître [Voltaire]…defies a cruel God and all His horrible mysteries and explicitly abandons Christianity so that he may be free to love the deist deity…” (Gay 387).
erreurs dont on avait accusé sa belle-mère” (Villermont 157-158), that a Rupelmonde would be “captured” by Carmel appears to have been seen as a significant victory in the struggle between the cloister and the world.

In the first verses of the third stanza cited above, Robinet writes that “in the world” (dans le monde), people speak critically of Rupelmonde’s choice, and say that she has been prise au trébuchet, “caught in the trap”. A number of traditional songs use this same formula and mention of the trébuchet – the “trap” – as a pejorative reference to being “trapped” in a marriage. The following version of the trébuchet formula, cited in Jérôme Bujeaud’s 1895 Chants et chansons populaires de l’ouest, likely conveys the intended meaning of those “in the world” who criticized the younger Rupelmonde’s choice:

Quand c’est pour me marier
On me mène à la messe,
Le curé m’met l’anneau au doigt
M’y voilà, m’y voilà prise,
Le curé m’met l’anneau au doigt
M’y voilà prise au trébuchet.

(Butjeaud 44)

However, as the poem from the convent of Saint-Denis retorts: Rira bien à son aise/Qui rira le dernier (“He who laughs last, laughs best”), suggesting that Rupelmonde’s choice has been the right one and that she laughs at the judgment of “the world”, which in her mind surely differs from the last judgment of God. And if the poem strikes a triumphant tone and suggests that a verdict has been rendered in favor of Christianity and against le monde, its use of contrafactum may also reinforce the poem’s message, as in the case of Julie de Jésus’ poem

193 “There was no concern that [Chrétienne] would allow herself to commit the same errors of which her mother-in-law had been accused”
on *Dans ma cabane obscure* and the poem celebrating Carmelite attire and way of life, built around the secular refrains *rien n’est si beau – rien n’est si bon*.

The tune given for the poem declaring victory on the world and redeeming the name of Rupelmonde, *Attendez-moi sous l’orme* (“Wait for me under the elm”), is an expression used to suggest a meeting one has no intention of attending, and the *orme* – the elm – is also a symbol of a place where verdicts are rendered and justice done. As in the case of *Dans ma cabane obscure* and *Rien n’est si beau – rien n’est si bon*, the details are small but significant. Either the world will wait in vain for Rupelmonde’s return to it, or a verdict has been rendered “under the elm” in favor of Christianity, or perhaps both. A play by Jean-François Regnard, published in 1694 under the same title (*Attendez-moi sous l’orme*), concludes with a song that uses the title as its refrain and ends with these verses:

> Attendez-moi sous l’orme          Wait for me under the elm
> Vous m’attendrez longtemps.       You’ll be waiting for me a long time.

(Regnard 452)

And so again, both the tenor of the poem and the choice of melodic vehicle make a defense of Carmelites facing external criticism, and in this case, victory is even declared over *le monde* and *messieurs les mondains*, using themes and tunes that allow specific and precisely targeted “attacks” on worldly persons and notions. And as shall be seen, this resistance was to find greater and greater expression in Carmelite poetry, as both content and contrafacta turned against “the world” intensified in the latter years of the 18th century, and the women “captured” by Carmel became increasingly significant acquisitions.

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A Princess in the Convent

If the arrival of a Rupelmonde in the convent of Saint-Denis may have represented something of a victory over vice and anti-Christian sentiment, the fact that Carmel could attract novices from the high aristocracy\textsuperscript{195} was also likely cause for celebration. As the poem celebrating the vows of Nathalie and Thais suggests, both of these young women were of noble lineage, and represented important acquisitions for the convent:

\begin{verbatim}
Toutes deux étaient reines                        Both were queens
Et d’un bonheur complet                        And in complete joy
C’est prendre deux baleines                    It is taking two whales
D’un seul coup de filet…                      With just one fishing line…
\end{verbatim}

These two “queens” were neither the first nor the most famous women of noble birth to enter Carmel – nearly a century before Chrétienne de Gramont-Rupelmonde took her vows at Saint-Denis, Louise de la Vallière (1644-1710), a lady of the court and mistress of Louis XIV, entered the Parisian convent of Faubourg Saint-Jacques, turning away from the world of court society and toward the austerity of Carmel. And so there was both a precedent set and an appetite for such “victories” when in 1770, the arrival of a famous postulante generated considerable excitement in the convent of Saint-Denis. Marie-Louise de France (1737-1787)\textsuperscript{196}, the seventh living daughter of Louis XV, entered the Saint-Denis Carmel at the age of thirty-three, having spent her adolescent years and early adulthood at the Court. Against some resistance from her father, Louise chose to leave the court for a life of contemplation within the walls of Carmel. As she crossed the threshold between these two radically

\textsuperscript{195} In addition to being a Rupelmonde by marriage (her husband had died in 1745), Sister Thais was the daughter of the duc de Gramont and of Geneviève de Gontaut, herself a daughter of the duc de Biron.

\textsuperscript{196} In the convent, Louise chose and adopted the name Thérèse de Saint-Augustin, but her fellow Carmelites had difficulty calling her anything but “Madame Louise”, the name and title with which she had been born. Noblewomen were born with the title Demoiselle, and daughters of royalty were born with the title Madame, such that the latter were already considered “ladies” and assigned the title that a married woman would have.
different phases of her life, she expressed this tension and broadcast her confidence in her choice in verse, on the occasion of her profession.  

The tradition of composing poems for ceremonies of taking of the habit, veiling and professions was by this time a long-standing one in Carmel. Teresa of Avila herself composed a number of poems for such occasions, including the following poem for Isabel de los Ángeles, a novice in the Carmel of Medina:

Hermana, por que veléis,  
So that you will be watchful, Sister,

Os han dado hoy este velo,  
Today they have veiled you,

Y no os va menos el cielo;  
On that your Heaven depends;

Por eso no os descuidéis...  
Do not be careless...

(ICS 2: 401)

In her poem, Teresa engages in a word-play between velo (veil) and velar (to keep watch).

Two centuries later, Louise would use the image of the veil in her own way, this time as part of a contrafactum justifying her choice:

Cantique de Mme Louise sur sa Profession
To the tune, importunate veil

Je suis une des Epouses  
I am one of the Brides

197 In a sense, Louise had made this transition before, in the opposite sense. She and her sister Sophie-Philippe (1734-1782) were raised at the Abbey of Fontevrault from their birth until 1750, when both sisters came to live at the palace of Versailles. For twenty years, from the age of thirteen to her entry into Carmel at the age of thirty-three, Louise lived at the court.

198 The aforementioned Libro de Romances y Coplas del Carmelo de Valladolid contains examples of such poems. See introduction, p. xli, “Coplas para hábitos y velos”. Also, see these poems by Teresa of Avila: “Buena ventura” (for the taking of the habit of Jerónima de la Encarnación, 1575), “En una profesión”, and “Profesión de Isabel de los Ángeles” (1571), TOC 662-665.

199 En una profesión, for the veiling of Sister Isabel de los Ángeles, 1569, Medina.
du Seigneur des Cieux

d’un sort si glorieux

ô Reines soyez jalouses

Mon Dieu mon Époux

que ce langage est doux

Puissant Monarque de la terre

ne jetez point les yeux sur moi

au maître même du tonnerre

j’ai donné mon cœur et ma foi

Sans balance je préfère

en conséquence de mon choix

aux plus brillants sceptres la croix

au Palais le Calvaire…

of the Lord of the Heavens

of such a glorious fate

be jealous o Queens

My God my Husband

how sweet is this language

Powerful Monarch of the earth

cast not your eyes upon me

to the very master of the thunder

I have given my heart and my faith

Without question I prefer

as consequence of my choice

to the most brilliant scepters the cross

to the Palace, Calvary…

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*Cantique de Mme Louise sur sa profession.* Archives of the convent of Pontoise, 1. Louise gave her vows in September 1771, one year after her arrival at Saint-Denis.
Powerful though this statement is, as Louise names her father (the “monarque de la terre”) and suggests that his earthly power is inferior to that of God, it should be pointed out that
Louis XV did indeed “cast his eyes” upon Louise after her profession, inside the very walls of the convent itself. As king, Louis was permitted access to religious houses including enclosed convents, and frequently visited Louise at Saint-Denis. This does not, however, discount the essential tension in the poem between the convent and the world. Louise concludes her poem with these verses, addressing the *mondains* in the same way that Julie de Jésus had done in her letter:

De ma dignité nouvelle
Mondain, vous n’êtes pas épris
Mais j’en connais assez le prix
Pour me contenter d’elle. 201

Of my new dignity
Worldly ones, you are not enamoured
But I know its value well enough
To be content with it.

In *Madame Louise, princesse au Carmel*, Bernard Hours catalogues a number of the reactions to Louise’s entry into Carmel, from the supportive to the critical and indifferent (114–115). The Carmelites of Saint-Denis summed up these opinions this way:

Les uns admiraient beaucoup sa constance
D’autres étaient touchés et convertis
Quelques-uns gardaient un profond silence
Le dirai-je, plusieurs en ont médité. 202

Some greatly admired her constancy
Others were touched and converted
Some maintained a profound silence
I will also say that some spoke ill of it.

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And so again, Carmelite poetry takes aim at the type of the *mondain* and his reaction to religious devotion, making a defense of the choice of a cloistered religious existence. And while the “pushing back” against the opinion of the *mondains* outside the convent can correctly be read as a general commentary on external criticisms, attention to the *air*, or melody, which Louise chose for the poem suggests that once again, the contrafactum at hand is not an “innocent”, or unmotivated one.

In a fairly obvious way, Louise plays with the title *Quel voile importun*, evoking the veil she will now wear permanently, the veil of a Carmelite that will, at least symbolically, shield her from the gaze of the world, and even from the eyes of her father, the “Monarch of the earth”. There may also be another less apparent message in her choice of tune and the contrafactum she composes on it. According to Bernard Hours, Louise was troubled by her father’s extramarital affairs, in particular his relationship with the Marquise de Pompadour (1721-1764) (*Madame Louise* 41). An enthusiast of literature and of the arts generally, Madame de Pompadour is known to have produced engravings and written fragments of poetry and music.

In *The Mistresses of Louis XV*, Edmond and Jules de Goncourt explain that Pompadour “feignait d’être jalouse des amours de l’Aurore pour le Roi” (63–64)203 when she composed the lyric and melody of the following song expressing her love for Louis:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quel voile importun nous couvre !</td>
<td>What importunate veil covers us?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Je veux un moment</td>
<td>I want for a moment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parcourir mon amant;</td>
<td>To have full run of my lover;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Que de charmes je découvre !</td>
<td>What charms I discover!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspends son réveil,</td>
<td>Suspend his waking,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puissant dieu du sommeil.</td>
<td>Powerful god of sleep.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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203 “[she] pretended to be jealous with the love of Aurora [the goddess of the dawn] for the King”
This text circulated widely after its composition, and was published in at least one collection of songs and in a memoir on Pompadour in which it is specifically attributed to her\textsuperscript{204}, and it seems likely that Louise would have been aware of the poem and its association with her father’s mistress. As a re-writing of Pompadour’s erotic text, now a pious celebration of the occasion on which she would leave behind the world inhabited by her father and his lover, it would have been a most effective contrafactum.\textsuperscript{205} Bernard Hours suggests that Louise likely suffered at her father’s choice of companion, not only because Pompadour’s non-aristocratic background “compromettait le prestige de la monarchie et du trône”, but because in the adulterous liaison the King “compromettait le salut de son âme” (Madame Louise 41).\textsuperscript{206} The musico-textual gesture Louise makes in her poem on \textit{Quel voile importun} may well be a deliberate one, very much in keeping with the message of her text in which she rejects the world of the court.

