

JEROEN DEPLOIGE – KATRIEN HEENE<sup>1</sup>

COLETTE'S TRAVELS. THE DISCURSIVE FRAMING  
OF THE MOBILITY OF WOMEN IN SAINTS' LIVES  
FROM THE LOW COUNTRIES  
(THIRTEENTH TO FIFTEENTH CENTURIES)

In 384, Jerome addressed a long and famous letter to Eustochium, one of his female followers. She had made of vow of perpetual virginity and would later on, together with her mother Paula, accompany Jerome from Rome to the Holy Land where she and her mother would take charge of three female monasteries in Bethlehem. In the 25<sup>th</sup> paragraph of his letter known as *De custodia virginitatis*, in which he treated the motives for and the regulation of a successful life of virginity, Jerome stipulated:

Ever let the privacy of your chamber guard you; ever let the Bridegroom sport with you within... Go not from home nor visit the daughters of a strange land

1. In a few paragraphs of this article, we continue to build upon results and insights published earlier in K. Heene, *Vrouwen en mobiliteit in de Nederlanden. Een verkenning in Mediolatijnse teksten*, «Queeste», 9 (2002), pp. 19-37; Id., *Gender and Mobility in the Low Countries: A Case Study on Thirteenth Century Exempla and Saints' Lives*, in E. Kittel – M. Suydam (eds.), *The Texture of Society: Medieval Women in Flanders*, New York, Palgrave, 2003, pp. 31-49; Id., *The Latin Discourse on Women and Mobility in the Late Medieval Low Countries. A Gender Approach*, in J. Dor – M. E. Henneau (eds.), *Femmes et pèlerinages/Women and Pilgrimages*, Santiago de Compostela, Compostela Group of Universities, 2007, pp. 153-90. We would like to thank Imke de Gier for her careful correction of our English. Address of the authors: Ghent University – Department of History, Sint-Pietersnieuwstraat 35, 9000 Gent, Belgium.

... Dinah went out and was seduced. Do not seek the Bridegroom in the streets; do not go round the corners of the city... Let foolish virgins stray abroad, but for your part stay at home with the Bridegroom<sup>2</sup>.

According to Jerome and many other Judeo-Christian authors, the dangers for a woman's virginity and honourable conduct were closely connected with the world outside the private house. This conviction never truly changed throughout the Middle Ages and early modern period. In medieval monastic circles, the vicissitudes of Dinah (Gen. 34), referred to by Jerome, continued to be used as an argument in favour of the active claustration of women<sup>3</sup>. The association between the world outdoors and the threat to a woman's chastity obviously also became an important topic in hagiographical texts on female saints, among whom virgins hold the first rank. Yet, as will be shown in this contribution, the discourse on female mobility in saints' lives is much more varied and nuanced than Jerome's guideline. Due to the specific nature of hagiographical texts, these sources offer us a large variety of views and glimpses of the mobility of women – in discourse as well as in practice – in medieval society.

### *The particularities of saints' lives*

Late medieval lives of saints were essentially written to promote or to launch the cult of a saint or to legitimise new religious ideals exemplified by charismatic personalities. As hagiographers often pointed out in the

2. Saint Jérôme, *Lettres*, edited and translated by J. Labourt, Paris, Les belles lettres, 1949, vol. 1, pp. 136–7 (Collection Budé): «Semper te cubiculi tui secreta custodiant, semper tecum sponus ludat intrinsecus... Cave ne domum exeas, ne velis videre filias regionis alienae, ... Dina egressa corrumpitur. Nolo te sponsum quaerere per plateas, nolo circumire angulos civitatis... Foris vagentur virgines stultae, tu intrinsecus esto cum sponso». English translation: *The Principal Works of St. Jerome*, translated W. H. Fremantle, Oxford, Parker & Co, 1896, p. 32 (A Select Library of the Christian Church. Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, 6).

3. See, e.g., J. Schroeder, *The Rape of Dinah: Luther's Interpretation of a Biblical Narrative*, «Sixteenth Century Journal», 28 (1997), pp. 775–91, here 776–80 and, from a more general perspective, C. Casagrande, *La Femme gardée*, in G. Duby – M. Perrot (eds.), *Histoire des femmes. T. II. Le Moyen Age*, Paris, Plon, 1991, pp. 83–116.

prologues to their works<sup>4</sup>, their heroes did not necessarily have to function as models for imitation<sup>5</sup>. The saints and beatified described in their texts had primarily to be venerated and admired for their mediating powers and their exceptional behaviour. Hence scholars agree that saints' lives are often better witnesses of the mindsets of hagiographers and of the ideas prevalent in their entourage, than of the lives of the saints themselves<sup>6</sup>. At the same time, however, hagiographical texts often also contain much information regarding the everyday life of the period in which they were composed. Hagiographers could give this information unintentionally in the course of their narratives, but they could also introduce it very consciously in order to create a realistic framework for the exceptional and often spectacular deeds and miracles of the person they wanted to sanctify. This seems to hold in particular for the lives of contemporary saints, in which, as Aviad Kleinberg puts it, the hagiographer not only had to produce «enough hagiographical commonplaces to convince the reader of his subject's sanctity» but also «enough neutral and unconventional material to convince the reader of the writer's sincerity»<sup>7</sup>.

In recent years saints' lives have become very popular among medievalists as extremely valuable sources for women's history<sup>8</sup>. The Low Countries in particular, and especially the diocese of Liège, have been well stud-

4. M. Goodich, *A Note on Sainthood in the Hagiographical Prologue*, «History and Theory», 20 (1981), pp.168-74.

5. On the mixture of admirable and imitable elements in medieval hagiography, see A. Vauchez, *Saints admirables et saints imitables. Les fonctions de l'hagiographie ont-elles changés aux derniers siècles du Moyen Âge?*, in *Les Fonctions des saints dans le monde occidental (IIIe-XIIIe siècle)*, Rome, Ecole française de Rome, 1991, pp. 161-72. See also R. Kieckhefer, *Imitators of Christ: Sainthood in Christian Tradition*, in R. Kieckhefer - G. D. Bond (eds.), *Sainthood. Its Manifestations in World Religions*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1988, p. 13 ff.

6. See, e.g., J. Schulenburg, *Forgetful of Their Sex. Female Sanctity and Society ca 500-1100*, Chicago-London, The University of Chicago Press, 1998, pp. 17-57.

7. A. Kleinberg, *Prophets in Their Own Country: Living Saints and the Making of Sainthood in the Later Middle Ages*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1992, p. 54.

8. See, e.g., J. Schulenburg, *Saints' Lives as a Source for the History of Women, 500-1100*, in J. Rosenthal (ed.), *Medieval Women and the Sources of Medieval History*, Athens, University of Georgia Press, 1990, p. 285-320 and J. Wogan-Browne, *Powers of Record, Powers of Example: Hagiography and Women's History*, in M. C. Erler - M. Kowaleski (eds.), *Gendering the Master Narrative: Women and Power in the Middle Ages*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2003, pp. 71-93.

ied in this vogue of research because of the presence in these territories, from the thirteenth century onwards, of a good number of famous *mulieres religiosae* connected to the growing success of the beguine movement, to female Cistercian spirituality and to the popularity of independent urban recluses<sup>9</sup>. Furthermore, in the late medieval religious movements of monastic reform and *Devotio Moderna*, we still encounter female saints and exemplary women testifying to a religious climate of openness to a specific and active female spirituality<sup>10</sup>. However, although it is undeniable that the number of contemporary saintly women witnessed a remarkable increase in the last three centuries of the Middle Ages, it should be noted that the Low Countries already had a long tradition of veneration of early medieval female patron saints of local or regional importance, one that continued to flourish. In some small rural communities especially, and following the example of important older monastic institutions and urban chapters of secular canons venerating an early medieval female patron saint, new cults of Christian heroines, whose lives were situated in a legendary early medieval past, were still launched<sup>11</sup>. These new cults of local patron saints were moreover accompanied by a growing popularity, both in Latin and in vernacular rewritings, of the universally acknowledged late antique martyrs and saints, amongst whom we find a minority of considerable proportions of women. This was especially due to the success of collections *per circulum anni* like the *Legenda aurea* of James of Voragine, which also circulated intensively in the Low Countries, often adapted to local preferences by the insertion of regionally important saints, or even in translation, for example from 1357 onwards in Middle Dutch<sup>12</sup>.

9. See, respectively, W. Simons, *Cities of Ladies: Beguine Communities in the Medieval Low Countries, 1200-1565*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001; S. Roisin, 'L'efflorescence cistercienne et le courant féminin de piété au XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle', «Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique», 39 (1943), pp. 342-78; A. B. Mulder-Bakker, *Lives of the Anchoresses: The Rise of the Urban Recluse in Medieval Europe*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005.

10. W. Scheepsma, *Medieval Religious Women in the Low Countries. The Modern Devotion: the Canonesses of Windesheim and their Writings*, Woodbridge, Boydell, 2004; J. Van Engen, *Sisters and Brothers of the Common Life: The Devotio Moderna and the World of the Later Middle Ages*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008, pp. 121-37.

11. See, for some case studies, A. B. Mulder-Bakker, *Woudvrouwen. Ierse prinsessen als kluizenaresen in de Nederlanden*, «Tijdschrift voor sociale geschiedenis», 20 (1994), pp. 1-23.

12. On the manuscript tradition of the *Legenda aurea*, see: B. Fleith, *Studien zur Über-*

It is obvious that the broad range of hagiographical narratives addressed a great variety of readers and audiences, and that processes of hagiographical stylisation could vary considerably according to the kind of female saints that were described. Latin texts, for instance, were primarily aimed at a male, clerical audience, who could subsequently incorporate some storylines of these *vitae* in their preaching for audiences who were not versed in Latin, while vernacular lives were meant more directly for religious women, novices, lay brothers, pious noblemen or even ordinary people. The use of Latin was also usually preferred to describe previously unknown figures, such as new local patronesses from an alleged distant past, or contemporary charismatic women whose sainthood still had to be negotiated. The latter's *vitae* were at the same time often primarily meant to propagate new religious ideals, such as the kind of female mysticism burgeoning from the thirteenth century onwards<sup>13</sup>. There were already some exceptions to this rule in the late Middle Ages, as in the case of the *vita* of Colette (d. 1447), which had first been written in French for a target readership of reformed Second Order sisters and which was only translated into Latin afterwards<sup>14</sup>. It is also in these texts on contemporary women especially, written by their father-confessors or personal counselors, that a chance to find some information on the ideas and personal ideals of the beatified women themselves exists<sup>15</sup>. The majority of the ver-

*lieferungsgeschichte der lateinischen Legenda aurea*, Brussels, Société des Bollandistes, 1991. On the regional reception of the *Legenda aurea* in the Low Countries: M. Carasso-Kok, *Een goed geordend verhaal. Jacobus de Voragine en de Legenda aurea*, in A. B. Mulder-Bakker - M. Carasso-Kok (eds.), *Gouden legenden. Heiligenlevens en heiligenverering in de Nederlanden*, Hilversum, Verloren, 1997, pp. 27-46, esp. 41-6. On the as yet unedited translations in Middle Dutch: J. Deschamps, *Middel nederlandse handschriften uit Europese en Amerikaanse bibliotheken. Catalogus*, Leiden, Brill, <sup>2</sup>1972, pp. 197-202.

13. See e.g. M. Lauwers, *Expérience béguinale et récit hagiographique. A propos de la Vita Mariae Oigniacensis de Jacques de Vitry (vers 1215)*, «Journal des Savants», (1989), pp. 61-103 and Id., *Entre béguinisme et mysticisme. La Vie de Marie d'Oignies (1213) de Jacques de Vitry ou la définition d'une sainteté féminine*, «Ons Geestelijk Erf», 66 (1992), pp. 46-70. See also: J. Deploige, *Intériorisation religieuse et propagande hagiographique dans les Pays-Bas méridionaux du 11e au 13e siècle*, «Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique», 94 (1999), pp. 808-31 (*passim*).