To what extent any of the above-cited poems were deliberate re-workings of secular pieces with the aim of criticizing specific individuals or attitudes cannot, for the moment, be determined with complete accuracy. But what is unquestionable is the pattern that emerges in

\textsuperscript{204} See Nouveau recueil de chansons, avec les airs notés, tome quatrième, Geneva: [s.n.], 1785, 143-144; Ange Goudar, Mémoires pour servir à l’histoire de La Marquise de Pompadour: traduits de L’anglois, Londres: Hooper, 1763, 106-107.
\textsuperscript{205} As a technical note, the first stanza of Louise’s poem follows exactly the rather irregular metrical structure of Pompadour’s original, 7-5-6-7-5-6-8-8-8-8-8.
\textsuperscript{206} “compromised the prestige of the monarchy and the throne”…“compromised the salvation of his soul”
Carmelite poems of the mid- to late-18th century, in which an increasing number of secular songs with potential for use as anti-
mondain criticisms are chosen as melodic vehicles for these poems, and an increasingly defiant mood in the texts of the poems themselves, as Carmelites responded to more and more anti-religious sentiment outside the walls of the convent.

**Madame Lidoine, Protégée and Protagonist**

The entry of Madame Louise into the Carmel of Saint-Denis had a determining influence on the well-being and future of the convent, which prior to Louise’s arrival was facing serious fiscal distress and dwindling recruitment, in part due to the turmoil of the years of Jansenist crisis described in chapter four. With the addition of Louise to their number, the Carmelites of Saint-Denis were assured financial stability (thanks to funds apportioned by Louis XV) and a dramatic expansion of their community. After the convent had been “purged” of its Jansenist element in 1745, recruitment began again at a reasonable pace, with twenty-nine new professions between 1745 and 1758. But following this thirteen-year period of growth came another twelve years, from 1758 to 1770, in which there were only two new professions. As such, Louise’s arrival in 1770 gave a much-needed boost to a convent threatened with extinction. After Louise, between 1770 and 1784, twenty-six new novices entered Saint-Denis, and the convent had regained its former strength and vitality (Hours, *Madame Louise* 146).

In her seventeen years at Saint-Denis, Louise was elected prioress twice, and held that position at the time of her death in 1787. Among the new Carmelites who applied to Saint-Denis during Louise’s first term as prioress (1773-1779) was Marie-Madeleine Lidoine (1752-1794), who continued the tradition of Carmelite poetry as vigorously as anyone before
her. In what is now referred to as the Recueil Lidoine (the “Lidoine Collection”), Marie-Madeleine left some 135 pages of cantiques, many bearing the stamp of Teresian influence, and many celebrating the history of 18th-century French Carmel. In a poem entitled Chanson allégorique, pèlerinage au château de l’âme (“Allegorical song, pilgrimage to the castle of the soul”), Marie-Madeleine compares the two heroines of Carmel as she sees them – Teresa of Avila and Madame Louise – in an imagined voyage to the château de l’âme, which was the French translation of the title of Teresa’s Castillo Interior. Presumably composed after Louise’s death in 1787, the poem evokes the “interior castle” of Teresa’s design and names Louise as its “lady”:

Ce fameux château de l’âme
Bâti sur un haut sommet
Dont Thérèse en traits de flamme
Nous trace un plan si parfait:
D’y faire un pèlerinage
J’avais fort devotion;
Mais je n’osais du voyage
Risquer l’exécution

[...] En séraphin transformée
J’y vis et je fus charmée
Louise la bien-aimée
De Louis le bien-aimé
Son nom, son rang de Madame
Elle a mis tout au tombeau

That famous castle of the soul
Built upon a high summit
Of which Teresa, in strokes of fire
Traces for us a design so perfect:
To make a pilgrimage there
I had a strong devotion;
But I did not dare to risk
The execution of the journey

Transformed into a seraphim
I saw there and was charmed
Louise the beloved
Of the beloved Louis
Her name, her rank of Madame
She laid all this in the grave
Et pourtant par sa grande âme
C’est la dame du château…

Yet by her great soul
She is the lady of the castle…


Another of Marie-Madeleine’s poems makes a similar parallel between Teresa and Louise, this time built around a different Teresian theme, that of the flaming arrow:

[...]  
Ce que dans l’une on contemple  
N’a plus de quoi rebuter  
Puisque de l’autre l’exemple  
Nous invite à l’imiter  
Et ce qu’on lit de Thérèse  
Dans ses ravissants écrits  
On en voit comme la thèse  
Dans Louise à Saint-Denis  
Dans l’ardeur qui la transporte  
Si comme un beau trait de feu  
Le cœur de l’une se porte  
Jusque dans le sein de Dieu  
L’autre avec quelle vitesse  
Et dans le même dessein  
Ne va-t-elle pas sans cesse  
Se plonger en même sein...²⁰⁸  
What we contemplate in one  
Has nothing more be rebuked  
Because the example of the other  
Invites us to imitate it  
And what we read of Teresa  
In her ravishing writings  
We see as the affirmation  
In Louise at Saint-Denis  
In the ardor that transports her  
If like a beautiful arrow of fire  
The heart of one flies  
To the breast of God  
With what speed does the other  
And with the same purpose  
Go without fail  
To plunge into the same breast...

Like other Carmelites before her, Marie-Madeleine absorbed the symbols of Teresian Carmel, and like those before her, integrated Teresian motifs and more contemporary, immediate influences in her poems. Marie-Madeleine’s gratitude to Madame Louise, apparent in her poems, was due not only to the general (and considerable) benefit that Louise had lent to

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 112-113, stanzas 2 + 3.
Carmel as a whole – Marie-Madeleine was also indebted to Louise for her personal intervention on behalf of the young novice. When Marie-Madeleine came to Saint-Denis in 1773 requesting a place in the convent Louise had recently joined, it was decided that she would be accepted, but not at Saint-Denis. With the help of a dowry arranged by Madame Louise (and paid by the newly crowned queen, Marie-Antoinette; see Hours, Madame Louise 230) Marie-Madeleine was accepted at the convent of Compiègne, some fifty miles northeast of Paris. And it was this decision, whose consequences neither Madame Louise nor Marie-Madeleine herself could have imagined, that would determine Marie-Madeleine’s place in history, among the Carmelites of Compiègne.

**Counter-Revolution a lo divino, a Voice Silenced: The Carmelites of Compiègne**

O ñudo que así juntáis

Oh, knot that binds

Dos cosas tan desiguales,

Two so different

No sé porqué os desatáis

Why do You become unbound

Pues atado fuerza dai

For when held fast You strengthen

A tener por bien los males.

Making injuries seem good.

(Teresa of Avila, *Hermosura de Dios*, stanza 2; ICS 3: 381)

By the late 18th century, anticlerical sentiment was nearing its point of greatest intensity, as men and women religious were increasingly viewed as either burdensome or dangerous to the state, or both. In this context, Carmelites felt compelled to defend their way of life and refute the idea that they were unwilling slaves of the church, and they did so in part by continuing to compose more and more sharply targeted contrafacta, some of which appropriated the very language of the revolutionaries themselves. Women religious of other orders were also
beginning to appropriate revolutionary language and direct it back at their opponents in written form: Mita Choudhury gives the example of the sisters of the Assumption, who submitted an adresse to the National Assembly in which they cited the very liberté promised by the revolutionaries: “You have solemnly promised liberty to all of the French; we only ask you to give us ours to be as we are”; Choudhury cites this as an instance in which women religious “harnessed the rhetoric and ideology of the Revolution to serve their own needs” (Choudhury 168–169). Writing to the National Assembly in 1789, the Ursuline nuns of Mans described as “calumnious” the depiction of “the cloister as an abode of horror and slavery, nuns so many chained victims who [will] not breathe until after a successful Revolution” (Choudhury 169), and in 1792 the abbess of the Benedictine nuns of Montargis issued a pamphlet in response to revolutionary administrators who had been trying to take over her convent’s property: “You can say, sirs, to those who sent you, that our feeble arms bend, no doubt, under the chains of oppression; but our consciences, stronger than death, only obey God alone…Ferocious souls, you drink our blood” (Choudhury 176). In this context, in which Benedictines, Ursulines, sisters of the Assumption and women religious of other orders defended themselves in writing against an increasingly hostile “outside world”, Carmelite poetry, already well established as a part of spiritual life in Teresian convents, stood ready to take on a new function that went beyond private devotion and beyond commentary on matters internal. In the Carmel of Compiègne, as in the convent of Saint-Denis, poetry became a means of reacting to voices extra muros that attacked and threatened the nuns’ way of life.

When a commission was dispatched to Compiègne to propose that the community be secularized and “liberated” from the yoke of Catholic oppression, Henriette de Jésus (1745-1794) made a versified defense of their existence, turning the critics’ notion of freedom back on them and evoking the bonds from which Teresa took strength two centuries earlier:
Qu’ils sont faux les jugements
How false are the judgements

Que de nous porte le monde
That the world levies against us

Son ignorance profonde
Its profound ignorance

Blâme nos engagements…
Criticizes our engagements…

[...]

Je méprise sa fierté
I scorn its pride

Je m’honore de sa haine
I am proud of its hate

Et je préfère ma chaîne
And I prefer my chain

A sa fausse liberté…
To its false liberty…

[...]

Nœuds chéris et précieux
Precious and cherished knots

Chaque jour je vous resserre
Each day I draw you tighter

Tout ce que m’offre la terre
All that the earth offers to me

N’est d’aucun prix à mes yeux…
Is of no value in my eyes…

(Marie de l’Incarnation 155–156)

One account of the composition of this poem has it that Henriette composed it on the spot, after having heard the demands of the revolutionary commission, and presented it to them as a formal response on behalf of the convent, after each of the Carmelites of the community had refused to renounce their vows or leave their home (Marie de l’Incarnation 154–155).

Years before, Louise de France had defended her choice between the cloister and the world; on the eve of the Revolution, Henriette de Jésus intensified this defense to the point of scorn for the critics of convent life, proudly defending the “chains” she had chosen for herself, roundly rejecting the freedom proposed by the revolutionaries and insisting that what from
the outside appeared to be bonds of slavery were in fact knots which she tied ever tighter in
the face of adversity, like those evoked by Teresa two centuries before. Carmelite poetry had
always borrowed from and been in dialogue with the outside world in a sense, taking from its
culture to carry a devotional message, but now it entered into this dialogue in a much more
forceful and direct manner, taking directly from the language and images with which all
women religious had been labeled to express a firm resistance to changes imposed from
without. In this, the poems of the Carmelites of Saint-Denis bear both similarities and
differences to other writings of early modern women religious. Elissa Weaver has shown how
16th-century Italian nuns used their plays as a means of resistance to the rules of enclosure
imposed by the Council of Trent in which, as she writes, “the Church sought to enforce
reform with mortar”, as windows and other openings to the outside world were walled up
(23). Two centuries later, French Carmelites used their writing to resist the outside world
rather than fight for access to it, as Italian nuns had done before. In both cases, it is a matter
of protesting external controls, but with different aims in mind, as French nuns wanted to
“stay in” and their Italian predecessors refused to be “walled in”.

At the same time, the rhetoric of resistance seen in the motivated, carefully selected
contrafacta of the 18th-century Carmelites of Saint-Denis would also play a powerful role in
the story of the Carmelites of Compiègne. In July 1794, sixteen of the sisters of Compiègne
were sent to the Bastille prison on suspicion of anti-revolutionary conspiracy.209 On the night
of July 15th, armed with a scrap of paper and a piece of coal, Julie-Louise de Jésus (1747-
1794) wrote the last poem a lo divino of the Carmelites of Compiègne, set to the most
recognizable tune of the age – La Marseillaise:

209 For an account of the experiences of the Carmelites of Compiègne, see Marie de l’Incarnation, La relation
des seize carmélites de Compiègne, ed. William Bush, and Bruno de Jésus-Marie (ed.), Le sang du Carmel; ou,
La véritable passion des seize carmélites de Compiègne.
As mentioned in chapter one, the Carmelites who followed in the footsteps of Teresa of Avila, composing contrafacta to popular tunes, were far from alone – the “re-composition” of popular songs was widespread, in Teresa’s time in the 16th century, during the French Revolution in the 18th century, and at all points in between. And once the first, “original” version of La Marseillaise became widely known, it soon became a favorite vehicle for expressing a variety of political points of view via contrafactum. In “Un air et mille couplets”, Hinrich Hudde estimates that no fewer than 250 different contrafacta of La Marseillaise were composed in the years after Rouget de Lisle wrote his original version (75). One of these contrafacta, composed by a certain citoyenne Bagneris, suggests that “remaking” the
revolutionary hymn – in both versions sympathetic to and against the Revolution – was indeed in fashion:

Sur l’air chéri des patriotes, On the dear air of the patriots,
Je veux aussi faire des couplets. I too want to compose couplets.
Pour fêter les Bons Sans-Culottes, To celebrate the good Sans-culottes,
Il n’en est point de plus parfaits. There is none better.