14. See Pierre de Vaux, *Vie de soeur Colette*, introduced and translated by E. Lopez, Saint-Etienne, Publications de l'Université de Saint-Etienne, 1994, pp. 10-16, 19-20.

15. On the difficulties of extracting women's own voices from male-authored texts, see M. C. Mooney, *Voice, Gender and the Portrayal of Sanctity*, in Ead., *Gendered Voices. Medieval Saints and Their Interpreters*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999, pp. 1-15.

naacular texts, which increasingly emerged from the end of the twelfth century onwards, dealt with established and well-known saints who were less connected to a specific locality or a new religious ideal. Their often rather stereotypical passion stories or sacred lives, written down in short and sometimes even versified texts, usually presented them as personifications of timeless Christian virtues rather than as exemplifications of specific and new kinds of spirituality<sup>16</sup>. Translating, however, often constituted a process of rewriting. Particularly in the case of *vitae* of relatively contemporary figures a comparison of the Latin originals with the different translations can be very revealing of interesting shifts of representation. We can think here of the lives of saints like Clare of Assisi (d. 1253) or Bridget of Sweden (d. 1373), who had entered the hallowed circle of universal saints rather quickly and whose Latin lives were translated into the vernacular.

In the following paragraphs, we will offer a basic overview of the way in which the mobility of women was represented in this varied hagiographical tradition. To this end, we will take into account a broad selection of saints' lives written in Latin as well as in the vernacular, describing old as well as contemporary charismatic women, and universally venerated saints as well as locally beatified figures. The hagiographical framing of women's freedom of movement will be surveyed by firstly looking at the way in which these texts confirmed the traditional normative discourse on the dangers to women of the outside world. Subsequently we will shift our focus to the fact that nevertheless several *vitae* are constructed around storylines in which it is precisely the female saint's travelling that is highlighted as part of her growth towards sainthood. Finally, the scattered details about women's mobility that one can often find in the descriptions, not only of the daily activities of the saints themselves but also of the contexts in which their lives were depicted, will allow us to complete our analysis. In the appendix to this contribution a selection of illustrative excerpts will be offered, completed with comments, from the hagiography of one of the most widely-travelled female saints of the late Middle Ages, Colette of Corbie, who died in her convent in the Flemish city of Ghent in 1447.

16. See also Kleinberg, *Prophets* cit., p. 53.

*Moral lessons: the ideal of claustration*

When analysing the way in which the mobility of women was dealt with in this varied corpus of texts, we need to consider two important variables: on the one hand the behaviour of women wandering outdoors, in the streets, which was connoted with immorality and even prostitution<sup>17</sup>; and on the other hand the actual practice of travelling, for example in the context of a pilgrimage. Throughout the Middle Ages, however, both variables continued to arouse big concerns amongst the clerical moralists in line with Jerome's premonitions. This is shown very well by the continued and even increased popularity of some late antique female saints, both in the Latin tradition and, from the end of the twelfth century onwards, in the vernacular world. We can think, for example, of the legendary Mary Magdalene who, according to the Western Christian tradition, had led a very loose life before becoming one of Christ's disciples, or of the repentant Mary of Egypt, the Alexandrian prostitute who had joined a group of pilgrims on their way to the Holy Land, but who had offered her body to the sailors by way of remuneration for her voyage<sup>18</sup>. Both women belong, together with St Thais, to the most well-known examples of converted female sinners whose conduct before their penance became emblematic of the kind of behaviour constituting the opposite of what could be expected from virtuous Christian women. Thanks to creative compilers like James of Voragine these legends received their late medieval shape, which we can also encounter in several vernacular versions, both in Old French and Middle Dutch<sup>19</sup>.

17. For the association between being in the streets, especially at night, and whoredom in medieval texts, see R. M. Karras, *Common Women. Prostitution and Sexuality in Medieval England*, New York-Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1996, pp. 70-1 and 111.

18. On the popularity of Mary Magdalene: K. L. Jansen, *The Making of the Magdalen: Preaching and Popular Devotion in the Later Middle Ages*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2000.

19. For *vitae* from the *Legenda aurea*, we refer in this article to the edition of the Latin text, which also circulated extensively in the late medieval Low Countries. On Mary Magdalene and Mary of Egypt: Iacopo da Varazza, *Legenda aurea*, c. 102 and 54, ed. by G. P. Maggioni, Florence, SISMEL - Ed. del Galluzzo, <sup>2</sup>1998, pp. 628-42, 374-7 (Millennio medievale, 6). A modern edition of the Middle Dutch translations and adaptations of the *Legenda aurea* – the so-called *Passionael* – is still lacking. See, however: W. Williams-Krapp, *Die deutschen und*

The old ecclesiastical fear of an all too independent freedom of movement for women, one which could endanger their chastity and reputation, was aggravated from the thirteenth century on with a very specific, new concern. In this period, although male clerics, especially in mendicant circles, based much of their conduct on the new spiritual ideal of an active and mobile apostolate, ecclesiastical authorities fiercely discouraged wandering about and, in particular, begging and preaching by semi-religious women such as beguines, or by women belonging to the female branches and the third orders of the mendicants<sup>20</sup>. At the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 it was even decreed that the mendicant lifestyle was only allowed after having obtained a license from a bishop and it is most unlikely that such a license would ever be granted to women<sup>21</sup>. Several *vitae* of contemporary saints clearly illustrate therefore that the authors particularly did not like girls and women leaving their home to wander around (*discurrere, vagari*), not even for reasons inspired by piety or asceti-

*niederländischen Legende des Mittelalters: Studien zu ihrer Überlieferungs-, Text- und Wirkungsgeschichte*, Tübingen, Niemeyer Verlag, 1986. For an edition of the French translation of the *Legenda aurea*, which also circulated in the Low Countries, see *La légende dorée. Édition critique dans la révision de 1476 par Jean Batallier d'après la traduction de Jean de Vignay (1333-1348) de la Legenda aurea (c. 1261-1266)*, ed. by B. Dunn-Lardeau, Paris, Champion, 1997 (Textes de la Renaissance, 19). Other vernacular versions of the lives of Magdalene and Mary of Egypt originating from the Low Countries are: *Ce est de la Magdeleine*, ed. by C. Platz, in Id., *Édition d'un sermon anonyme de la Magdelaine*, «Bulletin des jeunes romanistes», 13, 1966, pp. 14-8 (Old French - Flanders or Hainaut, end of the twelfth - beginning of the thirteenth century); *La vie de sainte Marie l'Egyptienne*, ed. by P. F. Dembowski, in Id., *La vie de sainte Marie l'Egyptienne. Versions en ancien et en moyen français*, Geneva, Droz, 1977, pp. 33-66 (Publications romanes et françaises, 144) (Old French - Northern France [Picardian-Walloon dialect], last quarter of the twelfth century); Martijn van Torout (?), *Sente Marie Egyptiake ende Zosimus*, ed. by M. Gysseling, in M. Gysseling - W. Pijnenburg, *Corpus van Middelnederlandse teksten (tot en met het jaar 1300). Reeks II: Literaire handschriften. 1: Fragmenten*, The Hague, Nijhoff, 1980, pp. 456-72 (Middle Dutch excerpts - Ename [Flanders], 1290).

20. See, e.g., A. Passenier, «Women on the Loose»: *Stereotypes of Women in the Story of the Medieval Beguines*, in R. Kloppenborg - W. J. Hanegraff (eds.), *Female Stereotypes in Religious Traditions*, Leiden-New York-Cologne, Brill, 1995, pp. 61-88, esp. 65-70; J. A. McNamara, *Sisters in Arms: Catholic Nuns through Two Millennia*, Cambridge (Mass.), Harvard University Press, 1996, pp. 305-17; B. L. Venarde, *Women's Monasticism and Medieval Society: Nunneries in France and England, 890-1215*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, pp. 175-9; Heene, *Gender and Mobility* cit., pp. 34-5.

21. Simons, *Cities of Ladies* cit., p. 67ff.



cism. In his famous *vita* of Mary of Oignies (d. 1213), one of the earliest well-known representatives of the beguine movement in the Low Countries, James of Vitry relates that at a certain moment, Mary conceived such a great desire for poverty, that she wanted to start a mendicant life of begging from door to door among strangers. However, her male friends finally managed to dissuade her from that plan<sup>22</sup>. She even had to be restrained from departing for the crusade against the Albigensians, a project which she only abandoned because it could scandalise her entourage<sup>23</sup>. Thomas of Cantimpré, in his *vita* of the beguine Margaret of Ypres (d. 1237), tells us that her Dominican father confessor often urged her to go back home each time she had escaped from her mother and aunt's custody to go begging alms for lepers<sup>24</sup>. According to the anonymous author of the *vita* of Ida of Louvain, his heroine, daughter of a rich wine merchant in Louvain who would later become a Cistercian nun in Roosendaal, was thought to have gone mad and was put in chains by her relatives for wandering about in shabby clothes<sup>25</sup>.

22. Jacobus Vitriacensis, *Vita Mariae Oigniacensis*, Lib. II, c. 45, ed. by D. Papebroeck, in *Acta Sanctorum quotquot toto orbe coluntur* (AASS), Iun. IV, Antwerp, 1707, pp. 636-66, here 648: «Unde quadam die fugere proposuit, ut inter extraneos ignota et despecta ostiatim mendicaret, ut nudum Christum nuda sequeretur... vix multis suorum amicorum lacrymis potuit retineri. Cum iam suis valedixisset, et iter in tali habitu, cum sacculo suo et scypho, paupercula Christi arripere vellet».

23. Ibid., Lib. II, c. 82, p. 658: «Unde tantum huius peregrinationis concepit ardorem, quod vix retineri posset, si sine scandalo proximorum aliquo modo it peragere valeret. Cumque quasi ridendo ab ea quaereremus quid illic si pervenisset faceret; saltem aiebat illa, Dominum meum honorarem». For comments on this passage, see I. Geyer, *Maria von Oignies. Eine hochmittelalterliche Mystikerin zwischen Ketzerei und Rechtgläubigkeit*, Frankfurt-am-Main, Lang, 1992, pp. 135-41.

24. Thomas Cantipratensis, *Vita Margarete de Ypris*, c. 22, ed. by G. G. Meersseman, in *Les Frères Prêcheurs et le mouvement dévot en Flandres au XIIIe siècle*, «Archivum fratrum praedicatorum», 18 (1948), pp. 69-130, here 117: «Matrem et materteras quandoque fugit, ut mendicaret, sed saepe iussu dicti patris sui redire et manere cum Matre est coacta».

25. *Vita Idae de Lovanio*, Lib. I, c. 18-19, ed. by D. Papebroeck, in AASS, Apr. II, Antwerp, 1675, pp. 157-189, here 163: «per vicus et plateas... coepit ambulando procedere ...velut amens et fatua...»; «vilis et abiecta ...incessisset; tandem a propinquis cognita, et non ficta sed veraciter ab his insana pariteret phrenetica reputata, ... ter uno die ligata, ter loris fortibus et vinculis est astricta». On madness in saints' lives and exempla, see K. Heene, *Was Medieval Madness Gendered? A Case Study on Deviant Behaviour in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> Century*, in M. Boone - M. Demoor (eds.), *Charles V in Context: The Making of a European Identity*, Brussels, VUB-Press, 2003, pp. 207-34.

So while they were part of the movement for voluntary poverty, and in contrast to the male members of the mendicant orders, women sharing the same religious ideals as Mary of Oignies were clearly not encouraged to «follow the naked Christ naked» actively<sup>26</sup>. On the contrary, hagiographical texts even commended discrete public appearances and safe seclusion as the best possible lifestyles for women with religious ambitions. The hagiographers of Alice of Schaarbeek (d. 1250), Ida of Gorsleeuw and Beatrice of Nazareth (d. 1268) were unequivocal in underlining that their heroines – all women who had gained their fame as mystically gifted Cistercian nuns – had already embodied the perfect type of girl who confined herself voluntarily at home as youngsters<sup>27</sup>. And when they had to leave home, they closed off their senses from impressions of the outer world, displayed a dignified posture and kept away from men<sup>28</sup>. The *vita* of Alice of Schaarbeek, for instance, makes an explicit reference to Jerome's letter to Eustochium as it literally states that, as a young girl, the future saint, although she was very pretty, did not go into the streets like Dinah once did. She preferred to stay home following the example of Mary<sup>29</sup>.

26. See note 22. See also: Geyer, *Maria von Oignies* cit., pp. 118–23. On the attempts by ecclesiastics to cloister wandering and begging beguines, see P. Dinzelbacher, *Mittelalterliche Frauenmystik*, Paderborn, Schöningh, 1993, pp. 37–8, 50, 57–8.

27. *Vita Aleidis Scharembekanae*, c. 2 and 6, ed. by G. Henschen, in *AASS*, Iun. II, Antwerp, 1698, pp. 477–82, here 477–8: «Fuit igitur praedicta Domina, a primevae aetatis initio, omnium aspectui amabilis et gratiosa, tamen non more Dinae... in plateas est egressa, sed more Dei geneticis, intra cubiculum commorantis gratiamque nutrientis, domi semper est morata» and «non circumvaga diversa quaerens loca, dabat operam lectioni». *Vita Idae de Lewis*, c. 7, ed. by V. De Buck, in *AASS*, Oct. XIII, Brussels, 1885, pp. 107–24, here 109: «discursus nescia, plurimumque constans et stabilis, et omnino, tranquillaque residens et quieta, seque in huiusce modi adeo mirabiliter exercebat, ut eam iam possent asserere morum conversio... claustrum non saeculo substitutam».

28. *Vita Beatricis de Nazareth*, c. 18 and 21–2, ed. by L. Reypens, in Id., *Vita Beatricis. De autobiografie van de Z. Beatrijs van Tienen O. Cist. 1200–1268*, Antwerp, Ruusbroecgenootschap, 1964, pp. 13–184, here 23 and 25 (Studiën en textuitgaven van Ons Geestelijk Erf, 15). See also for comparable descriptions: Thomas Cantipratensis, *Vita Margarete de Ypris* cit., c. 22 (*De gestu et dispositione eius forinseca, et quod facies virorum formidabat*), p. 157: «oculi demissi sunt, caput languidum, gressus fractior, levis et moderatus incessus» or *Vita Julianae de Monte Cornelii*, Lib. II, c. 25, ed. by G. Henschen, in *AASS*, Apr. I, Antwerp, 1675, pp. 443–77, here 465: «quid non aedificans et dignum admiratione in eius sermone, ingressu, gestu, aspectu, habitu et vultu».

29. *Vita Aleidis Scharembekanae* cit., c. 2, p. 477 (see note 27). See also, yet without an

The effective claustration of religious women also remained an important topic in late medieval hagiographical writings. This seems to have been fully in line with the papal decree *Periculoso* of 1298 issued by Boniface VIII, which imposed a strict enclosure on nuns<sup>30</sup>. However, in the fourteenth century, regular religious life seems to have gone through a period of slackening due to, not only general social and economic difficulties, but also a weakening of the internal organisation of the church at the time of Great Western Schism. Amongst the Clares for instance, the Second Order of St Francis, the ideal of personal poverty and the observance of claustration were often neglected<sup>31</sup>.

It was in the climate of reaction to this weakening, and as part of a more generalised atmosphere of efforts to restore monastic discipline, which started to take root by the end of fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, that we can situate Colette Boëillet<sup>32</sup>. Colette, born in Corbie, was said to have been incited by several visions to advocate a thorough reform of the Clares – a reform for which she begged the support of (Anti)pope Benedict XIII (1394-1423) in 1406 and which sought the restoration of the practice of absolute poverty. One of the important items which she included in the constitutions that she designed for her «Poor Clares», was precisely the imposition of both active and passive *clausura*. The only reasons for which sisters were allowed to leave the cloister were the foundation, reform, governance or correction of other convents<sup>33</sup>. These were also the motives for which Colette herself, as we will see

explicit reference to Dinah or Mary, Gossuinus de Bossuto, *Vita beatae Idae Nivellensis*, c. 1, ed. by C. Henriquez, in Id., *Quinque prudentes virgines sive B. Beatricis de Nazareth, B. Aleydis de Scharenbecka, B. Idae de Nivellis, B. Idae de Lovanio, B. Idae de Levvis, Ordinis Cisterci. praeclara gesta ex antiquis M. S. eruta*, Antwerp, Cnobbaert, 1630, pp. 199-297, here 200.

30. E. M. Makowski, *Canon Law and Cloistered Women. Periculoso and Its Commentators 1298-1545*, Washington, Catholic University of America Press, 1997, pp. 12-20, 31-4 and 125-6.

31. E. Lopez, *Culture et sainteté. Colette de Corbie (1381-1447)*, Saint-Etienne, Publications de l'Université de Saint-Etienne, 1994, p. 283.

32. On this climate, which led to the influence of Franciscan observantism on convents of the Second Order, especially in the Northern Low Countries, see also B. Roest, *De Clarissen in de Noordelijke Nederlanden*, in H. Van Engen - G. Verhoeven (eds.), *Monastiek observantisme en Moderne Devotie in de Noordelijke Nederlanden*, Hilversum, Verloren, 2008, pp. 43-68.

33. Lopez, *Culture et sainteté* cit., pp. 217-22.

below, had undertaken numerous journeys. In his Middle French *Vie de sainte Colette*, her first hagiographer Pierre de Vaux, who wrote her *vita* shortly after her death, did not keep silent about all these journeys. However, at the same time he repeatedly seized the opportunity to present Colette as a most remarkable example of the kind of secluded and claustral life religious women should aspire to. Already as a child, Colette was said to have looked for the solitude of a personal, isolated oratory in her parents' house at Corbie, near Amiens. After having made her vow of virginity she chose to adopt the rule of St Francis' Third Order and to become a recluse in a small cell built against the local church (see also Plate 1)<sup>34</sup>. According to Pierre, she kept her ideal of seclusion for the rest of her life, and even when it was necessary to leave the cloister, she tried to maintain a feeling of solitude and enclosure<sup>35</sup>. Even though, out of devotion to the Passion of Christ, she would have liked to start on a dangerous pilgrimage to the Holy Land, she did not do so because she was not granted permission<sup>36</sup>.

The Colettine reform also resulted in a hagiographical adaptation of the memory of the original founder of the Second Order, St Clare. The first translations into Middle Dutch of the thirteenth century *Legenda sanctae Clarae virginis* remained rather close to the Latin original<sup>37</sup>. However, in the late fifteenth century yet another Middle Dutch adaptation of the *Legenda* of St Clare surfaced, a text which offered a considerable expansion and narrative rearrangement of the original legend. Contrary

34. Pierre de Vaux, *Vie de sainte Colette*, c. 1/4 and 3/19, ed. by U. d'Alençon, in Id., *Les vies de Ste Colette Boylet de Corbie: réformatrice des Frères Mineurs et des Clarisses (1381-1447). Ecrites par ses contemporains Pierre de Reims dit de Vaux et Perrine de la Roche et de Baume*, Paris - Couvin, Picard - Saint Roch, 1911, pp. 1-201, here 7-8, 21-2: «niantmains fust elle solitaire voluptairement et personnellement ou propre hostel de son père et de sa mere, ouquel secreteent et solitairement elle se tenoit en ung petit lieu sequestré et separé des autres et qui estoit disposé comme ung petit oratoire»; «...en ung renclusaige situé près d'une esglise où elle pooit ouïr les siantes messes et recepvoir le saint sacrement de l'aulel qui estoit une tres petite et povre abitation elle se fist enclorre et refermer».

35. Ibid., c. 17/165, pp. 111-2. See also excerpt 1, added to this contribution.

36. Ibid., c. 11/98, pp. 91-2: «Et nonobstant qu'elle fust tendre et dibile et que les perilz qui sont à passer la mer sont moult grans et difficels, niantmoins elle estoit tres desirant voluptaire de entreprendre le voyage...».

37. L. Jongen, «Like a Pharmacy with Fragrant Herbs». *The «Legenda sanctae Clarae virginis» in Middle Dutch*, «Collectanea franciscana», 65 (1995) pp. 221-45, here 226-30. On Colet-

to the Latin *Legenda*, the author introduced several details and anecdotes in order to highlight the ideal of voluntary seclusion. As a child, Clare is told to have stayed away from the streets. While very young she developed a fascination for the rules of religious orders and when her family occasionally left the house to go out dancing or singing, she retired to a secret room of the house to pray. The author also comprehensively contrasts this exemplary behaviour with that of Clare's worldly sister Agnes, who had to endure a lot of humiliations before she devoted herself entirely to God<sup>38</sup>. It is precisely in this kind of emendation that the agenda of Colettine reform can clearly be recognised<sup>39</sup>.

However, the ideal of claustration was not only typical of the reformed Second Order. It also quickly penetrated the late fourteenth- and fifteenth century reform movement of the *Devotio Moderna*, especially in women's communities<sup>40</sup>. The *Devotio Moderna*, which has had a major influence on religious life in the Low Countries, did not leave us many entirely new hagiographical texts. While the Modern Devout did attach much importance to collecting the life stories of their fellow brothers and sisters in their institutional historiographies or in so-called sister books, they did not really spend much energy in attempting to hagiographically propagate real saints of their own communities<sup>41</sup>. However, as part of their

tine writing and identity, see also B. Roest, *A Textual Community in the Making: Colettine Authorship in the Fifteenth Century*, in A. M. Mulder-Bakker (ed.), *Seeing and Knowing: Women and Learning in Medieval Europe, 1200-1550*, Turnhout, Brepols, 2004, pp. 163-180.

38. *Die legende der glorioser maghet Sinte Clara*, c. 4, 6, 15, edited, translated and introduced by L. Jongen, in Id., *Het leven van de zalige maagd Sint Clara. De Middelnederlandse bewerking van de Legenda Sanctae Clarae Virginis*, Megen, San Damiano, 1998, pp. 44, 48-50, 72: «en liep sij niet doer der straten met anderen maechden, kallende, ydelijc sprekende»; «Si hadde altyjt in haer herte voer een vrient die leeringe der heiliger orden (...) Ende als haer huysgesin somtijt uutliepen te dansen ende te singen, soe was Clara satich inden Heere ende plach haer te bergeb in die heimelijcste stede vanden huys»; «Want Clara en hadde soe grote ghenoechte inder werelt niet ghehadt als Agnes, want si bleef altyjt thuys alleen».

39. Jongen, «*Like a Pharmacy*» cit., pp. 236-7.

40. On the restriction of women's freedom of movement in religious houses belonging to the *Devotio moderna*, see M. Van Dijk, *Een rij van spiegels. De Heilige Barbara van Nicomedia als voorbeeld voor vrouwelijke religieuzen*, Hilversum, Verloren, 2000, pp. 50, 52, 56, 58, 69-70 and Scheepsma, *Medieval Religious Women* cit., pp. 13-5.

41. On the exemplary portraits of founding figures of the *Devotio Moderna*, see e.g. K. Heene, *Hagiografisch herschrijven in de vijftiende eeuw? De casus Johannes Brinckerinck*

very developed reading culture, saints' lives did play an important role, especially in female communities. In this context, we can notice clearly how the vernacular reception of the passion stories and lives of late antique saints merged with new, contemporary religious concerns. A good example here, is the passion story of St Barbara, already known in early Old French translations and from the *Legenda aurea*<sup>42</sup>, which in the fifteenth century, in several Middle Dutch editions, began to gain great popularity in sister houses of Tertiaries and regular canonesses affiliated with the *Devotio Moderna*<sup>43</sup>. The virgin Barbara, who was said to have been locked up by her heathen father in a tower to keep her away from the attention of young men, and who converted to the Christian religion during her captivity, became an ideal example of holiness for sisters in their effort to cultivate their virginity and Eucharistic devotion in a context of claustration<sup>44</sup>.