(Hudde 75)

The “aussi” in Mme Bagneris’ version of La Marseillaise speaks for itself, suggesting a broad production of couplets on the revolutionary hymn. As an indication that the Carmelites’ version of La Marseillaise belongs to this larger body of “rewrites”, a certain number of similarities between it and other contemporary versions can be identified, as early on as the first verse: in at least two contrafacta of La Marseillaise catalogued by Constant Pierre in Hymnes et chansons de la Révolution (published in 1904), the verse Allons enfants de la patrie is modified with the same term in the rhyming position:

Chanson 712 (not dated): Que sur nos fronts soit l’allégresse...
(Pierre 567)

Chanson 879 (1793): Transports divins, vive allégresse...
(Pierre 600)

The first verse of the Carmelites’ version repeats this same term, in the same rhyming position:

Livrons nos cœurs à l’allégresse,
Le jour de gloire est arrivé.
Thus while certain characteristics of Carmelite contrafacta made them particular to Teresian Carmel, these pieces also formed a part of a much larger whole, the body of popular contrafacta composed out “in the world”: as much as the nuns of Saint-Denis and Compiègne came to have disdain for the world, in one sense they were very much of it, composing contrafacta alongside of (if walled off from) their fellow citizens. This fact not withstanding, their particular version of *La Marseillaise* was special, and composed for a special occasion: according to William Bush, who worked extensively on the case of the Carmelites of Compiègne and their *cantique*, the poem was composed “on the 15th of July, 1794…to be sung…the 16th of July, the feast day of Our Lady of Mount Carmel.” (Marie de l’Incarnation 298) If in fact the poem was to be sung to commemorate the Carmelite holiday, it was also composed and sung at what was surely the most dramatic moment of the Carmelites’ lives – on July 17th, the morning after the day of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, the sixteen Carmelites were sent to the guillotine to die for their suspected anti-Revolutionary activities.

**Songs of Resistance at the Scaffold**

As a final defiant gesture toward “the world” and the social upheaval it had produced, the Carmelites’ *Marseillaise* speaks for itself – the tune of the original remains, but nearly every word of the text has been rewritten to strongly counter the revolutionary message with one of religious martyrdom. The verses of the original lyrics that remain – *le jour de gloire est arrivé* and *l’étendard sanglant est levé* – are now easily reinterpreted: for the Carmelites, *le jour de gloire* is the day on which they will die for God, and the “bloody standard” is likely a symbol of wanton violence and shame rather than one of revolutionary glory. As the culmination of two centuries of poetic activity, this text demonstrates clearly the function that contrafacta poems like those written by Teresa of Avila in 16th-century Spain came to have in
18th-century French Carmelite convents: what began in Teresa’s time as relatively innocent entertainments and expressions of devotion became, two centuries later, highly charged spiritual and political statements, in way that Teresa herself likely did not imagine.

Yet in one sense, the trajectory taken by Carmelite poetry, that of resistance and speaking its own truth to the outside world, was not followed through to what might have seemed its most logical conclusion. Having taken the time and effort to re-compose the revolutionary hymn in keeping with their own message of martyrdom, the Carmelites of Compiègne appear to have stopped short of delivering that message to the world at large. As they were driven through the streets of Paris on the way to the guillotine at the Place du trône renversé (today Place de la Nation), the Carmelites sang, in voices that could be heard by the crowds assembled to watch them pass.210 There was precedent for such activity: other groups of women religious had gone to their deaths singing, in Bordeaux, Cambrai, Orange and Valenciennes (V. S. Pierre 150), and the year before the Carmelites were executed, the Girondins – a minority within the National Assembly that had fallen out of favor in the new Republic – were sent to the guillotine, and went there singing the same hymn they had previously embraced as revolutionaries: La Marseillaise, presumably in its original form. But on their own voyage to the scaffold, the Carmelites did not sing their newly fashioned, subversive rendering of La Marseillaise. According to William Bush, the last songs of the Carmelites were limited to liturgical hymns: “As far as what was sung on the way to the scaffold, [sources] consistently mention both the Miserere and the Salve Regina…” (To Quell the Terror 176); Bush also explains that, having reached the guillotine with her sisters, the prioress of the group “was prepared for this fateful moment and greeted the scaffold’s uncompromising reality with the equally uncompromising theological affirmations of the Te Deum...with firm boldness and a

210 This story was made famous in literary and musical adaptations by Getrud von le Fort (in the novel Die Letzte am Schafott, “The Last at the Scaffold”, 1931), Georges Bernanos (in the screenplay Dialogues des Carmélites, 1949) and Francis Poulenc (in the opera Dialogues des Carmélites, 1957).
clear voice she intoned: ‘It is thee whom we praise, o God!’; with one heart and one voice the nuns took up the chant: “It is thee whom we acknowledge to be the Lord!” (To Quell the Terror 204). Seeming to forgo the opportunity to declare their martyrdom to the world using a refashioned Marseillaise, the Carmelites reverted to the Miserere, the Salve Regina and finally, the Te Deum.

The intent of what might be termed a “motivated” contrafactum is to replace one text with another and in so doing counteract the message of the original text. The “tone” – the original melody – is maintained to make clear the link between the original text and the new “counterfeit” version. It may rightly be said that the Carmelites passed up a singular opportunity to publicly counteract the message of the revolutionary hymn by not singing their newly composed contrafactum on the way to the guillotine. On the other hand, the songs that they did sing on the trip to the scaffold themselves made a statement that perhaps displays the spirit of the motivated contrafactum after all. For singing hymns such as the Miserere, the Salve Regina and in particular the Te Deum was itself a sort of substitution, or more precisely restitution. As Daniel Roche explains, the Te Deum had long had an important place in official ceremony: “the Te Deum sustained the dynastic ideal, along with celebrations of royal births, marriages, and funerals; it publicized the triumphs of absolutism, the battles won and treaties signed; and it confirmed the power of the king at the top of the social hierarchy” (Roche 270). But as Laura Mason explains, with the revolutionaries in power La Marseillaise replaced the Te Deum as the musical accompaniment at public ceremonies (Mason 100), and La Marseillaise became, as the Minister of War Joseph Servan put it, “le Te Deum de la République” (“The Te Deum of the Republic”) (Levayer 15). Thus for the Carmelites, whose own poems had evolved into songs of resistance, singing the Te Deum – itself now a song of resistance as well – was perhaps a gesture not unlike the composition of their version of La Marseillaise, a sort of motivated substitution with the aim of countering a message with
which they did not agree. Where the Revolutionaries had removed the *Te Deum* and put in its place *La Marseillaise*, the Carmelites perhaps sought to re-assert the sacred hymn at what was indeed a public – if macabre – ceremony, using their last chance to speak to the world to replace something that had been taken away.
“For Memory to Posterity”

In 19th-century France and Belgium, Carmelite poetry resumed after the restoration of Catholicism in France and the revolution and secession that created Belgium in 1830. A poem composed in 1896 in the convent on Avenue de Saxe in Paris even picked up where the Carmelites of Compiègne had left off: after citing the cantique written the night before the Carmelites of Compiègne went to the scaffold, the author added a couplet to the original poem in honor of those who had composed it:

_Couplet ajouté en 1896, en honneur des Mères qui avaient fait les précédents_

Mères si justement chéries
De vos chants les saintes ardeurs
Nous touchent, nous laissent ravies
Oui, oui, nous nous sentons vos sœurs !

Si tout indignes de ses grâces
De Dieu nous entendions l’appel
Si pour nous se dressait l’autel
Marchons sur ces illustres traces.

Non, non pas de frayeurs
Nos martyrs, nos sœurs,
Nous guident au sentier de l’éternel bonheur.
Couplet added in 1896, in honor of the Mothers who had written the preceding ones

Mothers so justly cherished
The saintly ardors of your song
Touch us, leave us ravished
Yes, yes, we feel ourselves to be your sisters!
If completely unworthy of his graces,
We heard God’s call,
If for us the altar was raised
Let us walk in these illustrious footsteps.
No, no frights
Our martyrs, our sisters,
Guide us to the path of eternal happiness.

(SAX 62-63)
This continuation of the poem written by the Carmelites of Compiègne shows a clear concern for the past, and serves to preserve the memory of the nuns whose trials it recalls. This focus on both past and future, recalling the past and preserving memory for the future, is a common feature in many Carmelite poems composed after the Revolution. Dedicatory notes in the initial pages of the volume that contains the poem cited above (a collection of poems compiled in 1892 in the Parisian convent at 26 Avenue de Saxe) make this concern for past and future explicit: in the first pages of the collection, an initial dedication is made “À Notre Séraphique Mère Thérèse de Jésus, Titulaire et Patronne de Notre Monastère. Nous dédions..."
ces pieux Souvenirs de nos fêtes de famille.” (SAX 4) A second dedication on the pages that follow is made “A nos chères Mères et Sœurs présentes et futures dignes Filles Séraphiques de Notre Sainte Mère Thérèse. Pour Mémoire à la Postérité.” (SAX 6) A few pages on, the following introduction explains the purpose of the volume of poems, making it clear that it is intended to be a continuation of what was begun in earlier such collections:

En 1892 ayant mis en ordre tout ce qui concerne les souvenirs de la Communauté nous avons voulu continuer le recueil des petites poésies composées par les religieuses pour différentes occasions. En conséquence nous destinons ce nouveau volume pour faire suite au premier et nous y renfermons tout ce qui a été fait depuis quelques années sur les mêmes sujets, ainsi que différents morceaux donnés par des amis du Monastère, et d’autres Carmels. (SAX 9)

In two places, these notes also indicate a clear concern for the preservation of memory: “…having put in order everything that concerns the memory of the Community…we enclose in [the volume] everything that has been done for a number of years on the same subjects”. A sort of literary time capsule that contains the poems of the community, this volume’s self-declared purpose is to “enclose” these texts, presumably so that they can be remembered. These annotations also suggest that the collection of poetry is only one part of a larger project to preserve the past, as it is explained that everything relative to the memory of the convent, perhaps not just poems, has been put in order. These prefatory notes are both rare and valuable in understanding poetry as a part of the culture of the Carmelite community. They

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211 “To Our Seraphic Mother Teresa of Jesus [Avila], for whom our convent is named and its patroness. We dedicate these pious mementos of our family celebrations.”
212 “To our dear Mothers and Sisters present and future, worthy Seraphic Daughters of Our Holy Mother Teresa. For Memory to Posterity.”
213 “In 1892 having put in order everything that concerns the memory of the Community we wished to continue the collection of little poems composed by the religious [sisters] for different occasions. As a result we intend this new volume to follow the first one and we enclose in it everything that has been done for a number of years on the same subjects, as well as different pieces given by friends of the Monastery, and other Carmels.”
represent, along with the annotations from the poetry collections from Beaune (see chapter two) some of the few instances in which Carmelite poetry is specifically mentioned and contextualized; in most cases, the poems are left to speak for themselves, without any paratextual indications of their importance in the life of the convent. Here, however, it is explicitly stated that the poems are considered an important part of the culture of the community, and that they are to be remembered.

Remembering is a recurring theme in a number of poems composed by 19th-century Carmelites; the first poem in the collection from Avenue de Saxe extends memory all the way back to the foundations of reformed Carmel:

_Ou Souffrir, Ou Mourir_

Ou souffrir ! Ou mourir ! disait Sainte Thérèse
De mon âme ici-bas, voilà le seul désir:
Dans ce monde qui passe il n’est rien qui me plaise
Je n’y veux plus, mon Dieu, que souffrir ou mourir !

_To Suffer, or to Die_

To suffer! Or to die! said Saint Teresa
Of my soul on earth, that is the only desire:
In this passing world there is nothing that pleases me
I want nothing more here, my God, than to suffer or to die!