That chastity was a central issue underlying all the concerns over the enclosure of religious women, is clearly illustrated by the life of the fifteenth century mystic Lidwina of Schiedam (d. 1434), one of the few exceptional personalities to enjoy original hagiographical attention from within the *Devotio Moderna* (yet without being a Modern Devout herself)<sup>45</sup>. Especially the second Latin *vita* of Lidwina, written by no less a figure than Thomas a Kempis in 1448, is very revealing in this respect. At the age of twelve, after a skating accident, Lidwina had fallen ill and remained so for the rest of her life. From 1398 onwards, she could not leave her sick

(† 1419), «Ons geestelijk erf», 79 (2008), pp. 252–84. On sister books: A. M. Bollmann, *Frauenleben und Frauenliteratur in der Devotio moderna. Volkssprachige Schwesternbücher in literarhistorischer Perspektive*, Groningen, 2004, *passim*.

42. *Vie de sainte Barbe*, ed. by A. J. Denomy, in *An Old French Life of Saint Barbara*, «Mediaeval Studies», 1 (1939), pp. 157–71 (Flanders or Hainaut, late thirteenth–early fourteenth century); Iacopo da Varazza, *Legenda aurea* cit., c. 202, p. 898.

43. On this Middle Dutch tradition, with transcriptions: Van Dijk, *Een rij van spiegels* cit., pp. 180–235.

44. *Ibid.*, pp. 172–3. See also, from an art historical perspective: M. Cassidy-Welch, *Prison and Sacrament in the Cult of Saints: Images of St Barbara in Late Medieval Art*, «Journal of Medieval History», 35 (2009), pp. 371–84.

45. For a thorough analysis of the hagiography of Lidwina: K. Goudriaan, *Het Leven van Lidwina en de moderne devotie*, «Jaarboek voor Middeleeuwse Geschiedenis», 6 (2003), pp. 161–236.

bed anymore and only survived on regularly partaking of the Eucharist. As her illness was considered a divine gift, which prevented her from getting married against her will, Thomas compared it with a seal which guarded her virginity and spiritual welfare because it kept her from roaming around with her worldly comrades<sup>46</sup>. Also in this same text, we are confronted with an example of mental pilgrimage, which was seen as a divine favour. Indeed, despite being confined to her sickbed, Lidwina was able to make pilgrimages to Jerusalem, Rome and other minor holy places during ecstasies<sup>47</sup>. Yet such a «virtual pilgrimage» was not entirely original. In James of Voragine's description of the miracles attributed to the thirteenth century St Peter Martyr of Verona, there is the story of a nun from Ottenbach who wanted to visit Peter's tomb in Milan but was unable to do so due to illness. Therefore, she undertook the journey mentally (*ire mentaliter*) by reading a hundred paternosters for each day the trip would have taken. Moreover, after having arrived virtually at the tomb, she was eventually cured by reading the whole Psalter<sup>48</sup>. Mental pilgrimages, however, were not seen as a female privilege. According to his biographer, the fourteenth century hermit Arnold of Diest, for example, also visited the tombs of the martyrs in Rome in a vision<sup>49</sup>.

46. Thomas a Kempis, *Vita Lidewigis virginis*, Lib. I, c. 2-3, ed. by M. I. Pohl, in *Thomae Hemerken a Kempis opera omnia*, Freiburg, Herder, 1905, vol. 6, pp. 315-453, here 326: «Ne saeculi vanitates aut deliciae carnis violarent sigillum virginitatis; Christus eam circumsaepsit spinis et doloribus gravissimis: ut nullis esset apta coniugalibus toris» and «Cum igitur quintumdecimum annum ageret, ne post greges sodalium saecularium vagari inciperet; medicus animarum Christus corporali quadam infirmitate eam pie pro salute animae suae visitavit et coercuit».

47. Ibid., Lib. II, c. 2 (*De raptu eius in terram sanctam, et ad sacra loca urbis Romanae*), pp. 373-75. See also the older *Vita Lidwinae prior*, c.47-48, 50-52, ed. by D. Papebroeck, in *AASS*, Apr. II, 1675, pp. 267-302, here 280-2.

48. Iacopo da Varazza, *Legenda aurea* cit., c. 61, pp. 434-5. For another example of «virtual mobility», see *Vita Pironae*, c. 48, ed. by Hagiographi Bollandiani, *Anecdota ex codicibus hagiographicis Iohannis Gielemans, Canonici regularis in Rubea valle prope Bruxellas*, Brussels, Société des Bollandistes, 1895, pp. 421-35, here 429, where the recluse Pirona Hergods is said to have travelled from Malines to Liège in a vision. See also, for a late fifteenth century example: M.-L. Ehrenscheidtner, *Virtual Pilgrimages? Enclosure and the Practice of Piety at St Katherine's Convent, Augsburg*, «Journal of Ecclesiastical History», 60 (2009), pp. 45-73.

49. Henricus Pomerius, *De origine monasterii Viridisvallis et de gestis patrum et fratrum in primordiali fervore ibidem degentium*, Lib. I, c. 5 (*De revelatione sibi facta in Viridivalle de situ et dispositione Romanae Urbis*), ed. by J. B. de Leu, «Analecta Bollandiana», 4 (1885), pp. 263-322, here 269.

*Storylines: the travelling saint*

While many hagiographical texts continued to express the traditional concerns over the dangers of leaving the seclusion of the house or of the cloister, we can nonetheless easily find even more texts in which it is precisely the mobility and travels of the described female saints that is of prime importance for their journey to holiness. Particularly in the lives of the late antique saints, several examples occur of storylines in which the activity of «travelling» plays a central role. A first recurrent motive in collections like the *Legenda aurea*, and in some individual vernacular lives, is that of the escape from marriage. We can think here of St Margarita, who for her virginity's sake, cut off all her hair during her wedding night. Dressed up as a man, she fled to a monks' cloister where she entered under the name Pelagius. After being falsely accused of having impregnated a nun, she ended her life in an isolated cave<sup>50</sup>. A similar story was told about the fifth century St Euphrosyne, who escaped from marriage by fleeing to a male monastery near Alexandria where she lived for thirty-eight years<sup>51</sup>. A well-known and very influential legend dating only from the late tenth century, but also adopted in the *Legenda aurea* is that of the late antique British princess St Ursula, who, before marrying an English prince who had just been converted to the Christian religion, travelled to Basel and to Rome with eleven thousand virgins. On their way back, they were all killed by the Huns near Cologne, St Ursula with them because she had refused to marry their leader<sup>52</sup>. From a gender perspective, it should be noted, however, that the popularity of the escape from marriage as a hagiographical motive was not only typical for saints' lives about women. Comparable stories were also known about late antique men. The fourth century desert father Malchus, for example, whom we encounter in the early thirteenth century Old French *Vies des sainz peres* translated by Wauchier of Denain for count Philip I of Namur, was said to have escaped

50. Iacopo da Varazza, *Legenda aurea* cit., c. 147, pp. 1036-7.

51. *De sainte Eufrosyne*, ed. by R. T. Hill, *La vie de sainte Euphrosine*, «The Romanic Review», 10 (1919), pp. 159-69, 191-232 (Old French - Northern France [Picardian-Walloon dialect], end of the twelfth century).

52. Iacopo da Varazza, *Legenda aurea* cit., c. 154, pp. 1073-8.



into the Syrian desert because of an arranged marriage<sup>53</sup>. Also very popular in the late Middle Ages, both in Old French and Middle Dutch, was the story of St Alexis, a Roman patrician who fled from his wife during their wedding night to end up as a beggar, unrecognised by anyone of his family<sup>54</sup>.

It is nonetheless very notable that this theme of the virgin escaping from an imposed marriage seems to have witnessed a renewed popularity, not only in the reception of older *vitae* about universal late antique saints, but also, even before the spread of the *Legenda aurea*, in the emergence of a number of new Latin saints' lives connected with the development of local cults in smaller rural communities. These heroic female saints were not only situated in a somewhat distant Merovingian past, but they also had in common their hazardous undertakings. St Ragenufla, whose *vita* must have been written already in the second half of the twelfth century in the abbey of St Laurent in Liège, was said to have lived at the time of King Dagobert I in the surroundings of Jodogne. She allegedly fled into the woods to escape from an unwanted marriage and lived there for a while as an ascetic before dying of cold and hardship<sup>55</sup>.

53. Wauchier de Denain, *Vie de saint Malchus, le moine captif*, excerpts ed. by P. Meyer, in *Versions en vers et en prose des Vies des Pères*, «Histoire littéraire de la France», vol. 33, Paris, Imprimerie nationale, 1906, pp. 254-328, here 266-7.

54. On Wauchier of Denain's early thirteenth century collection *Li seint confessor*, which includes a *La vie mon signeur seint Alexis*, see J. J. Thompson, *The Recent Discovery of a Collection in Early French Prose, Wauchier de Denain's Li seint confessor*, «Romance Notes», 38/2 (1998), pp. 121-37. For other vernacular versions, originating from the Low Countries, of this same saint's life: *Vie de saint Alexis*, ed. by C. E. Stebbins, in Id., *A Critical Edition of the 13th and 14th Centuries Old French Poem Versions of the «Vie de Saint Alexis»*, Tübingen, Niemeyer, 1974, pp. 21-63 (Old French - Northern France [Picardian dialect], thirteenth century); *Vers d'Alexis*, ed. by A. G. Elliot, in *The Vie de saint Alexis in the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries. An Edition and Commentary*, Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina, 1983, pp. 151-86 (Old French - Artesia or Wallonia [Walloon-Picardian dialect], second half of the thirteenth century at the latest); *Alexiuslegende*, ed. by M. Gysseling, in Gysseling - Pijnenburg, *Corpus van Middelnederlandse teksten* cit., pp. 527-8 (Middle Dutch excerpts, probably thirteenth century). See also Iacopo da Varazza, *Legenda aurea* cit., c. 90, pp. 621-6.

55. *Vita Ragenulfæ Brabantensis*, ed. by J. B. Sollerius, in *AASS*, Iul. III, Antwerp, 1723, pp. 696-8. On this text and its function: A. Dierkens, *Le culte de sainte Ragenuphle et le(s) chapitre(s) d'Incourt (XIème et XIIème siècles)*, in *La Belgique rurale du Moyen Age à nos jours. Mélanges offerts à Jean-Jacques Hoebanx*, Bruxelles, Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 1985, pp. 47-65.

She was later honoured with a cult near Incourt, on the site of her refuge. The semi-orphan St Dymphna had to run away from her pagan father, an Irish king, to avoid an incestuous marriage with him. Together with a priest called Gebernus she installed herself in the village of Geel in the Kempen region where she was finally beheaded by her ferocious father<sup>56</sup>. Her story was recorded around 1240 by canon Peter of St-Aubert in Cambrai at the request of the local priest Stephen. Shortly afterwards, it was in St Oedenrode in North Brabant that the local canon Godfrey put into writing the legend of St Oda, a beautiful daughter of a Scottish king who first travelled to the tomb of St Lambert in Liège to be cured from her blindness. After her return, she fled to Rome with a few companions to escape from the marriage that her father had arranged for her. She allegedly spent the rest of her life in the surroundings of the place where her later cult would take root<sup>57</sup>. A last example is St Rolendis, whose *vita* was written after the middle of the thirteenth century. She was depicted as the daughter of a Gaulish king who had tried to back out of a marriage with a Scottish prince. She wanted to flee to Cologne because of the cult over there of St Ursula and her eleven thousand virgins, but she died on her way near the village of Gerpennes, where she was to be venerated<sup>58</sup>.

If we shift our focus to the late medieval lives of contemporary saints, we cannot definitively say that the motive of the rejection of marriage was an uncommon theme<sup>59</sup>. There was St Clare who was said to have fled to

56. Petrus S. Auberti, *Vita et miracula sanctae Dymphnae virginis et sancti Gereberni presbyteri*, ed. by G. Henschenius, in *AASS*, Mai III, Antwerp, 1680, pp. 479–89. See also A. M. Mulder-Bakker, *Gendering Medieval Martyrdom: Thirteenth-Century Lives of Holy Women in the Low Countries*, in J. Leemans (ed.), *More Than a Memory: The Discourse of Martyrdom and the Construction of Christian Identity in the History of Christianity* Leuven, Leuven, Peeters, 2005, pp. 221–39, here 224–9.