(SAX 1, stanza 1)

This poem remembers Teresa of Avila in a few ways: first, by naming her in the first verse, and subsequently by “quoting” her – the phrase _souffrir ou mourir_ (“to suffer or to die”) was
associated with Teresa as something of a “motto” by which she lived. The poem cites this motto in its title, and also uses it as both a structural and thematic organizing feature: the first stanza cited above is followed by eight stanzas that begin with *Souffrir!* and enumerate the ways in which the devoted soul may suffer and the value of that suffering; the poem concludes with six stanzas that begin: *Mourir!* and similarly describe the ways one may “die” for God, notably in stanza 17 –

Mourir pour vivre en vous, voilà la douce attente
Voilà le vœu pressant de celle qui gémit
De ne pas vous offrir une âme assez aimante
Lorsque votre grandeur à son néant s’unit.

To die to live in you, that is the sweet expectation
That is the pressing wish of she who moans
For not offering you a sufficiently loving soul
When your greatness unites itself with its nothingness.

(SAX 3)

– where the very Teresian *mourir pour vivre en vous* (“to die to live in you”) in the first verse recalls Teresa’s *Muero porque no muero*:

Vivo sin vivir en mí I live without living in myself,
Y de tal manera espero And in such a way I hope,
Que muero porque no muero. I die because I do not die.

The correspondence to *Muero porque no muero* is reinforced in stanza 23:

Ah ! comment supporter plus longtemps votre absence !
En proie à la douleur, je me sens défaillir
Je soupire après vous, et telle est ma souffrance
Que je meurs, ô Jésus, de ne pouvoir mourir…

Ah! How to tolerate your absence any longer!
Ravaged by pain, I feel myself weaken
I sigh after you, and such is my suffering
That I die, o Jesus, for being unable to die…

(SAX 4)

The final stanza returns to and specifically mentions Teresa’s motto:

Ou souffrir, ou mourir ! N’est-ce pas la devise
Qui convient ici-bas le mieux à vos élus !
Oh ! non je ne crains pas que la mort nous divise:
Je serai dans le ciel: Térèse [sic] de Jésus !

To suffer, or to die! Is this not the motto
That is the best for your chosen ones here on earth!
Oh! I do not fear that death will divide us:
I will be in heaven: Teresa of Jesus!

(SAX 5, stanza 25)

A fitting beginning for a volume of poetry dedicated to her, this poem remembers Teresa by name, by recalling and organizing itself around her “motto”, and by citing her own poetry, all essential elements of the Carmelite past, preserved in a poem for the future.
For the Carmelites of Belgium, remembering Teresa also appears to have been important: in the archives from the convent of Liège (now housed in Embourg), two *Cantiques Pour la Fête de Notre Sainte Mère Thérèse* (*Cantiques for the Feast Day of Our Holy Mother Teresa*) celebrate Teresa on her “feast day”, the 15th of October, a day with historical significance for Carmel. The second of the two poems recalls Teresa both by name and “thematized” like the poem from Avenue de Saxe, incorporating Teresian motifs in its celebration of the founding mother:

C’est en cet heureux jour, qu’en forme de colombe
Un nouveau séraphin s’envole dans les cieux
Aux traits du saint amour Thérèse enfin succombe
Pour aller posséder l’objet des bienheureux.

Attentive à la voix de l’époux qui l’appelle
Accourez du Carmel aux noces de l’agneau
Thérèse prend son vol vers la gloire éternelle
Et va chanter au Ciel un cantique nouveau… 214

It is on this happy day, that in the form of a dove
A new seraphim takes flight in the skies
To the arrows of holy love Teresa finally succumbs
To go and possess the object of the blessed.

Attentive to the voice of the spouse who calls her
Rush from Carmel to the wedding of the lamb

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214 *Cantiques pour fêtes de Noël.* Archives of the convent of Embourg, Belgium, 91, stanzas 1 + 2. This poem is not individually dated, but it is contained in a volume dated 1848.
Teresa takes flight toward eternal glory
And goes to sing in Heaven a new song…

Like the motto *souffrir ou mourir* and the contrast of spiritual life and death echoing *Muero porque no muero* in the poem from Avenue de Saxe, the flight of the spirit and the arrow of love in this poem from Liège serve to remember Teresa and the Teresian heritage that belonged to all Carmelites; the attention to the institutional memory of Carmel in these poems is clear. Two more poems from Belgium, this time from the convent of Brussels, show that this commemorative spirit extended to embrace other foundational figures besides Teresa. A poem composed in 1821 by one Thérèse de Sainte Anne, whose very name recalls two of the most important figures in Carmelite history, *Couplets composés…au Jubilé de 200 ans de la mort précieuse de Notre Vénérable Mère Anne de Jésus* (*Couplets composed…for the 200-year Jubilee of the precious death of Our Venerable Mother Anne of Jesus*), celebrates the anniversary of the death of Ana de Jesús, one of the Spanish Carmelites who worked closely with Teresa of Avila in Spain before coming north to found convents in France and the Spanish Netherlands. The poem also honors the “long and painful” difficulties she endured in that mission, a likely reference to the harsh treatment she received from Pierre de Bérulle, who supervised the establishment of Teresian Carmel in France (see introduction, chapter two):

C’est aujourd’hui 200 ans
O vénérable et chérie Mère
Que vous laissâtes vos enfants !
Orphelines sur la terre
Pour jouir de votre Dieu,
L’objet de toutes vos Délices

It is today 200 years
O venerable and cherished Mother
Since you left your children!
Orphans on the earth
To take pleasure in your God,
The object of all of your Delights
Et enfin recueillir aux Cieux
Le fruit de tous vos sacrifices.
Pour jouir de ce Bonheur
Bonheur pur et incompréhensible
Vous entreprites de tout cœur
Des travaux longs, et très pénibles
Avec magnanimité
Et un très constant courage;
Surmontant les difficultés
Qui vous échurent en partage.

And finally to awaken in Heaven
The fruit of all your sacrifices.
To enjoy this Happiness
Happiness pure and incomprehensible
You undertook wholeheartedly
Long and most arduous work
With magnanimity
And a very constant courage;
Overcoming the difficulties
That were your lot.

(BRU 101)

Along with Teresa and Ana de Jesús, Belgian Carmelites also honored another important figure in their history: a poem composed in 1842 by one Marie-Joseph de Jésus, *Couplets composés à l’occasion du Jubilé de 250 [sic] de la mort de notre Père Saint Jean de la Croix* (Couplets composed on the occasion of the 250th jubilee of the death of our Father Saint John of the Cross) celebrates the 250th anniversary of the death of John of the Cross, who assisted Teresa in the foundation of reformed Carmel in 16th-century Spain:

Pour célébrer votre victoire
Digne Père Jean de la Croix
Des saints habitants de la gloire
Que n’ai-je aujourd’hui la voix

To celebrate your victory
Worthy Father John of the Cross
Of the holy inhabitants of glory
I have not the voice today
Ma très profonde ignorance
Dans l'art de chanter et rimer
Implore votre indulgence
Me veuillez bien me [sic] pardonner.

(BRU 81)

This poem not only recalls John of the Cross as an important figure in the foundations of reformed Carmel; it also appears to remember him as a poet. By the 19th century, John of the Cross was well known as both a spiritual thinker and writer, and particularly recognized for his poetry.\textsuperscript{215} Thus for Marie-Joseph de Jésus to adopt a posture of humility in the composition of verse, and ask John’s forgiveness for whatever her poem might lack makes perfect sense in the context of a poem in his honor. In this way, John of the Cross is celebrated, Carmelite history is celebrated and perhaps even Carmelite verse is itself commemorated, in a poem that recalls one of Carmel’s original poets.

Conscious of and actively commemorating reformed Carmel’s past, these poems and others like them from post-Revolution Carmelite archives evince a special sense of remembrance and preservation of that past. In all of the poems presented in this study, this attention to heritage and preservation is evident to some degree: in the poems from Beaune that closely imitate Teresa’s writings, the poem from Mol that recounts an important struggle for Catholic nuns in a Protestant environment, the poems from Saint-Denis and Compiègne that answer anti-clerical criticisms from outside the convent, and finally and most especially in the poems of 19th-century French and Belgian nuns, the poem was a privileged place where, among

\textsuperscript{215} John’s three major texts, the \textit{Subida del Monte Carmelo}, \textit{Noche Oscura} and \textit{Llama de amor viva}, which combine prose and verse, were published in editions in Spanish and French (and other languages) in the 16th and 17th centuries, and were widely read. The Carmelites of Brussels would necessarily have been familiar with his writings.
many other things, Carmelite women wrote and celebrated their past, and documented their stories for the future, for memory to posterity.

**Toward a Carmelite Corpus**

In reading and analyzing the texts presented in this study, certain tendencies in Carmelite poetry become evident, and certain common traits among the poems appear to bind them together, even across time, language and borders. One might, given these commonalities, begin to consider this group of poems – those of Teresa of Avila from 16th-century Spain and those of 17th-, 18th- and 19th-century Spanish, French and Flemish Carmelites – as something of a “Carmelite corpus”, a body of poems with both common origins and common distinguishing traits that help demonstrate that they belong together. While the poems presented in the first section of this chapter stand out for their focus on memory and posterity, they and other 19th-century poems are also remarkable for the way in which they collectively bring together a number of the unifying traits of Carmelite poetry seen in the course of this study, thanks to which a recognizable corpus of poems may be said to exist. The poems to be analyzed in the second section of this chapter, some known and some unknown, will serve as examples of the family resemblance that exists in this body of writing.

**Structural Similarities**

Structurally, the poems of 19th-century Carmelites continue in general to be composed on the *cantique*-style model, with some exceptions in the case of plays. This generic distribution is consistent with that seen in the poems of the Spanish *cancioneros* of Teresa’s time and in the poems presented in chapters two through five of this study. Beyond these structural commonalities, 19th-century Carmelite poems also maintain the traditional relationship
between tone and text, according to which a preexisting tune is borrowed for the setting of a new lyric. In the time of Teresa of Avila and (as has been shown in chapter five) in the convents of later generations of Carmelites, often the borrowed tune came from the outside world; this is also the case in at least one of the 19th-century poems in the collection from the convent on Avenue de Saxe in Paris, with the particularity that the original source was a sacred song from a “worldly” source, with a two-part musico-textual history: the original text in question is a Noël composed by the French poet Théophile Gautier (1811-1872):

Le ciel est noir, la terre est blanche; The sky is black, the earth is white;
- Cloches, carillonnez gaîment ! - Bells, peal for joy!
Jésus est né ; - la Vierge penche Jesus is born, the Virgin leans
Sur lui son visage charmant. Over his charming face.

Pas de courtines festonnées No drapes festooned
Pour préserver l'enfant du froid; To preserve the child from the cold
Rien que les toiles d'araignées Nothing but the cobwebs
Qui pendent des poutres du toit. That hang from the roof beams.

Il tremble sur la paille fraîche, He trembles on the cool straw
Ce cher petit enfant Jésus, This dear little infant Jesus,
Et pour l'échauffer dans sa crèche And to warm him in his crib
L'âne et le bœuf soufflent dessus. The ass and the bullock blow on him.
La neige au chaume coud ses franges, The snow on the thatch roof like
Mais sur le toit s'ouvre le ciel But above the roof the sky opens
Et, tout en blanc, le chœur des anges And, all in white, the choir of angels
Chante aux bergers : "Noël ! Noël ! " Sings to the shepherds: "Noel! Noel!"

(Gautier)

The Carmelite poem based on Gautier’s original substitutes a new text, but otherwise the title, content and message of the poem remain unchanged:

Noël

Air: “Le ciel est noir, Tune: “The sky is black,
la terre est blanche the earth is white”

Baigné de pleurs de la tendresse Bathed in tears of tenderness
Je l’ai trouvé dans un berceau I found him in a cradle
Ce Dieu que je poursuis sans cesse This God that I pursue incessantly
Qu’il est petit, mais qu’il est beau ! How small he is, but how beautiful!
Je veux, je veux dans son étable I want, I want in his stable
Fixer à jamais mon séjour To make my stay forever,
Autour de Lui tout est aimable, Around Him all is pleasant,
Tout crie: Amour, amour, amour… Everything cries: Love, love, love…

(SAX 529, stanzia 1)

The Carmelite text is eight octaves to Gautier’s four quatrains, but otherwise the mood is similar, and even its structure reflects that of Gautier’s poem: at the conclusion of the first
and last stanzas, the exclamation *Amour, amour, amour* imitates somewhat Gautier’s final verse in which the angels sing "*Noël! Noël!*" to the shepherds.