57. Godefridus Rodensis, *Vita et translatio sanctae Odae Rodensis*, ed. by J. van der Straeten, in Id., *Sainte Ode, patronne de Sint-Oedenrode*, «*Analecta bollandiana*», 76, 1958, pp. 89–110. See also W. Steurs, *L'utilisation d'une source hagiographique discréditée: la Vita s. Ode virginis de Sint Oedenrode*, in M. A. Arnould (ed.), *Histoire et méthode*, Bruxelles, Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 1981, pp. 129–45.

58. *Vita seu legenda sanctae Rolendis Garpiniensis*, ed. by M. Coens, in Id., *La Vita Rolendis dans sa récession gerpinoise*, «*Analecta bollandiana*», 78 (1960), pp. 336–47. See also A. Dierkens, *Le culte de sainte Rolende de Gerpennes au Moyen Age. Hagiographie et archéologie*, «*Problèmes d'histoire du christianisme*», 12 (1983), pp. 25–50.

59. See also Simons, *Cities of Ladies* cit., pp. 68–74.

St Francis in order to escape from the wedding which her parents had prepared for her, or of the less universally known Ida of Nivelles (d. 1231) who already at the age of nine ran away from home to the local beguine community for this same reason<sup>60</sup>. Yet apart from these rather exceptional examples, this opposition does not seem to have been an important reason for hagiographers to stress in some way the mobility of their heroines.

Throughout the Middle Ages, the most obvious religious reason for people to travel was pilgrimage. This undertaking could take on different forms. There was the lasting popularity of regional pilgrimages to local shrines that were often made to pray for intercession, help or miraculous healing. The long-distance pilgrimage to Rome, Jerusalem or Santiago, however, constituted a religious adventure which could also offer the possibility of personal religious growth and deepening of devotion throughout the long journey; it could be a way of doing thorough penance or obtaining the benefits of important indulgences. Such a pilgrimage was moreover very demanding in terms of time and money, something which enhanced its rather exclusive character<sup>61</sup>. Despite women's traditional confinement to domestic roles, recent research has shown that they were never absent from the history of Christian pilgrimage<sup>62</sup>. Especially in the late medieval period we have lots of evidence of female participation in both regional and long distance pilgrimage. Pilgrimage is also said to have penetrated the ideals of sainthood of this period. While André Vauchez among others has pointed to the importance of travelling to far-flung cult places in the lives of a number of Mediterranean female saints in the late Middle

60. *Die legende der glorioser maghet Sinte Clara* cit., c. 7 and 11, pp. 50–52, 60–62; Gossuinus de Bossuto, *Vita beatae Idae Nivelensis* cit., pp. 200–1.

61. L. A. Craig, *Stronger than Men and Braver than Knights: Women and the Pilgrimages to Jerusalem and Rome in the Later Middle Ages*, «Journal of Medieval History», 29 (2003), pp. 153–75, here 153–4. On the impact of social class on the distance of pilgrimages, see, for instance, S. Morrison, *Women Pilgrims in Late Medieval England: Private Piety as Public Performance*, London–New York, Routledge, 2000, p. 2.

62. For a well documented survey: Diana Webb, *Pilgrims and Pilgrimage in the Medieval West*, London, Tauris, 1999, *passim*. On criticism of women going on pilgrimage, see, for instance, J. van Herwaarden, *Pilgrimages and Social Prestige. Some Reflections on a Theme*, in G. Jaritz – B. Shuh (eds.), *Wallfahrt und Alltag im Mittelalter und früher Neuzeit*, Vienna, Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1992, pp. 25–79, esp. 76–8.

Ages, others have taken the eccentric and widely-travelled mystic Margery Kempe (d. c. 1440) as an example of an exemplary English pilgrim<sup>63</sup>.

In the Low Countries too, stories about female pilgrim saints circulated widely. The *Legenda aurea* already contained examples of both regional and long distance pilgrimage. The third century virgin Lucia of Syracuse in Sicily, for example, went on a pilgrimage with her sick mother to the tomb of St Agatha in Catania after which her mother recovered miraculously. Out of gratitude, Lucia decided to remain a virgin and to distribute her whole dowry to the poor. Her frustrated fiancé finally handed her over as a Christian to the Roman persecutors after which she was martyred<sup>64</sup>. As for pilgrimage to far-away lands, there is the example of St Jerome's disciples Paula and her daughter Eustochium, who, notwithstanding the warnings Jerome had addressed them concerning the dangers of wandering in the streets, voyaged to Jerusalem and Bethlehem where they chose a monastic life<sup>65</sup>. Among the more recent female saints who were well-known for their pilgrimages, the name of the visionary St Bridget of Sweden stands out. While being married, she already travelled to Santiago with her husband. As a widow, she installed herself in Rome where, for years, she advocated the authorisation of her new double order. Yet, despite the fact that Bridgettine canonesses had to lead a strictly enclosed life, she herself still made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem<sup>66</sup>. Especially after the mid-fifteenth century, when her *vita* became well-known not only in Latin but also in several Middle Dutch manuscripts, the details of her travels became well-known in the Low Countries<sup>67</sup>.

63. A. Vauchez, *La sainteté en Occident aux derniers siècles du Moyen Age d'après les procès de canonisation et les documents hagiographiques*, Rome, Ecole française de Rome, 1988, p. 232; D. Webb, *Pilgrimage in the Lives of Women Saints*, in Dor-Henneau (eds.), *Femmes et pèlerinages* cit., pp. 191–206; Craig, *Stronger than Men* cit. We were not yet able to consult Ead., *Wandering Women and Holy Matrons: Women as Pilgrims in the Later Middle Ages*, Leiden, Brill, 2009.

64. Iacopo da Varazza, *Legenda aurea* cit., c. 4, pp. 49–52.

65. *Ibid.*, c.29, pp. 201–8.

66. See B. Morris, *St. Birgitta of Sweden*, Woodbridge, Boydell, 1999, pp. 59–63, 118–42.

67. The Middle Dutch lives of St Bridget are still unedited. See, e.g., Brussels, Royal Library, ms. 3042-4 and ms. 4584 (both from Mariëntroon Dendermonde, ca 1480 and 1487) or Uden, Maria Refugie, ms. A1 (olim 88) (fifteenth century).

In the lives of late medieval contemporary saints who were directly linked to the Low Countries, however, pilgrimage does not seem to have been such an important aspect of sanctity. Only a few thirteenth century female saints are said to have undertaken regional pilgrimages, for personal devotional reasons, as well as in order to seek divine support for their religious mission. Mary of Oignies, for instance, according to James of Vitry, almost annually made a pilgrimage from Oignies to Heigne (Jumet) to receive consolation from the Holy Virgin. This information mainly served to stress the supernatural protection Mary enjoyed during these journeys of only 10 miles or so, and therefore implicitly enforced the idea that travelling was a dangerous undertaking for women. Although the road was twisting and woody, according to James, Mary never lost the way because she was guided by a light, angels held her when she returned, exhausted from fasting and vigils, and on rainy days stars stopped the floods of water and protected her<sup>68</sup>. In somewhat the same way, we also encounter pilgrimage in the anonymous *vita* of Juliana of Mont-Cornillon (d. 1258), the Augustinian prioress of a local leper house just outside the city gate of Liège who has become famous for advocating, after several divine exhortations expressed in visionary experiences, the installation of the Feast of Corpus Christi. In her *vita*, Juliana is said to have undertaken pilgrimages from Liège to Cologne, Tongeren and Maastricht, in order to ask the saints there for their divine support of her project, which until then had not yet received much approval from her contemporaries. While her hagiographer remains silent about the fact that these visits probably also offered her the opportunity to recommend the Feast to the prelates of these important religious centres<sup>69</sup>, he describes not only Juliana's ecstasy in the cathedral of Cologne, but also how during the journey, she and the few fellow sisters who were travelling with her, were repeatedly tested by an evil spirit trying in vain to impede them and to sabotage their carriage<sup>70</sup>.

68. Jacobus Vitriacensis, *Vita Mariae Oigniacensis* cit., Lib. 1, c. 28, p. 643: «Solebat autem causa peregrinationis et orationis fere singulis annis ecclesiam B. Mariae de Heignis visitare... cumque una sola comitante ancilla viam, quae valde distorta est et nemorosa, nescirent; lumine quodam eam praecedente viamque ostendente, numquam errabat.»

69. Mulder-Bakker, *Lives of the Anchoresses* cit., pp. 92-3.

70. *Vita Julianae de Monte Cornelii* cit., Lib. II, c. 11-2, p. 462: «Et cum iter cum suis somi-

In this way stories about travelling women saints not only offered good pretexts to illustrate the miraculous protection by Divine Providence, but also underline implicitly the dangers that women were exposed to while being on the road, whether or not in a context of pilgrimage. And just as in some *vitae* of holy men women are sometimes depicted as a threat to the chastity of male travellers<sup>71</sup>, women saints are occasionally exposed to the dangers of men. For example, in his *vita* of the mystically gifted Cistercian nun Lutgard of Tongeren (d. 1246), Thomas of Cantimpré elaborately illustrates the risk of rape for female travellers. He recounts how the adolescent Lutgard, when she was on a journey to her sister, was once attacked and nearly raped by a rejected admirer. Fortunately she escaped and, accompanied by an angel, reached the house of her former nurse. The admirer's servants were persuaded that the rape really had taken place and spread the tidings of the assault, thus causing the alleged rapist to run away<sup>72</sup>. Thomas adds to the story that as a result the people started to treat Lutgard with suspicion, but that she was able to rid herself of the weight of shame with Christ's help<sup>73</sup>. This last remark clearly alludes to the belief,

tatibus inchoasset, videns diabolus et invidens... imo furore succensus; currum, quo Christi Virgo cum suis vehebatur, in plana via et pulchra, nequiter subvertit, sese exhibens rotam quintam: qui quoniam illarum animabus nocere non poterat, saltem corpora interimere conabatur. Verumtamen Christi famulae, cum ruente curru cecidissent, non sunt collisae: quia Dominus supposuit manum suam».

71. See e.g. the thirteenth century *vita* of the Cistercian monk Arnulf of Villers: Gosuinus de Bossuto, *Vita Arnulfi conversi Villariensis*, Lib. 1, c. 26, ed. by D. Papebroeck, in *AASS*, Iun. v, Antwerp, 1709, pp. 608–31, here p. 622. Arnulf, when entering a wood, meets three beautiful female demons who offer themselves to him. He scares them off by making the sign of the cross.

72. *Vita Lutgardis* cc. 6–7 (*ASS Iun. III* (1701), pp. 234–263, here p. 237): «Accidit quod Lutgardis, a sorore sua per nuntios accersita, iter arripere: cui iuvenis obvius cum turba satellitum eam rapere nitebatur. Mox puella, equo quo sedebat exiliens, a manibus se iuvenis violenter extorsit, et tota nocte fugiens, per ignota silvarum, Angelico ductu, ad domum nutricis mane pervenit. Quam ut nutrix vidit, suspicata raptum, dixit: Numquid te iuvenis ille hac nocte violenter oppressit? Cui illa: Non, inquit. Nec mirum si nutrix hoc suspicabatur, ut diximus: Servi enim eius, ut viderunt praecedenti vespere iuvenem super se cum manu valida venientem, fugerunt; et ut in talibus mos est, inclamaverunt iuvenem ut raptorem. Et ille voce clamantium pavefactus, cessavit a persecutione virginis et aufugit. Occasione igitur huius clamore et fugae, in suspensionem hominum innocens puella devenit».