But Gautier’s poem is text only, and the Carmelite poem is, as is typical, a song with text and tune. The melody borrowed for the setting of the Carmelite poem may well have been that of the brothers Paul and Lucien Hillemacher (1852-1933/1860-1909), who set a number of 19th-century poems to music, including works of Hugo and Baudelaire (Johnson and Stokes 249-250). The existence of the Hillemachers’ setting, and the indication in the manuscript that the poem is to be sung to the tune *Le ciel est noir, la terre est blanche* suggest that the Carmelites of Avenue de Saxe may have known Gautier’s piece as a song rather than just a written poem. Thus the Carmelites may or may not have been aware of their borrowing from Gautier, or indeed they may have been indifferent as to the source of the poem, as the original text is unambiguously devotional, in spite of having been written by an artist very much of “the world”.

Regardless, this example both follows Carmelite tradition and adds another dimension to the musico-textual borrowing that had gone on in Carmel since the time of Teresa of Avila: a devotional text by a well-known secular poet that apparently began as a written poem later acquired a melodic element as it was set to music, and finally this tune and the spirit and structure of the original text were borrowed by a Carmelite poet to create a new composition.

Such borrowing from contemporary poetry *via* musical settings of that poetry is also in evidence in the poems of Thérèse de Lisieux, the best (or perhaps only) known Carmelite woman poet after Teresa of Avila. Two of her poems, *Jésus, mon bien-aimé, rappelle-toi* and *Prière de l’Enfant d’un Saint* are set to a melody that had come to be associated with the French poet Alfred de Musset’s *Rappelle-toi*:

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216 Gautier was not known as a religious poet, and was apparently not particularly interested in religion. His *Noël* may perhaps be viewed as a text which engages with religious imagery as a part of popular culture rather than a personal expression of devotion.
Rappelle-toi, quand l’Aurore craintive
Ouvre au Soleil son palais enchanté ;
Rappelle-toi, lorsque la nuit pensive
Passe en rêvant sous son voile argenté ;
A l’appel du plaisir lorsque ton sein palpite,
Aux doux songes du soir lorsque l’ombre t’invite,
Ecoute au fond des bois
Murmurer une voix :
Rappelle-toi.
[…]

Remember, when the timid dawn
Opens to the Sun its enchanted palace ;
Remember, when the pensive night
Passes dreaming beneath its silvery veil ;
To the call of pleasure when your bosom palpitates,
To the sweet evening dreams when the shadow invites you,
Listen deep in the forest
To a voice that murmurs :
Remember.
[…]

(Musset, stanza 1)

This poem, like Gautier’s Noël, was also apparently known to the Carmelites as a song: Thérèse’s sister Céline (also a Carmelite in the same convent: Geneviève de la Sainte Face,
1869-1959) is said to have asked her “…de me composer une longue poésie…dont chaque strophe se termineríait par *ces paroles d’une mélodie* (italics mine) qui nous plaisait: ‘Rappelle-toi’” (Thérèse de Lisieux, Poésies 133).217 Thérèse obliged, and composed her own *Rappelle-toi*, which closely follows the structure of Musset’s poem:

Rappelle-toi de la gloire du Père
Rappelle-toi des divines splendeurs
Que tu quittas t’exilant sur la terre
Pour racheter tous les pauvres pécheurs
O Jésus ! t’abaissant vers la Vierge Marie
Tu voilas ta grandeur et ta gloire infinie
Ah ! du sein maternel
Qui fut ton second Ciel
Rappelle-toi.

Remember the glory of the Father
Remember the divine splendors
That you left behind in exiling yourself on earth
To redeem all of the poor sinners
O Jesus! Lowering yourself toward the Virgin Mary
You hid your greatness and your infinite glory
Ah! the maternal breast
That was your second Heaven
Remember.

*(Thérèse de Lisieux, Poésies 135, stanza 1)*

217 “…to compose a long poem…in which each stanza would end with those words from a melody that we enjoyed: ‘Rappelle-toi’.”
In his edition of the poems of Thérèse de Lisieux, Jacques Lonchamp explains that the version of *Rappelle-toi* that the Carmelites of Lisieux knew was a musical setting of Musset’s poem by the composer Georges Rupès; Thérèse was therefore (at her sister’s request) borrowing most directly from song, rather than from (only) written poetry, apparently just as the Carmelites of the Avenue de Saxe had borrowed indirectly from Gautier. But Musset’s poem had itself a complex musico-textual history, as before appearing in Musset’s *Poésies Nouvelles* (1850), it was published in an 1843 song collection and identified by Musset himself as a text set to the tune of the German song *Vergiss mein nicht.* The poem by Thérèse de Lisieux on *Rappelle-toi* was thus another musico-textual composition at the end of a rather long line of related musico-textual compositions: first a German *lied*, whose text was subsequently adapted by Musset, whose poem was in turn set to music by Rupès, whose setting Thérèse de Lisieux used (both words and music) for her own devotional poem, demonstrating once again that the cultures of le monastère and le monde were intertwined to a significant degree, as tunes and lyrical templates from the culture outside the convent were borrowed to make new Carmelite poems.

**Thematic Similarities**

If general practices of tune-borrowing and composing poems on models provided by popular songs linked the poems of Thérèse de Lisieux to those written by previous generations of Carmelites including Teresa of Avila, who had originally promoted such activity in reformed Carmel, thematically Thérèse’s poems also show evidence of belonging to a larger Carmelite corpus. Composed in 1896, Thérèse’s *Vivre d’amour* displays similarities both structural and thematic to Teresa of Avila’s *Muero porque no muero*. In its last two stanzas –

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218 Musset believed this song to be a musical setting by Mozart. This was later shown to be a false attribution on the part of Musset, which was corrected when the composer of the tune to *Vergiss mein nicht* was identified as Georg Lorenz. See Frits Noske, *French Song from Berlioz to Duparc: The Origin and Development of the Mélodie*, rev. by Rita Benton and Frits Noske, trans. by Rita Benton, New York: Dover Publications, 1970, 27.
Mourir d’Amour, c’est un bien doux martyre
Et c’est celui que je voudrais souffrir.
O Chérubins ! accordez votre lyre,
Car je le sens, mon exil va finir !...
Flamme d’Amour, consume-moi sans trêve
Vie d’un instant, ton fardeau m’est bien lourd !
Divin Jésus, réalise mon rêve :
Mourir d’Amour !...

Mourir d’Amour, voilà mon espérance
Quand je verrai se briser mes liens
Mon Dieu sera ma Grande Récompense
Je ne veux point posséder d’autres biens.
De son Amour je veux être embrasée
Je veux Le voir, m’unir à Lui toujours
Voilà mon Ciel… voilà ma destinée :
Vivre d’Amour !

To die of Love is a sweet martyrdom
And it is the one I would like to suffer.
O Cherubim! Tune your lyre,
Because I feel it, my exile is going to end!...
Flame of Love, consume me without ceasing
Life of an instant, your burden is indeed heavy to me!
Divine Jesus, make real my dream:
To die of Love!...
To die of Love, that is my hope
When I will see my ties broken
My God will be my Great Reward
I wish to possess no other good.
By his Love I wish to be set ablaze
I want to see Him, to join with Him forever
That is my Heaven… that is my destiny:
To live on Love!

*(Vivre d’amour, stanzas 14-15; Thérèse de Lisieux, Poésies 99)*

Thérèse plays with the same two opposites Teresa contemplates in *Muero porque no muero*, life and “death”, both the product of love for God, and particularly in the final stanza which Thérèse begins with *Mourir d’Amour, voilà mon espérance* (not unlike Teresa’s *Y de tal manera espero*) and concludes with *voilà ma destinée: Mourir d’Amour*, the contrast *mourir–vivre* recalls Teresa’s *vivo–muero*. But beyond this thematic similarity, the repeated refrains in Thérèse’s poem (these alternate between *je vis d’amour/mourir d’amour/vivre d’amour* and other similar formulas at the beginning and end of each stanza) also recall the structure and message of *Muero porque no muero*, which itself relies upon repetitive iterations of the refrain from the title at the end of each of its stanzas. In his commentary on *Vivre d’amour*, Jacques Lonchampt writes that “Peut-être la monotonie des attaques ‘Vivre d’amour, c’est’, alourdit-elle le poème”¹²²⁰, citing the refrains as a structural flaw of the text (Thérèse de Lisieux, *Poésies* 93). Yet it is precisely these repetitions, and the message repeated, with its alternating *vivre d’amour–mourir d’amour*, that brings the poem so close to

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¹¹⁹ Or the *Mourir pour vivre en vous, voilà la douce attente* in the poem from the Avenue de Saxe cited earlier.
²²⁰ “Perhaps the monotony of attack ‘to live on love, is to’ weighs down the poem”
Muero porque no muero – this feature of Thérèse’s text is in fact a marker of its belonging to the larger body of Carmelite poetry.221

In other compositions Thérèse de Lisieux echoed themes that link her poems to those of Teresa of Avila and those of the Carmelites of the generations between them. In Histoire d’une Bergère devenue Reine (Story of a Shepherdess become a Queen), written for the profession of Sister Marie-Madeleine, another Carmelite nun in Lisieux, Thérèse recalls the bond to God that Teresa of Avila had written about in Hermosura de Dios (Beauty of God):

En ce beau jour, ô Madeleine!  
Nous venons chanter près de vous  
La merveilleuse et douce chaîne  
Qui vous unit à votre Epoux…

(On this beautiful day, oh Madeleine!  
We come to sing close to you  
The marvelous and sweet chain  
Which binds you to your Spouse…

(Histoire d’une Bergère, v. 1-4; Thérèse de Lisieux, Poésies 72)

O ñudo que así juntáis  
Dos cosas tan desiguales,  
No sé porqué os desatáis  
Pues atado fuerza dais  
A tener por bien los males.

(Oh, knot that binds  
Two so different  
Why do You become unbound  
For when held fast You strengthen  
Making injuries seem good.

(Hermosura de Dios, stanza 2; ICS 3: 381)

221 Thérèse repeated a similar formula in stanza 29 of Rappelle-toi: “Ce n’est plus moi qui vis, mais je vis de ta vie” (“It is no longer I who live, but I live on your life”). The correspondence of this formula employed by both “Teresas” to Galatians 2:20 should also be noted: “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”
These poems by Teresa and Thérèse evoke a cherished constriction, like that in the poem by Henriette de Jésus cited in chapter five, written in response to the “judgements” of the anticlerical revolutionary committee sent to oust the Carmelites of Compiègne from their convent:

Qu’ils sont faux les jugements
How false are the judgements

Que de nous porte le monde
That the world levies against us

Son ignorance profonde
Its profound ignorance

Blâme nos engagements…
Criticizes our engagements…

[...]

Je méprise sa fierté
I scorn its pride

Je m’honore de sa haine
I am proud of its hate

Et je préfère ma chaîne
And I prefer my chain

A sa fausse liberté…
To its false liberty…

[...]