73. *Ibidem* c. 7 (p. 238): «Concurso ergo populi curiosius conglomerata, ibi immense coepit erubescenciae pondere fatigari, statimque Christum reduxit ad mentem, et fortiter

found among lay persons as well as ecclesiastics, that women were often – at least partly – responsible for being raped<sup>74</sup>. Yet according to some hagiographical texts, women themselves were also aware of the fact that travelling could endanger their chastity and that it was important to have a reliable travelling companion. This seems to be suggested in an episode of the exemplary life of Gertrud ten Venne (d. 1469), sister in the Master Geert House in Deventer and subsequently *mater* of the Lamme of Dyese House in the same town. According to her biographer, in his description of Gertrud's youth, Gertrud's sister Margaret once asked her father if she was allowed to visit another of their sisters who lived in a religious community. She got his permission on the condition that Gertrud would accompany her. When two beautiful young men sitting on horses and dressed in white, probably angels, proposed to take both sisters to their destination, Gertrud is said to have answered that she had to turn down their proposition because her father would certainly not approve of them riding on horseback with men<sup>75</sup>.

The most widely travelled female saint which we can connect at least in part with the late medieval history of the Low Countries, was Colette of Corbie. Her freedom of movement was also only granted after she had received a dispensation of her vows as recluse. Only from that moment on, and still under the discreet guidance of her father confessor Henry de Baume, was she able to visit Benedict XIII in his residence in Nice in order to convince him of her project to reform St Francis' Orders<sup>76</sup>. This first

animo imperans, mox velum a facie manu iniecta dimovit...in revelatione faciei eius confusa populi multitudo discessit».

74. On the impact of prejudices concerning women on the attitude of members of courts of justice in cases of rape and abduction, see W. Prevenier, *La Stratégie et le discours politique des ducs de Bourgogne concernant les rapt et les enlèvements de femmes parmi les élites des Pays-Bas au XVe siècle*, in J. Hirshbiegel - W. Paravicini, *Das Frauenzimmer. Die Frau bei Hofe in Spätmittelalter und früher Neuzeit*, Stuttgart, Thorbecke, 2000, pp. 429-37, esp. 432-3.

75. See *Vita Gertrudis ten Venne*, ed. by W. J. Kühler, in *Levensbeschrijvingen van devote zusters te Deventer*, «Archief voor de geschiedenis van het aartsbisdom Utrecht», 36 (1910), pp. 9-33, here 12: «Pater vero eo pacto permisit, ut sororem suam Gertrudem secum assumeret ... duo speciosissimi iuvenes sedentes in equis, albissimis vestibus induti, pulsaverunt ad portam... Quibus illa respondit: "Ego et soror mea Daventriam petiture sumus, sed puto non gratum futurum patri nostro, si equitantes viris in equis assideamus"».

76. Pierre de Vaux, *Vie de sainte Colette* cit., c. 2/34-36, pp. 32-6. See also Lopez, *Culture et sainteté* cit., pp. 351-76. See also excerpt 2, added to this contribution.

journey to the southern France marked the beginning of a life full of travel and of dangers that had to be defied. As her hagiographer Pierre de Vaux emphasises, she started her career as a newly consecrated abbess without cloister or sisters, but she ended up as the spiritual leader of a network of convents situated in diverse regions «*en France, en Alemaenge, en Bourgogne et en Langhedoc*»<sup>77</sup>. By accumulating numerous anecdotes scattered throughout her biography, Colette is represented as a most exemplary and heroic traveller. In the various places she visited, she urged the authorities to prohibit the organisation of markets and fairs on Sundays and Feast days, while she herself, wherever she was, in Roman or in German speaking lands, took care of attending as many masses as possible on these days<sup>78</sup>. Nothing could scare her off during her journeys: wars throughout France could not prevent her from travelling, she kept dangerous robbers and rapists at a distance, and protected cities against plunderers by her sole litanies<sup>79</sup>. Even at the age of seventy, when she had become very fragile, she continued to be a tireless traveller<sup>80</sup>. During her lifetime, she had already become a miracle worker for other travellers in distress (see also Plate 2)<sup>81</sup>.

### *Lifelike Contexts: Women on the Road*

Both the moral lessons concerning the ideal of the seclusion and claustration of women, and the stories about travelling female saints that we have analysed hitherto, had to serve the shaping of ideals of sainthood in a very explicit manner. However, successful saints' lives were at the same time also always embedded in descriptions of realistic contexts in order to make the exceptional character of saintliness recognisable and admirable from the perspective of the daily life of ordinary Christians. It is precisely from these lifelike contexts, in the *vitae* of both female and male saints,

77. Pierre de Vaux, *Vie de sainte Colette* cit., c. 6/44, pp. 43-5.

78. *Ibid.*, c. 4/26-7, pp. 26-7.

79. *Ibid.*, c. 10/76-81, pp. 69-73.

80. *Ibid.*, c. 19/190, pp. 162-3.

81. See e.g. *Ibid.*, c. 10/91, pp. 82-3 or several miracles recounted in c. 20, pp. 170 ff.



that we are able to deduce that in late medieval society, women on the road were far from an uncommon phenomenon. Hagiographers' efforts to advocate the curtailing of the freedom of movement of religious girls and women in order to protect their virginity and chastity did not prevent them from presenting in their texts numerous mobile women as well as common practicalities concerning travelling.

For instance, hagiographical evidence reveals that women of all social groups undertook pilgrimages in order to obtain miracles for themselves or their relatives, or to show their gratitude for miracles that had occurred after they had promised a pilgrimage. Caesarius of Heisterbach describes how Margaret, Countess of Gelre (d. 1231), went on a pilgrimage to Cologne to thank the celebrated murdered bishop Engelbert (d. 1225) for helping her with a difficult birth<sup>82</sup>. Thomas of Villers, in the *vita* which he wrote about his recently deceased brother Godfrey (d. 1262) with whom he had entered the Cistercian abbey of Villers, relates that their mother undertook a pilgrimage from Leuven to Herent annually on feasts of the Annunciation or the Assumption to commend herself and her children to the Holy Virgin while offering money and prayers<sup>83</sup>. Since the distance between these last two places was only two miles, this anecdote clearly shows that intention must have been considered at least as important as distance for pilgrims<sup>84</sup>. In the fourteenth century, the wife of a Flemish worker whose hand had been crushed by a stone travelled from Beveren to the shrine of St Amalberga (d. 772) in Temse, situated some ten miles away, in order to ask for help<sup>85</sup>. Many more examples of regional women pilgrims could be added to this short survey.

82. *Vita et miracula Engelberti*, c. 10, ed. by F. Zschaeck, *Leben, Leiden und Wunder des Heiligen Engelbert*, in A. Hilka (ed.), *Die Wundergeschichten des Caesarius van Heisterbach*, Bonn, Hanstein, 1937, vol. 3, pp. 234-328, here 289-90. See also J. Van Moolenbroek, *Mirakels historisch. De exempels van Caesarius van Heisterbach over Nederland en de Nederlanders*, Hilversum, Verloren, 1999, pp. 291-4.

83. Thomas Villariensis, *Vita Godefridi Pachomii*, c. 2, ed. by Socii Bollandiani, in *Catalogus codicum hagiographicorum qui Vindobonae asservantur in Bibliotheca privata serenissimi Caesaris Austriaci*, «Analecta bollandiana», 14 (1895), pp. 263-8 here 265.

84. See van Herwaarden, *Pilgrimages and Social Prestige* cit., pp. 65-6. On English men being more mobile and covering longer distances than women, see R. Finucane, *Miracles and Pilgrims: Popular Beliefs in Medieval England*, Basingstoke, MacMillan, 1977, p. 184.

85. *Miracula Amalbergae*, c. 15, ed. by J. B. du Sollier, in *AASS*, Iul. III, Antwerp, 1723, pp. 103-4.

Moreover, notwithstanding the fact that hardly any late medieval female saint from the Low Countries seems to have travelled to the Holy Land, several *vitae* offer examples of the ascetic and penitential dimension of long distance pilgrimage undertaken by women. Thomas of Cantimpré, in his supplement to the *vita* of Mary of Oignies, written between 1227 and 1231, depicts a noble lady who, of her own free will, set off on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, walking barefoot and girded with an iron chain, in order to do penance<sup>86</sup>. Thomas also reports in his *vita* of his former abbot John of Cantimpré, how the latter had counselled Countess Mary of Champagne (d. 1204), much against everyone's advice, to leave her daughters behind and to travel to the Holy Land where her husband, the Flemish count Baldwin IX, Emperor of the Latin empire of Constantinople, was waiting for her<sup>87</sup>. In the 1220s, Sibrand of Mariëngaarde in Frisia illustrated in his *vita* of abbot Fredric (d. 1175) that such a demanding pilgrimage could also be undertaken for altruistic reasons. He recounts that a certain nobleman Asego, whom Fredric had advised to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem to atone for his sins, was accompanied by a religious woman called Gertrud who was his sister in law<sup>88</sup>.

Travelling women also often surface in *vitae* to reveal the popularity of contemporary holy people during their lifetime, for hagiographers give many examples of the visits that were rendered to the latter by all kinds of important admirers. James of Vitry, for instance, tells us that Mary of Oignies was visited by a Cistercian nun. The latter was the widow of the

86. Thomas Cantipratensis, *Vita Mariae Oigniacensis, liber tertius*, c. 18, ed. by D. Papebroeck, in *AASS*, Iun. iv, Antwerp, 1707, pp. 666-76, here 673: «in Lotharingiae partibus nobilissimam feminam vidi, quae miro ardore spiritus cruce suscepta, usque in terram sanctam Jerusalem, vinculo ferreae cincta, carensque vehiculis, nudis etiam pedibus ambulavit». On self chastisement and gender, see also K. Heene, *Deliberate Self-Harm and Gender in Medieval Saints' Lives*, «Hagiographica», 6 (1999), pp. 1-21.

87. Thomas Cantipratensis, *Vita Ioannis abbatis primi Cantipratensis*, Lib. III, c. 5, ed. by R. Godding, in *Une oeuvre inédite de Thomas de Cantimpré. La Vita Ioannis Cantipratensis*, «Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique», 76 (1981), pp. 257-316, here 314. When Mary arrived in Jerusalem, Baldwin turned out to be dead already.

88. Sibrandus, *Vita Fretherici*, c. 31, introduced, edited and translated by H. Th. M. Lambouij - J. A. Mol, in *Eid., Vitae abbatum Orti Sancte Marie. Vijf abtenlevens van het klooster Mariëngaarde in Friesland*, Hilversum, Verloren, 2001, pp. 131-241, here 186: «Huic ergo proficiscenti, Ghertrudis predicta comitem se obtulit laboris et itineris. Euntes autem prospere, voto suo potiti sunt».

count of Leuven (Godfrey III, d. 1190). She had already met Mary long ago in Willebroek and, on that occasion, had expressed the wish to see her once again<sup>89</sup>. This plan succeeded despite the fact that she was only able to encounter Mary's recently deceased body just before it was going to be washed for her burial. In the thirteenth century *vita* of the hermit Gerlach of Houtem (d. 1165), we can read that among the many who came to see him from far away places (*de remotis partibus*), there was also the noblewoman Oda of Heinsberg who offered him the lands around his hermitage<sup>90</sup>. The mystic Lidwina of Schiedam was said to be visited on her sickbed by Margaret of Burgundy (d. 1442), the wife of Count William VI of Holland (1404-17)<sup>91</sup>. Famous cases can also be found of course in Pierre de Vaux's *Vie de sainte Colette*. First, there is the Baroness of Brissay who came to visit Colette in her hermitage and who, after having learned of Colette's project of reform, encouraged her to travel to Nice to submit her plan to Benedict XIII. According to Pierre, it was this Baroness who helped Colette to receive a dispensation of her reclusion and who, with her household and her own means, accompanied her on her journey<sup>92</sup>. They were also accompanied, however, by Colette's father confessor Henry of Baume. When they approached the city of Nice, they sent ahead a notable and prudent lady (*ungne notable et discrete femme*) to prepare the pope for Colette's arrival. The lady apparently became possessed by a demon when she entered the town, but she was nonetheless received by the pope and came back to her senses (see also Plate 2)<sup>93</sup>. Finally, some years later, when Colette undertook a journey to Besançon to reform her first convent, she was accompanied by Countess Blanche of Geneva, her niece Mathilde of Savoy and their retinue<sup>94</sup>.