Nœuds chéris et précieux
Precious and cherished knots

Chaque jour je vous resserre
Each day I draw you tighter

Tout ce que m’offre la terre
All that the earth offers to me

N’est d’aucun prix à mes yeux…
Is of no value in my eyes…

(Marie de l’Incarnation 155-156)

The theme shared by Teresa, Thérèse and Henriette and the spiritual philosophy that underlies it can in turn be found again in the poems of the Carmelites of the Avenue de Saxe: in a poem entitled *Cantique sur le bonheur d’une Carmélite* (*Cantique on the Happiness of a Carmelite*), the 19th-century Carmelite nun Mère Saint-Hilarion explains, as had Henriette de Jésus a century earlier, the erroneous perception of the *mondain* and the satisfaction that her “chain” brought to her:
Ma règle est à vos yeux My rule is to your eyes
À l’homme impraticable To man, impracticable
Pénible, insoutenable Painful, unsustainable
Un joug fort ennuyeux A most burdensome yoke
Ma règle est à vos yeux My rule is to your eyes
Si j’exprimais sans doute If I expressed perhaps
Le plaisir que je goûte The pleasure that I taste
Vous en seriez jaloux You would be jealous of it
Plus heureuse que vous Happier than you
Je chéris de ma chaîne I cherish my chain’s
L’austérité la gêne Austerity and inconvenience
Un don mystérieux A mysterious gift
Ma règle est à vos yeux… My rule is to your eyes…

(SAX 149, stanza 4)

In the same terms that had been employed by Carmelites for three centuries, Mère Saint-Hilarion evoked a spiritual “chain” which was also, in fact, a thematic and poetic chain that linked her not only to God but also to Teresa of Avila, Henriette de Jésus, Thérèse de Lisieux, and less directly but no less strongly to every Carmelite woman to take up the pen and compose poetry in the course of three hundred years.

**Editing**

As compilers and editors of their own work, 19th-century Carmelites appear to have been as interested as their predecessors had been in refining the content of their poems even after they had been copied out in collections. It has been shown that in the convent of Beaune in the 17th...
century, edits were made to a number of the poems composed there; in the case of Thérèse de Lisieux in the 19th century, this was also true: Pauline Martin, Thérèse’s biological older sister (like Thérèse and Céline, also a Carmelite in Lisieux: Agnès de Jésus, 1861-1951) and Thérèse’s superior in the convent of Lisieux, had an important and at times heavy hand in editing her younger sister’s poetry. The changes Pauline made to the poems range from technical corrections to the metrical structure of the verses to more significant rewritings that replaced entire passages of the text. Jacques Lonchampt cites two cases of Pauline’s edits, one in which a defect in the meter of the poem Pourquoi je t’aime, ô Marie (Why I love you, o Mary) is removed\textsuperscript{222}, and another more drastic edit in which Pauline makes a nearly complete rewrite of another of Thérèse’s poems, Mon chant d’aujourd’hui (Thérèse de Lisieux, Poésies 269-274). To properly understand these edits in their context, it must also be noted that Thérèse’s poems were in fact being prepared for a limited publication within Carmel; part of the attention that Pauline paid to the structure and content of the texts may be attributed to their upcoming publication. In any case, however, the pattern of composition and subsequent editing is consistent with that seen in other Carmelite manuscripts, including those from the convent of Beaune.

In the Parisian convent on Avenue de Saxe, there appear to have been similar edits made to poems composed there. A poem composed by the Carmelite Aimée de Jésus\textsuperscript{223} also shows evidence of edits like those seen in the manuscripts from Beaune: in her poem Couplets à la Sainte Vierge. Composés par Sr Aimée de Jésus pour une sœur qui avait de grandes appréhensions de la Mort (Couplets to the Holy Virgin. Composed by Sister Aimée de Jésus

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item The verse Je t’aime, ô Notre Dame te disant servante is changed to Je t’aime te disant la petite servante in order to repair the awkward break between the two halves of the verse.
\item Aimée de Jésus (1839-1874) was active as a poet and also a writer of prose treatises on spirituality, and her writings served as an inspiration to more than one Carmelite; one of the poems from the Avenue de Saxe collection is titled Quelques couplets inspirés à une Carmélite de Caen par un passage des écrits de Sr Aimée de Jésus (Some couplets inspired to a Carmelite of Caen by a passage of the writings of Sister Aimée de Jésus, f. 59), and the Carmelite Edith Stein cited her as an inspiration and mentioned her in her writings.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
for a sister who had great apprehensions regarding Death), Aimée appears to have written from the point of view of a sister who was facing death, and to have used that voice to make an appeal to the Virgin Mary:

Ne tarde plus à m’apprendre  
Wait no longer to show me

Ce Cantique merveilleux  
This marvelous Cantique

Que les Vierges font entendre  
That the Virgins make heard

Suivant l’Agneau en tous lieux  
Following the Lamb in all places

Quand viendra mon heure dernière  
When my final hour comes

Marie, aussi tu seras là  
Marie, you too will be there

Ô Vierge mon auguste Mère  
O Virgin my august Mother

Et quoi, n’y es-tu pas déjà !  
And what, are you not already there!

(stanzas 1-2) (SAX 41)

The poem is not, however, left in its original state: as an annotation in the margin next to the first stanza indicates, the text is “retouché au crayon...” (altered/touched up in pencil), and in the second stanza the edits in pencil make the following changes:

Quand viendra mon heure dernière  
When my final hour comes

Et toi, aussi tu seras là  
And you, you too will be there

Ô âme auguste de ma Mère  
O august soul of my Mother

Et quoi, n’y es-tu pas déjà !  
And what, are you not already there!

(SAX)
It is not clear why *et toi* appears to be substituted for *Marie* and *Ô Vierge mon auguste Mère* is altered to *Ô âme auguste de ma Mère* (perhaps some shift in perspective was intended – *Vierge* is again altered to *âme* in a later stanza of the poem) but it is clear that someone was editing in the same way that Pauline (Agnès de Jésus) reworked the poems of Thérèse de Lisieux, and as another hand had retouched a number of the poems from the convent of Beaune two centuries before. The presence of such alterations in these manuscripts appears to be more of a constant than an isolated instance of post-facto editing, and it may be argued that along with other general tendencies outlined in this study, the composition and subsequent reworking and refinement of these poems is another characteristic feature that associates them with the common, shared poetic practice of Carmel.
**Collaborative Efforts**

The poem by Aimée de Jésus cited above suggests two kinds of collaboration in creating a poetic text: first, as has been shown, Aimée’s poem was edited after the fact, like those of Thérèse de Lisieux and at least some of those written by the Carmelites of Beaune. Second, as the title of the poem explains and the content of the poem demonstrates, Aimée composed the poem on behalf of another Carmelite, apparently lending her poetic skills to the message of another member of the community, and adopting the narrative perspective of one of her sisters. Later in the 19th century, Thérèse de Lisieux would also work as what Jacques Lonchampt calls a *poète à mesure*, a writer of “made to order” poems based on the ideas and messages of other Carmelites. Her poem *L’Atome de Jésus-Hostie (The Atom of Jesus-Host)* is written on *Pensées de Sr Saint Vincent de Paul, mises en vers à sa demande (Thoughts of Sister Saint Vincent de Paul, set in verse at her request)*. Sister Saint Vincent de Paul’s devotion to the Eucharist had evolved into a wish to become tiny and insignificant next to the Host:

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Je ne suis qu’un grain de poussière
I am but a grain of dust
Mais je veux fixer mon séjour
But I want to make my stay
Dans les ombres du sanctuaire
In the shadows of the sanctuary
Avec le Prisonnier d’Amour
With the Prisoner of Love
Ah ! vers l’hostie mon âme aspire
Ah! Toward the host my soul aspires
Je l’aime et ne veux rien de plus
I love it and I want nothing more
C’est le Dieu caché qui m’attire,
It is the hidden God who attracts me,
Je suis l’atome de Jésus…
I am the atom of Jesus…
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*(Thérèse de Lisieux, *Poésies* 115, stanza 1)*
Thérèse composed a number of similar poems “made to order”, including another based on the “thoughts” of Sister Saint Vincent de Paul and one based on the ideas of another Carmelite, Marie du Sacré-Cœur, who had meditated on the Sacred Heart of Christ during a solitary retreat, and asked Thérèse to render her meditations in the form of a poem. As explained in the letter cited in chapter five from Sister Marie-Jany of the convent of Bordeaux, a retreat of ten days once a year is common for Carmelites, and indeed some return to their communities with their thoughts organized in the form of a poem. In the case of Marie du Sacré-Cœur in Lisieux, she seems to have emerged from her retreat with the fruits of her meditation clearly in mind, but perhaps lacked the facility to render them in verse. As her part of the collaborative effort, Thérèse de Lisieux did the job of putting Marie’s thoughts in the form of a traditional Carmelite poem:

_Au Sacré Cœur de Jésus_

Au sépulcre saint, Marie-Madeleine
Cherchant son Jésus, se baissait en pleurs
Les anges voulaient adoucir sa peine
Mais rien ne pouvait calmer ses douleurs.
Ce n’était pas vous, lumineux archanges
Que cette âme ardente venait chercher
Elle voulait voir Le Seigneur des anges
Le prendre en ses bras, bien loin l’emporter…

_To the Sacred Heart of Jesus_

At the holy tomb, Mary Magdalene
Searching for her Jesus, bent down in tears
The angels wanted to ease her suffering
But nothing could calm her pain.
It was not you, luminous archangels
That this ardent soul came searching for
She wanted to see The Lord of the angels
To take him in her arms, to take him far away…

(Thérèse de Lisieux, *Poesies* 130, stanza 1)

Such collaboration in the composition of a poem is perhaps unsurprising, as Carmelite poetry had after all always been a communal activity, in that one of the principal functions of the poems was their use at events involving the entire convent, the *fêtes de famille* mentioned in the dedications to the volume of poems from the convent on Avenue de Saxe. This same sense of collaboration and community was clearly alive in 19th-century Carmel, as the poems of Aimée de Jésus and Thérèse de Lisieux show, and in this sense these poems are very much of Carmel and representative of its spirit.

**Sharing**

It has already been established that in the time of Teresa of Avila, poems circulated from convent to convent in a network of exchange; Teresa herself attests to this in her letters. Such networks also appear to have existed in 19th- and even 20th-century French Carmel: the volume of poems from Avenue de Saxe contains poems written not only by Parisian Carmelites, but also poems attributed to members of other convents including Caen and Bordeaux, and the explanatory notes at the beginning of the collection state that it contains “différents morceaux donnés par des amis du Monastère, et d’autres Carmels” (SAX 9).224