89. Jacobus Vitriacensis, *Vita Mariae Oigniacensis* cit., Lib. II, c. 106, p. 665.

90. *Vita Gerlaci*, c. 13, ed. by C. H. Kneepkens, in A. B. Mulder-Bakker (ed.), *De kluizenaar en de eik: Gerlach van Houthem en zijn verering*, Hilversum, Verloren, 1995, pp. 148-214, here 170.

91. *Vita Lidwinae prior* cit., c. 11, p. 278; *Tleven van Liedwy, die maghet van Siedam*, c. 6, edited, translated and commented by L. Jongen - C. Schotel, in Eid., *Het leven van Liedewij, de maagd van Schiedam. De Middelnederlandse tekst naar de bewaarde bronnen uitgegeven, vertaald en van commentaar voorzien*, Hilversum, Verloren, 1994, pp. 19-103.

92. Pierre de Vaux, *Vie de sainte Colette* cit., c. 6/34, pp. 32-4. See also excerpt 2, added to this contribution.

93. *Ibid.*, c. 6/36, pp. 34-6.

94. *Ibid.*, c. 7/43, pp. 42-3.

Yet it is not only lay women that are presented in hagiographical sources as respectable travellers. In many a saints' life we encounter religious women who reveal extensive mobility in the carrying out of their duties, especially concerning organisational matters regarding the cloister. In his life of the Cistercian lay brother Arnulf of Villers (d. 1228), for instance, the thirteenth century Gossuin of Bossut mentions that on a certain day the prioress and nuns of the Cistercian cloister Epinlieu near Mons came to Villers in Brabant and that, after having settled their affairs, they spent the night there before returning home<sup>95</sup>. In addition, in his *vita* of the mystically gifted Ida of Nivelles, that same Gossuin situates several of the miraculous examples of Ida's supernatural powers within situations when she is travelling around the region for business with other nuns or abbesses<sup>96</sup>. Sometimes religious women were even compelled by men to travel. The anonymous *vita* of abbot Sibrand of Mariëngaarde reports for example that at the beginning of the thirteenth century Sibrand asked some sisters from the nearby nunnery of Bethlehem to accompany him in order to found a nunnery into which the widowed Duchess Anastasia of Pommeren (d. c. 1240) wanted to retire<sup>97</sup>. According to his hagiographer, however, this same abbot got extremely angry when one day Anastasia, together with some sisters, took a walk in the fields without his approval<sup>98</sup>. However, even saints' lives indicate that groups of religious women did not necessarily need the company or direction of male leaders to set out on longer journeys for the relatively independent organisation of their monastic networks. This is again very well illustrated in the *Vie de sainte Colette*. Particularly from the many miracle stories it contains about Colette's journeys to and fro between the growing number of reformed and newly founded convents, it appears that she was, more often than not, travelling with fellow sisters, with men acting solely in servant's roles. For instance, according to one such miracle story, Colette was on the

95. Gossuinus de Bossuto, *Vita Arnulficit.*, Lib. II, c. 67, p. 631. The distance between both cloisters was some 35 miles.

96. Gossuinus de Bossuto, *Vita beatae Idae Nivelensis* cit., c. 15, 16 and 22, pp. 237-8, 241, 253.

97. *Vita Sibrandi, Iarici, Ethelgeri*, c. 10, ed. Lambooj - Mol, *Vitae abbatum* cit., pp. 350-497, here 370-5.

98. *Ibid.*, c. 12, pp. 378-9.

road one day with a number of sisters to bring them to a convent. Due to the negligence of their coachman they tipped into a river. Thanks to Colette, one of the sisters who nearly drowned survived (see also Plate 3).

This last story brings us to a final dimension of the richness of information to be derived from hagiographical sources. They often offer the reader a great wealth of details elucidating the practical aspects, inconveniences and (super)natural dangers which travellers could encounter<sup>99</sup>. As a rule these «realistic» details confirm the picture we also get from other sources<sup>100</sup>. Women as well as men usually travelled accompanied by friends, parents, spouses, fellow religious people, or, in the case of royal or noble persons, by a large escort of vassals, servants and clerics<sup>101</sup>. They travelled on foot when they were poor or inspired by asceticism, on horseback or in a carriage when they were affluent or (considered to be) physically weak<sup>102</sup>. They took along all kinds of necessities (food, clothing, books...), spent nights at inns, with private persons or in religious communities and travelled distances of up to forty miles a day<sup>103</sup>. As pilgrims, they were provided traditional attributes – a staff, a hat and a bag<sup>104</sup>. And especially in some stories from the *Legenda aurea*, we find indications of the advantages for women to wear men's clothes while travelling<sup>105</sup>. For women travellers had to face some extra dangers and inconveniences: the

99. See e.g. Thomas Cantipratensis, *Vita Ioannis* cit., Lib. II, c. 6, pp. 281–2 for a story about a merchant killed in his guest house. For some fifteenth century examples of threats by robbers, see Pierre de Vaux, *Vie de sainte Colette* cit., c. 77–84, pp. 70–6.

100. See e.g. N. Ohler, *The Medieval Traveller*, Woodbridge, Boydell, 1989; J. Verdon, *Voyager au Moyen Age*, Paris, Perrin, 1998.

101. See, e.g., Thomas a Kempis, *Vita Lidewigis virginis* cit., Lib. I, c. 11, p. 345: «dux Wilhelmus cum domina Margareta ducissa et multa comitate civitatem Schiedamensem intravit»; Pierre de Vaux, *Vie de sainte Colette* cit., c. 6/34, pp. 32–4.

102. For the link between physical weakness and travelling by horse or carriage, see *Vita Julianae de Monte Cornelii* cit., Lib. II, c. 11, p. 462: «siquidem prae nimia debilitate pedes ire non poterat»; Pierre de Vaux, *Vie de sainte Colette* cit., c. 6/35, p. 54 (See also excerpt 2, added to this contribution).

103. See also Ohler, *The Medieval Traveller* cit., pp. 82–101.

104. The *vita* of Ida of Nivelles offers a fine description of a pilgrimage ceremony. A deaf nun of La Ramée, the Cistercian cloister where Ida's remains were kept, promised a wax ear to the saint in exchange for her recovery. Before visiting Ida's tomb she asked for fun to be ceremonially recognized as a pilgrim and eventually received the traditional pilgrimage attributes. See Gossuinus de Bossuto, *Vita beatae Idae Nivelensis* cit, c. 35, pp. 293–4.

105. See U. Peters, *Gender Trouble in der mittelalterlichen Literatur? Mediävistische Gender-*

danger of rape was always present, and travelling while being pregnant was certainly not without risks<sup>106</sup>. Even so, hagiographers remained rather sparing with misogynistic remarks and moral disapproval.

Isolated *vitae* of holy women can often be considered rather fragmentary and selective in their information as to the mobility of the heroines that are described. However, this contribution may have shown that the corpus of saints' lives from the Low Countries in its entirety nevertheless offers us a kaleidoscopic image of the ecclesiastical concerns, the narrative motives and the lifelike representations that existed in late medieval society in relation to travelling women.

*forschung und Crossdressing-Geschichten*, in I. Bennewitz – H. Tervooren (eds.), *Manlichiu wíp, wíplich man: Zur Konstruktion der Kategorien Körper und Geschlecht in der deutschen Literatur des Mittelalters*, Berlin, Schmidt, 1999, pp. 284–304, here 289–90 and V.R. Hotchkiss, *Clothes make the man: female cross dressing in medieval Europe*, London, Routledge, pp. 13–32.

106. Mary Magdalene, e.g., was told to have saved a pregnant woman who was wrecked. See Iacopo da Varazza, *Legenda aurea*, c. 92, pp. 632–6.

#### ABSTRACT

Despite their usually andro-centric and clerical focus, hagiographical texts offer much implicit as well as explicit information on the different dimensions of female mobility. In this contribution, the hagiographical representation of female mobility in late medieval texts from the Low Countries is analysed, considering several possible variables. Are there differences between texts treating people from a distant past and those treating contemporary exemplary figures, or between Latin and vernacular texts and their respective audiences, or between the representation of female (im)mobility in texts written with a view to propagating religious ideals and those written within the realistic frame surrounding the saint's spectacular deeds? This contribution argues that the discursive framing of female mobility in hagiographical texts is always the result of the search for a balance between at least three components: the moral teaching which has to be given, the historical core of the life of the holy person involved and the realistic background in which the hagiographical story has to be situated.

## APPENDIX

### Excerpts from Pierre de Vaux's *Vie de sainte Colette*

Nicoletta or Colette Boëillet was born in 1381 to well-to-do parents at Corbie, a village near Amiens on the river Somme. After having tried out various types of religious life, she began living as an anchoress in a cell attached to the side of the local church of St Etienne in 1402. Around that time she received several divine visions informing her that she was chosen to reform the Franciscan Orders, and especially the female branch of the Clares. In 1406, after having been relieved of her vow, Colette travelled to Nice, to Antipope Benedict XIII, accompanied by her confessor Henry of Baume and several important noble women. The pope blessed Colette, consecrated her Clare and abbess and granted her permission to carry out her project of reform. In the next four decades Colette travelled all over Europe. The first house that she reformed, in 1410, was the convent of the Clares of Besançon. In 1430 she put into writing her *Constitutions*. By the end of her life she had reformed and founded no less than sixteen houses, especially in France and Burgundy, but also in the German Empire (Heidelberg). Colette got much support, in particular from noble women, and acquired many followers during her travels. She spent the last years of her life in Ghent in the Bethlehem cloister that she had founded at the behest of Philip the Good and Isabella of Portugal. She died in 1447<sup>107</sup>.

Among the many sources concerning Colette and her reform, there are also several interesting hagiographical texts. Her life was written for the first time, in French, almost immediately after her death by Pierre de Vaux who had been her confessor for 18 years. It is from this text which was clearly modelled after the lives of St Francis and St Clare, that the excerpts below are selected. One of the main manuscripts of Pierre de Vaux's work

107. The best comprehensive study on Colette of Corbie is certainly Lopez, *Culture et sainteté* cit.

was commissioned by Countess Margaret of York (1446–1503). It was illustrated with 29 large initial letters, 28 borders and 25 half-page miniatures and is still today kept in the convent of the Poor Clares in Ghent<sup>108</sup>. A Latin translation of Pierre de Vaux's work was made shortly afterwards in c. 1450 by the Franciscan theologian Etienne de Juilly<sup>109</sup>. In 1451, Pierre de Vaux also commissioned a Middle Dutch translation, allegedly based on the Latin version and composed by the Benedictine prior Olivier de Langhe of St Bavo's abbey in Ghent<sup>110</sup>. Around 1471, sister Perinne de Baume, a niece of Henry of Baume and one of Colette's companions dictated her personal recollections of the saint to Francis des Marez, the confessor of Hesdin, one of the cloisters Colette had founded<sup>111</sup>. In many aspects, her report differed from that of Pierre de Vaux. However, both her main hagiographers picture her as a typical, humble and ascetic religious woman who experienced all kinds of mystical phenomena and displayed miraculous powers. Already during her lifetime, she was said to have performed many miracles, particularly in helping travellers in need and in offering a refuge for women in childbirth. At the end of the fifteenth century a process of beatification was initiated with the support of the citizens of Ghent. Nevertheless, Colette was only canonised in 1807.

The excerpts below offer excellent illustrations of the different ways in which the mobility of women could be represented in hagiographical writings. They add concrete examples to the three levels of analysis that we have distinguished above. The first excerpt constitutes an explicit praise of the secluded life that religious women were supposed to embrace. The second excerpt, about her very first long distance journey to Nice, relates the crucial episode in Colette's life, which led to the beginning of her career as travelling reformer. The third excerpt, which narrates some of the difficulties Colette and her sisters had to face when

108. See A. Derolez, *The Illuminated Manuscript Belonging to the Bethlehem Convent in Ghent*, in Ch. van Corstanje et al. (eds.), *Vita sanctae Coletae (1381-1447)*, Tielt-Leyde, Lanoo-Brill, 1982, pp. 149–53.