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224 “different pieces given by friends of the convent and other Carmels”
These details are significant, as they support the likely hypothesis that the practice of inter-convent exchange was not limited to 16th-century Spain, but also spread along with the practice of composition to France and Belgium as well. Like the manuscripts from Avenue de Saxe, documents from the convent of Lisieux also provide valuable information regarding these exchanges, and in fact highlight a “new” means of transmission and sharing of poems. Thérèse de Lisieux’s poem *A ma Mère Chérie le Bel Ange de mon Enfance (To my Dear Mother the Beautiful Angel of my Childhood)*, composed in 1895 for the thirty-fourth birthday of her sister Pauline, celebrates the relationship between the two biological and spiritual sisters:

```
Bien loin du beau Ciel ma Patrie  Far from the beautiful Heavens, my Country
Je ne suis pas seule ici-bas,   I am not alone here on earth,
Car en l’exil de cette vie     As in the exile of this life
Un bel Ange guide mes pas.    A beautiful Angel guides my way.

Ce bel Ange, ô Mère chérie !  This beautiful Angel, o cherished Mother!
A chanté près de mon berceau,  Sang close to my cradle,
Et l’accent de sa mélodie      And the accent of her melody
Me paraît encor tout nouveau. Still seems brand new to me.
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*(Thérèse de Lisieux, *Poésies* 125, stanzas 1/2)*

Thérèse died of tuberculosis in 1897, two years after composing this poem, at the age of twenty-four. Pauline, for her part, lived to the age of ninety, and died in 1951. As had long been the custom in Carmel, a *lettre circulaire* (a “circular” letter) was composed and sent to all of the convents in France, giving the news of Pauline’s passing and a brief account of her life. In this particular letter, along with the news of Pauline, the poem her sister Thérèse had written to honor her fifty-four years earlier also traveled from convent to convent, as part of
the circulaire. Thus, like certain Spanish poems in Teresa of Avila’s time, *A ma Mère Chérie le Bel Ange de mon Enfance* was also shared via an inter-convventual network. An examination of the *lettres circulaires* of French and Belgian convents of the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries – many of these letters still exist in convent archives – would help to determine whether or not other poems circulated in this form, but for the moment it is clear that in at least a few cases in 19th- and 20th-century France, Carmelite poetry continued to be shared between convents, as shown by the poems by nuns from Caen and Bordeaux in the Parisian volume and the poem by Thérèse de Lisieux that circulated in the letter on Pauline. Like the *circulaires*, poetry is an essential feature of Carmelite culture, and it may indeed be that the sharing of both in epistolary form has also been typical in Carmel since the time of Teresa of Avila.

**Outside Engagement**

Generally speaking, the poems by 19th-century Carmelites found in the collections from Brussels, Liège, Paris, Tours and Lisieux engage little with the world outside the convent. Rather like their counterparts from 16th-century Spain and 17th-century France, these poems tend to deal with matters internal, matters of the soul and matters particular to their enclosed communities. Unlike the poems presented in this study from Mol, Saint-Denis and Compiègne, those written by Carmelites after the Revolution tend generally to stay clear of events *extra muros*. On one occasion, however, Thérèse de Lisieux was drawn out of this tendency toward interiority and engaged in a controversy outside the walls.

In 1890s France, a series of publications entitled *Le Diable au XIXe siècle (The Devil in the 19th Century)* had caught the attention of the public, with tales of occult devil-worship and vast anti-Christian Masonic conspiracy. In this series, the heathen exploits of a group of
characters were told, among them one Diana Vaughan, who was said to be a Satanist priestess. Although no one had ever seen her, Diana Vaughan became a well-known and for Catholics much-reviled figure in France, and so it came as a great shock and a welcome surprise for Christians when it was announced in June of 1895 that Vaughan had been freed from “l'emprise diabolique” and converted to Catholicism (Thérèse de Lisieux, Théâtre 242). Following her conversion, Vaughan began to publish prolifically against her former cause, denouncing Satanism and Masonry and in 1896, after a number of her publications had appeared, her story came to the attention of the Carmelites of Lisieux. In the convent, the news was received with a to-be-expected degree of joy, and Thérèse de Lisieux, moved by the story, decided to begin a correspondence with the recent convert. Thérèse wrote to Vaughan, Vaughan replied, Thérèse sent photographs of herself dressed as Joan of Arc (a figure she greatly admired) and dedicated it to Vaughan, writing: “À la nouvelle Jeanne d’Arc” on the picture. Thérèse then proceeded to make this same comparison in the context of a play, Le Triomphe de l’humilité, in which she again likened Vaughan to the French heroine:

“…j’ai lu le récit de la conversion extraordinaire de…Diana Vaughan…elle est devenue une nouvelle Jeanne d’Arc…” (Thérèse de Lisieux, Théâtre 248)

The support that Thérèse de Lisieux had shown for Diana Vaughan turned out to be misplaced, however: doubts had begun to grow regarding the veracity of Vaughan’s claim, and some even questioned her very existence, suspecting that she might be an invented character in the hands of a prankster. Ostensibly to quell these rumors, a press conference was scheduled for April 19, 1897, where, it was announced, Vaughan would appear personally and address the public. Vaughan never appeared, but Léo Taxil (1854-1907), a

225 “the devil’s hold”
226 “…I read the story of the extraordinary conversion of…Diana Vaughan… she has become a new Joan of Arc.”
journalist who had previously been a strident anti-clerical critic but later converted to Catholicism (he was even granted an audience with Pope Leo XIII following his conversion) did appear – to announce to the public that Diana Vaughan, her conversion and even his own conversion had all been a hoax, designed to ridicule Catholics for their obsession with diabolical and Masonic conspiracies. And on that particular day, Taxil’s ridicule was both general and personal – he appeared flanked by enlarged versions of the photographs Thérèse de Lisieux had sent to “Diana Vaughan”, one of herself dressed as Joan of Arc and another of her sister Céline dressed as Saint Catherine, as proof that he had fooled even the most devout of Catholics. Thus for Thérèse, her first and only serious engagement with events outside her convent was met with obstacles; in this, her sentimental and poetic engagement was not unlike that of Carmelites who came before and also used their poetry to assert what they believed: as in Mol, Saint-Denis and Compiègne, in Lisieux, Carmelite poetry had evolved, at least for a time, into a tool for the assertion of spiritual truth, even in the face of opposition from beyond the walls.

As a literary corpus, Carmelite poetry since the time of Teresa of Avila displays both consistent characteristics and innovative departures from the norm; there are sufficient examples of the former to show that in structure, content and function, poetry in Teresian Carmel does indeed have an identity of its own, thanks to characteristics that, while not necessarily unique in poetry as a whole, recur frequently enough to bind the poems together as a group. There are also enough departures from the original poems written by Teresa and others of her generation in 16th-century Spain to make the work of her French, Flemish and Belgian daughters worthy of study, as in each time, place, and set of circumstances, Carmelite poetry meant something different for those who composed it, and it served its authors in different ways as they negotiated worlds interior and exterior.
When the Spanish Carmelite Ana de San Bartolomé was establishing her new convent in 17th-century Antwerp and training the first generation of Flemish Carmelites, a second convent was founded in the same city, this one made up of Englishwomen who had left Protestant England to enter convents in the Netherlands. The first members of what came to be called the “English Carmel” in Antwerp had been trained alongside French, Spanish and Flemish nuns in the convents set up by Ana de Jesús, and when they were sufficient in number a new house was founded for them in Antwerp in 1619, a neighbor to the one already established by Ana de San Bartolomé in 1612. Ana de San Bartolomé corresponded frequently with Anne of the Ascension, the first prioress of the English Carmel. Her letters suggest that Anne, who was born to an English father and a Spanish mother, may have been receptive to Ana’s coplas, and wished to use them in her own convent:

(A la Madre Ana de la Ascensión, Amberes, 2 de enero 1618/1619)
…aunque tengo poco lugar, la escribo y le envío las coplas que me pide…hice para alegrarlas en el coro esas que dicen: Levántate, Bras/que oigo algún ruido…

(To Mother Anne of the Ascension, Antwerp, January 2 1618/1619)
…though I have little space, I write you and send you the coplas you ask me for…to cheer them in the chorus I wrote those that say: Get up, Bras/I hear a sound…

(Ana de San Bartolomé, Obras, letter 248)

(A la Madre Ana de la Ascensión, Amberes, comienzos de enero 1622/1624)

Ana’s concern for “cheering” her sisters with coplas, “not allowing them to be sad”, is a clear reflection of Teresa’s original desire for alegría in the convent, and an indication of the function of poetry and song in maintaining a joyful atmosphere in Teresian Carmel.
En lo que me pide V.R. de las coplas, no he hecho ninguna, mi Madre; las de las hermanas he tenido por mías y las he alegrado con ellas todo lo que he podido; no las he dejado estar tristes, han sido todas muy alegres…

(To Mother Anne of the Ascension, Antwerp, early January 1622/1624)

As far as the coplas Your Grace asks me for, I have not written any, my Mother; those of the sisters I have used as my own to cheer them all that I could; I have not allowed them to be sad, they have all been very joyful…

(Ana de San Bartolomé, Obras, letter 540)

Whether Anne of the Ascension reciprocated with her own _coplas_ or _cantiques_ in English is not known, but it appears that in the nearby convent of Lierre, founded in 1648 by English nuns from Antwerp, the Carmelite poetic tradition carried on. Margaret Mostyn (Margaret of Jesus, 1625-1679) was one of the first to go to Lierre from Antwerp, and according to _The Life of Margaret Mostyn_ by Edmund Bedingfield (1878), she composed poems like the Spanish Carmelites’ _coplas_, and a tradition of singing them was maintained for over two hundred years:

The following lines are supposed to be the composition of Mother Margaret. Since her time they have always been sung by the Community, to a quaint old tune, every day during Advent, as an invitation to the Sacred Infant, and a preparation for the Feast of Christmas.

_Sweet blessed little Jesus,
’Tis You alone can please us,
Why stay You then so long?
Lord, hasten now Your coming,
Our hearts do die with longing_
Over a century after Margaret Mostyn’s time, English nuns from Lierre traveled back to England to found a new convent, in 1794 in the town of Darlington, in the north of England. In Anne Hardman’s *Mother Margaret Mostyn, Discalced Carmelite, 1625-1679*, we read that the Carmelites of Darlington cherished the memory of their convent in Lierre, and commemorated not only the bicentenary of its foundation, but also Avila, the birthplace of Teresa of Avila, and in so doing tied together nearly three hundred years of Carmelite history, from Spain through France and the Netherlands, to England:

The following lines, written for the bicentenary of the foundation in Lierre kept in 1848, speak for themselves:

Deep in the heart of fair Brabant it lies,

A dreamy old-world town;

Its red-tiled roofs and lance-like spires

‘Mid woods of golden brown.

A swift white river flashes past its feet,

On to the woodland space,

And its tall trees clasp o’er the narrow street

Like friends in close embrace.

‘Twas here that Carmel’s garden bloomed,

And all the Brabant land perfumed

With saintly odors pure and rare

Beneath the Blessed Margaret’s care.

Such virtues flourished in its shade,
That people loved the name, and said:

“That Avila lives in youth once more
Upon the distant Brabant shore.”

(Hardman 49)

But even before Carmelites ventured back to England, they had gone much farther afield, to America. In April of 1790, a group of Carmelites from the English Carmel in Antwerp set off to found a convent in the state of Maryland, founded in 1632 and by now one of the United States, by virtue of approving the Articles of the Confederation. The new foundation was made in the town of Port Tobacco, in southern Maryland, on October 15, 1790, the day of the Feast of Teresa of Avila. From here, investigative work remains to be done to determine the extent of the Carmelite poetic presence in America, and this falls outside the scope of the present study. But the work of at least one 20th-century Carmelite poet suggests that the tradition may have remained intact. Jessica Powers (Miriam of the Holy Spirit, 1905-1988) entered the Carmelite convent of Milwaukee in 1941, and went on to publish several collections of poems, some of which draw on specifically Carmelite themes. In Winter Music, A Life of Jessica Powers, Dolores Leckey documents that Powers, like her predecessors, wrote poems for Easter and Christmas, and shared them with Carmelites in other convents, and also gave a reading of one of her poems at a Carmelite gathering in Philadelphia in 1955, recalling Teresa’s recreaciones, during which poems were read or sung (Leckey 127). The title of her poem “The House at Rest” comes from the poem Noche Oscura (“Dark Night”) by John of the Cross, and even begins with an English translation of the first stanza of John’s poem:

On a dark night

Kindled in love with yearnings –
Oh, happy chance! –
I went forth unobserved,
My house being now at rest...

(Leckey 148-149)

Thanks to this handful of poems, which may (like their French and Flemish predecessors) be indicative of a larger, as yet unexplored poetic practice in English and American convents, the Carmelite poetic tradition outside of Europe can be traced back to the Spanish Netherlands, to Margaret Mostyn, to Margriet van d’Engelen, to Ana de San Bartolomé, and of course, to Teresa of Avila. Further study may reveal that Carmelite poetry in England and America had as important a function as it had in Spanish, French and Flemish Carmel.

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228 The first stanza of the Spanish original:

En una noche oscura,  
con ansia, en amores inflamada,  
¡oh dichosa ventura!,  
sali sin ser notada,  
estando ya mi casa sosegada.
In critical editions and other books and articles on the poems of Teresa of Avila and Thérèse de Lisieux, a certain critical tendency on the part of the editor/scholar is often evident. Jean Guitton, in his preface to the collected poems of Thérèse de Lisieux, writes of her “vocation poétique inaccomplie” (Poésies 8); in his commentaries in that same edition, Jacques Lonchampt writes of “…ces vers maladroits, pour lesquels l’auteur ne s’est guère donné de peine…” (42) and says of her poem A Mère Marie de Gonzague pour ses soixante ans (To Mother Mary Gonzaga for her sixtieth birthday) that “le métier paraît nul” (20). In his Introduction to Thérèse’s plays, Guy Gaucher states that “De même que les poésies de sainte Thérèse n’ont pas révolutionné l’art poétique…les récréations [the plays] ne bouleversent pas l’art dramatique” (Thérèse de Lisieux, Théâtre 7). Mary Frances Dorschell has asked the question: “…how are we to judge Thérèse’s poetical works? Are they as tasteless in content and style as some critics would have us believe…?” (Dorschell 403). And Teresa of Avila, according to Efrén de la Madre de Dios and Otger Steggink, was “more than a poet…a sketcher of verses”. Victor García de la Concha echoes this sentiment, declaring his agreement with Teresa’s own autocritical evaluation in which she says that she writes her poems “without being a poet”. One can understand the impulse to make such assessments

229 “J’avais esquissé quelques pensées sur la vocation poétique inaccomplie de la ‘petite Thérèse’…” (“I had sketched out some thoughts on the unfulfilled poetic vocation of the ‘little Thérèse’…”)
230 “…these awkward verses, for which the author made hardly any effort”
231 “the [poetic] craft appears nonexistent”
232 “Just as Saint Thérèse’s poems have not revolutionized the art of poetry…likewise her plays cause no commotion in dramatic art”
233 “Más que poeta, fue Santa Teresa una gran versificadora, o ‘trazadora de versos’” (TOC 651).
234 Teresa’s “self-evaluation” is found in the Vida, 16:4: “Yo sé persona que, con no ser poeta, que le acaecía hacer de presto coplas muy sentidas declarando su pena bien, no hechas de su entendimiento, sino que, para más gozar la gloria que tan sabrosa pena le dava, se quejava de ello a su Dios.” (I know a person who, without being a poet, was able to easily compose verses full of feeling and most expressive of her pain, verses not made of her
– Thérèse was, after all, no Alfred de Musset or Théophile Gautier, and Teresa no Garcilaso de la Vega or Fray Luis de León (it should be noted as well that neither of them pretended otherwise).

Such criticisms may be valid as far as they go, but I would also like to suggest that the importance of Carmelite poetry goes beyond the aesthetic, and lies more in what these texts have to say about the culture and life of women religious. Further, I would like to posit that the best way to understand these poems and their value (apart from the value they may have as devotional/spiritual documents) is to properly contextualize them: rather than comparing them to the work of contemporary published “professional” poets, we should rather compare them to other texts that are truly of the same genre, those of other Carmelite poets who lived and worked in similar conditions, with numerous obligations and relatively little time for the composition and refinement of poems. Until now, such comparisons were difficult to make, due to the lack of a corpus of Carmelite poems within which the work of Thérèse de Lisieux and Teresa of Avila could be situated. One of the purposes of this study, and, it is to be hoped, one of its principal contributions, has been to provide a meaningful context for the reading of poems like those written by Teresa and Thérèse, and to thereby better demonstrate their value. To that end, in chapter two, I have attempted to establish the importance of the prose and the poetry of Teresa of Avila for a later generation of Carmelites in 17th-century France, and to show that, much more than just a means of enlivening the atmosphere of the convent, the poetic space that Teresa opened up for her followers was one of freedom of expression in which women could have both a spiritual and a literary voice. In chapter three it has been shown that the practice of poetic composition extended to the pastoral genre, and that in that

understanding, but rather, so as to better savor the glory that such sweet suffering gave to her, she complained of it to her God.) García de la Concha echoes the sentiment in this passage: “Prescindamos de la valoración autocritica —con no ser poeta—, que, por lo demás, es bastante exacta.” (“Let us dispense with the self-criticism without being a poet—, which, nonetheless, is fairly accurate.”) García de la Concha, El arte literario, 19.
privileged literary space that is the “locus amoenus” of Carmelite poetry, Flemish Catholic
nuns asserted their own spiritual truth even as that truth was disputed all around them. Further,
the pastoral poem from Mol is an important document in understanding the Protestant-
Catholic dynamic in the 17th-century Dutch Republic, a document that may perhaps have
never existed without the insistence of Teresa of Avila on poetry a century before. In chapters
four and five, it is demonstrated that Carmelite women worked within the Teresian poetic
space to defend their heritage, insisting first that austerity and alegria could indeed coexist,
and later declaring that anti-clerical pressures extra muros could not shake their faith in and
dedication to their chosen way of life, and that they would stay true to their vows even on
pain of death. The poems cited in chapter six serve to establish the existence of a
recognizable Carmelite corpus with its own particular characteristics, and an increasing
concern for the preservation of memory.

Finally, while I believe that the poems of the Carmelites who lived in the time between
Teresa of Avila and Thérèse de Lisieux are at least as important as those of the “two Teresas”
(in some cases perhaps even more so), it is worth repeating that the poetic link between these
two figures has now been definitively established, and there can be little doubt regarding the
continuity of practice and tradition between these them, as manifested in the consistency of
style, content and function of the poems presented here. This, in turn, should help scholars of
Teresa and Thérèse to more readily understand that what may appear to be defects in these
poems often have – with the proper context – explanations: thus, for example, the “monotonie
des attaques” that Jacques Lonchampt perceives in Thérèse’s poem Vivre d’amour can be
better understood as a fundamental structural feature in many Carmelite poems; the same is
true for “curiosities” like the one detected by Mary Frances Dorschell in the same poem:
“Curiously enough,” she writes, “in the last two stanzas of the poem, Vivre
d’amour…becomes Mourir d’amour.” (Dorschell 409) As has been shown, the “contradictory”
declarations in Thérèse’s poem are only curious if the poem is not compared to *Muero porque no muero*, which might be considered the foundational text of the Carmelite poetic corpus. And now, with the context provided by the poems presented in this study, we have good reason to make such comparisons, and a solid basis upon which to make them. In the end, from a literary standpoint, it may be more useful to show what Teresa of Avila and Thérèse de Lisieux had in common with their fellow Carmelites and less important to point out what they lacked in comparison to poets who lived and worked in rather different circumstances.

**The Future of the Study of Carmelite Poetry**

Within the field of convent writing, this study occupies a place that shows it to be both similar to and different from the studies that precede it. Like the studies of scholars like Surtz, Weaver, Winston-Allen, Lowe, Monson, Arenal and Schlau, this study takes as one of its basic purposes to present, situate and analyze unknown or understudied works by women religious living in enclosed communities. In doing so, this study, like others before it, deals with a body of written work that spans multiple centuries, and in this case, not only multiple eras but also multiple languages and nations. While this approach is not without its problems – it is difficult, for example, to thoroughly examine every relevant aspect of 17th-century Catholic France, Protestant and Catholic tensions in the 17th- and 18th-century Netherlands, and 18th-century Enlightenment France and the French Revolution in a single study – it is necessary in this case in order to demonstrate the larger tradition of convent poetry in Carmel in such a way as to make clear that Carmelite poetry and its implications were not merely a “local” phenomenon limited to one or two temporal/geographical locations. With the necessity of taking on a broad span of time comes a certain amount of sacrifice in a preliminary, expository study such as this one.
More narrowly focused studies can be done in the future to more deeply and locally explore the relevance of the poems of the Carmelites of Beaune in France in the 1600s, when a powerful wave of mysticism swept over the country – indeed, even within French Carmel itself, mystics such as Marguerite du Sant-Sacrement (of Beaune) and Catherine de Jésus (of Paris) will have a great deal to “say to one another” in a comparative study, and the poems from Beaune (some of which may have been written by Marguerite) will be important documents in such an analysis. The work of male poets such as Jean-Joseph Surin and Martial de Brive can also be brought into this “dialogue”, in order to give a fuller picture of the presence of Teresa of Avila in the poems of 17th-century French men and women. The question of miracles in the 17th- and 18th-century Netherlands and the written participation of both Catholics and Protestants in the religious struggles of that time and place are also deserving of a thorough study, and in such work poems by Carmelites – especially those on the “hostile” side of the spiritual frontier – will be an important part of the exchange. The shifting attitudes toward religious ways of life in 18th-century France are already well-known and extensively studied, but adding more insiders’ voices – those of cloistered women in particular – to this discussion would be an important and rare contribution, and while the significance of the anti-mondain poems of the Carmelites of Saint-Denis is only briefly established here, they could be key texts in a study focusing on the querelle opposing sacred and secular in pre-Revolution France. Finally, while the role of counter-revolutionary Carmelite poetry has been partially examined by William Bush and within this study as well, these poems are part of a much larger dialogue in which competing political and spiritual messages were often communicated via carefully crafted contrafacta. And on this point, it is important to acknowledge the necessity of a study in which the musical aspect of the poems presented here is more fully taken into consideration; for Carmelite poetry is, after all, song,

235 On Catherine de Jésus, see Barbara B. Diefendorf, *From Penitence to Charity*, 147-148.
and while this study has focused principally on the text, both text and tone (to again borrow Richard Freedman’s formula) are important, and the role of not just composing but also singing in Carmelite convents should be considered in the context of other musical activities in convent communities. But none of this can be done without first establishing the existence and broader significance of Carmelite poetry after Teresa of Avila’s time, and this is exactly what the present study has been intended to do.

It is also important to note one way in which this study differs from others like it, and in so doing to explain one aspect of its critical approach. Many, indeed most, of the studies that deal with convent writing take as an essential part of their arguments the question of women’s writing as a means of opposition to the world of men. Elissa Weaver refers – quite accurately, in my opinion – to the “feminine subculture” created in the convents she has studied and the ways in which Italian women religious defined themselves in opposition to men. And in her introduction to *Convent Chronicles*, Anne Winston-Allen shows that after examining the women’s writings she has uncovered, “…the past changes: it looks different with women sharing center stage.” (Winston-Allen 3) And just as the present study brings to light the abovementioned “local” questions in need of greater attention, the texts presented herein may indeed benefit from an analysis that takes the assertion of women’s power against male control and domination into greater account – I have touched upon this in chapter two, for example, where the Carmelites of Beaune appear to have written Teresian autobiographical fragments away from the critical eye of male supervisors – but for the most part, the primary tension present in the rest of the texts has seemed to me to be that of *monastère* vs. *monde*, the convent versus the world, rather than woman versus man. In that light, I have attempted to show how Carmelite poetry served as a means of dealing with the world as a whole (admittedly, a “man’s world” for the most part) rather than the specific
question of how women take on gender differences in their writing. But this last question may be a useful one indeed to pose in a future study.

Finally, the overall significance of Carmelite poetry must be brought into sharper focus. As Ronald Surtz has written, women religious prior to Teresa’s time – her “mothers” – relied upon male authority and models for their own writing, such that the “written links in the chain of authority” were forged by men (Surtz 5-6). After Teresa, this changes, as Surtz explains: “…the seventeenth-century daughters of Teresa had precisely what Teresa’s own medieval mothers lacked, a more or less contemporary role model to authorize and validate their experiences.” (Surtz 141) But the authority that the women who followed Teresa derived from her example was based upon her success as a leader and reformer, and in literary terms on the overwhelming reception and diffusion of her prose writings, the Libro, the Castillo and the Camino. What I have attempted to show in this study, through an analysis of the conditions of poetic production in Teresian Carmel and the subsequent adoption and adaptation of the poetic practices Teresa set in place, is that – consciously or not – by encouraging, indeed in some cases insisting upon, the composition and sharing of poems within the confines of Carmel, Teresa created a reserved space in which Carmelite women could write, with a apparently high degree of freedom, an autoridad de escribir, as Teresa herself said, an authority which she may have felt she possessed only with strings attached.236

No one was more aware of the difficulties associated with the censorship of women’s writing than Teresa of Avila, whose prose works were consistently controlled by others; as such, her insistence upon a literary activity for herself and her fellow Carmelites that could go largely unnoticed by those outside the convent is significant, and it left in place a means by which Carmelite women could have the power to write, and to write what they wished. This

236 In chapter six of the Libro, Teresa again declares her obedience and her lack of authority: “Si fuera persona que tuviera autoridad de escribir, de buena gana me alargara en decir muy por menudo las mercedes que ha hecho este glorioso Santo…” (“If I were a person who had the authority to write, willingly I would elaborate, saying in detail the mercies that this glorious Saint has given…”)(TOC 51)
freedom, or liberté de la plume, as one Carmelite from Beaune put it, is a result of Teresa’s practices, and I would argue, establishes the importance of her poetry outside 16th-century Spain, in 17th-, 18th- and 19th-century France, the Spanish Netherlands and England, and in our time as well.
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