109. Stephanus de Juliaco, *De beata Coleta virgine*, ed. by G. Henschen, in *AASS*, Mar. 1, Antwerp, 1668, pp. 538–95.

110. The autograph is kept in Ghent, Poor Clares, ms. 2 and a late fifteenth century copy in Ghent, University Library, ms. 520.

111. Perinne de Baume, *Vie de sainte Colette*, ed. by d'Alençon, in Id., *Les vies de Ste Colette Boylet* cit., pp. 203–91.



they were on the road, is a fine example of the way in which a hagiographical text could be corroborated with details derived from the day-to-day realities of travelling. All three excerpts are enhanced with suitable miniatures reproduced from the Ghent manuscript of Pierre de Vaux's *Vie de sainte Colette*.

Excerpt 1: *the ideal of claustration*

PLATE I

*De la solitude qu'elle a eu.*

*Peu en y a des anciens peres qui l'eust oncque tele ne samblable comme elle a eseu par l'espace de chinquante ans. Elle fust enclose et enfermée, non pas seulement dedens ung renclusaige où il y peult avoier aulcune fois lieux spacieux et solacieux, ne dedens ses couvens qui sont amples et gracieux, mais en une petite cellette située dedens les couvens qui polvoient myeulx estre ditte prison ou sepulture que aultre. Car elles estoient si petites si basses et si estroittes qu'elles ny s'i pooit tourner ne drechier ne hauchier, comme il appert par sa cellette qui est située au couvent de Viviés qui n'a pas vj. piés de long ne iiij. de large. Aulcuns des enciens peres avecque che qu'il avoient leurs celles assez ambles si pooient ilz aller aulcune fois. Et de fait les aulcuns aloient par le deseert pour eulx recreer et solacier apres leurs orisons el apres leurs paines et labuers. Mais la petite ancelle de notre Seigneur, non obstant qu'elle eust paines orribles et doloreusses, comme dist est, oncques elle n'issit hors de son horatoire pour avoier quelque recreacion. Et encore plus quant la petite cellette estoit située pres du jardin qu'il ne convenoit que mestre le pet dedens, oncques n'y veut entrer ; et quant il luy convenoit yssir hors des couvens pour visitacion ou aultrement en tous les hostelz où elle venoist elle gardoist solitute et clausere et se tenoit en ungne petite placette qu'elle faisoit clore de draps ou de couverture et y là se tenoit comme s'elle fust immobile sans soy partir jusques à son departement<sup>112</sup>.*

On the solitude she has known.

Among the old fathers only few have lived one comparable to the one she did during a span of fifty years. She was enclosed and locked up, not only in a hermitage where there can sometimes be spacious and sunny rooms, or inside one of these convents which are large and elegant, but in a small cell situated inside these convents. These cells are better called prison or grave than anything else because they were so small and low and narrow that it was impossible to turn around inside them, to straighten up or to stand upright, as can be noticed in her cell in the convent of Vevey which is hardly six feet long by four feet wide. Some of the old fathers, who had rather large cells, could sometimes walk around. Indeed, some

112. Pierre de Vaux, *Vie de sainte Colette* cit., c. 17/165, pp. 141-2.

of them went into the desert to relax and to repose after their prayers and after their penance and labour. But the little maiden of our Lord, notwithstanding her horrible and painful penance, did never, as was already said, leave her oratory to enjoy some recreation. What is more, though her little cell was situated so close to the garden that she only had to put her foot outside, she did not want to enter it. And when she had to leave her convent for a visitation or another reason, she kept her solitude and clausura in all the inns in which she stayed; she stayed inside a small room which she enclosed with cloths and covers and she stayed there and did not leave before her departure as if she was immobile.

PLATE 2 Excerpt 2: *the travelling saint*

*Comment elle ala a notre st pere le pape et comment il la fist religieuse professe et abesse. VF capte.*

*Quant Dieu l'eust ainssy pourueve de celluy venerable pere pour maistre à execucion la ditte reformation, elle proposa d'aler personnellement et le dist bon pere avecques elle en la presence de notre saint pere le pape. Et pour ce faire honnorablement et plus sceurement notre Seigneur donna aulcune congnoissance d'elle et de sa sainte vie et de son saint desir à ungne noble et puissante dame chevaleresse [et baronesse qui pour celluy temps estoit] vesve du singneur de Brysay et fust fille du S<sup>r</sup> de Roche Chouaert. Laquelle dame purement pour l'amour de Dieu et par sa grant douceur et benignité vint par devers elle en son renclusaige à Corbie et eubt moult de saintes collacions touchant la tres parfaicte amour de Dieu et le salut de son ame avecq elle. Dont la ditte dame fust grandement ediffiée et consolée et avecque che animée à le aydier de toute sa puissance que le bon propos et saint desir que Dieu luy avoit donné peult sortir son effect, et pour ce faire print à labourer la ditte dame s'y efficacemement avecque les aultres que Dieu luy avoit administrés que en petit de tamps, tant par dispensacion papale comme par aultres remedes convenables, nonobstant quelconques empechemens que l'ennemy luy faisoit et procurait q'elle fust hors dud. renclusaige. Et quant la ditte dame appecheu comment Dieu les avoit aydié a la maistre hors car ad che faire y eust moult de contradiccions et de oppositions<sup>113</sup> lez quelz par voye humaine ne pooient pas estre annullées en sy bief tamps; niantmains par la volonté de Dieu incontinent tout empechemens furent seclus, et mis arriere. Adoncque charitablement elle se presenta personnellement et les siens et tous ses biens pour le admener jusques à la présence du saint père. Laquelle presentacion humble et charitable congoissant l'ancelle de notre Seigneur qu'elle procedoit de la volonté de Dieu, humblement l'accepta et s'y consenti, dont la noble dame conceupt en son cuer unge grande liesse et luy fust bien advis, comme verité*

<sup>113</sup>. It was in particular the abbot of the Benedictine abbey of Corbie who opposed Colette's plans.

*estoit, que Dieu en celluy eust fait ungne grace tres especiale. Et par la bonté souveraine de Dieu confortablement et sceurement l'amena jusques à la présence de mondit saint pere et ramena en luy faisant et à tous les aultres moult de charité et de humanité. Et en celluy voyage Dieu les conserva et conforta et furent tous grandment consolez d'eestre en la compaignie de la glorieusse nacelle de notre Seigneur laquelle leur estoit comme l'exemplaire de toute sainteté et souvent leur monstroit bonne et belle doctrine pour les enflamer, pour Dieu parfaitement amer et le servir, craindre et doubter, à pechié fuyr et ses sains commandements garder. Et si estoit de si biau maintieng et de sy honneste conversacion entre eulx qu'il leur sambloit que che fust un angle qui fust descendu du chiel.*

*Aucune fois par pitié et compassion pourtant qu'elle estoit josne et tendre il la mestoient sur la beste et comme jamais n'estoit oyseuse, ains toudis se occupoit à penser ou à parler à notre Seigneur. Incontinent qu'elle estoit sur la beste, elle mestoit sy vivement son cuer à penser à Dieu qu'il sambloit qu'elle fust toute ravie et transfigurée en li, ne elle ne scavoit que on disoit ne que on faisoit d'empres elle. Et niantmoins elle se tenoit sy ferme sans vachiller d'ung costé ne d'aultre qu'il sambloit que les angles le tenissent; aucune fois quant elle aloit à piet et quant elle estoit en fort et difficile chemin et pallin de pierres, plusieurs fois il sambloit qu'elle ne touchoit poin à terre, aucune fois qu'elle vollaist ou qu'elle fust eslevée en hair et ainssy à petit d'espace elle faisoit sy grant chemin que nulz tant fuist fort ne bon chemineulx ne le point consuir<sup>114</sup>.*

How sister Colette went to our Holy Father the Pope and how he made her a professed religious woman and abbess. Chapter six.

When God had thus given her this remarkable Father<sup>115</sup> in order to realise this reform, she resolved to go personally with the Father in question to our Holy Father the Pope. In order to do so in an honourable and more safe way, our Lord made a noble and powerful knightly lady acquainted with her, her saintly life and desire; at the time the lady was baroness, widow of the lord of Brisay and daughter of the lord de Rochechouart. This lady came to her and to her hermitage in Corbie out of pure love of God, sweetness and benevolence; she had many saintly conversations with her concerning the very perfect love of God and the salvation of her soul. The lady was greatly edified and consoled by these conversations as well as motivated to help her with all her strength so that the good plan and saintly desire that God had given could be put into practice. To realise this, the lady in question, together with other persons that God had administered her, started to make such effective efforts that in no time, thanks to a papal dispensation and to other appropriate measures, she could leave the hermitage in question, despite some obstacles that the enemy put in her way. The lady in question

114. Pierre de Vaux, *Vie de sainte Colette* cit., c. 6/34-35, pp.32-34. For an elaborate comment, see Lopez, *Culture et sainteté* cit., pp. 57-7.

115. Henry de Baume is meant.

noticed that God had helped them to get her outside, as there was much resistance that could not have been eliminated by human forces in such a short time. Yet, by the will of the Lord all the obstacles were removed. Therefore she charitably showed up with her retinue and all her possessions to bring her in the presence of the Holy Father. The servant of the Lord who realised that this kind and charitable proposition came from the will of God, accepted it humbly and agreed with it. The noble lady experienced a great joy in her heart and understood rightly, as was the truth, that God had given them a very special grace in this matter. And due to the sovereign goodness of the Lord, she took her to our Holy Father comfortably and safely while showing her and many others much charity and humanity. During the journey, God protected them and helped them. All were feeling a great joy to be accompanied by the maiden of our Lord. She was for them the model of all sainthood. Many times, she taught them a solid and good doctrine in order to inflame in them a perfect love of God, to incite them at serving and fearing Him, at fleeing from sin and at respecting the holy commandments. And there was such a good conduct and such honest conversation amongst them, that it seemed to them that an angel was descended from heaven.

Sometimes out of pious compassion because she was young and tender, they placed her on an animal, and, as she was never lazy, she was always busy thinking of the Lord or talking with Him. As soon as she sat on the beast, she devoted her heart so greatly to thinking of God that she seemed in ecstasy and totally transfigured in Him. She did no longer know what was said or done next to her. Yet she kept so upright without staggering from one side to the other that it seemed that angels held her. Sometimes when she walked on foot and found herself on an hard and difficult road, full of stones, it often seemed that she did not touch the ground, that she flew or that she was lifted in the air. In this way, and in only a small lapse of time, she covered such a long distance that nobody, no matter how good a walker, could follow her.

PLATE 3

Excerpt 3: *women on the road*

*Ou temps que partout le royaume de France les gherres estoient sy cruelles et sy mortelles que peu de gens osoient yssir hors des fortresses et bonnes villes, non obstant qu'elle fust pavoureuseuse et moult crainttive comme il appertient à dame de religion, niantmains en celluy tamps elle entreprinst pour l'amour de Dieu et le salut des ames à faire plusieurs voyages en diveers et longtaines regions. Et pour yceulx faire sceurement et sauvement son saulfconduyt estoit d'avoir tous les jours avant qu'elle partist de la maison la sainte messe des. iij. roys. Et tantost qu'elle estoit departie, elle commençoit à dire devotement les letanies et par le grace de Dieu et par les merites de tous les sains nommés en la ditte letanie,*

*tous les perilz qui estoient aulcune fois si grans que pour perdre la vie elle eschievet et evadoit sauvement. Desquelz perilz aulcuns sont chy apres declarés et manifestés en brief.*

*Unghe fois que elle avecque plusieurs de ses religieuses estoient en ungne region estrainge et dont elles ignoroient la langhe, ainssy comme elles passoient par ung dangereulx passaige en ung bois citués, eles furent rencontrées de gens d'armes bien montés et armés, leurs arbaleestres tous tendues, lesquels s'estoient mis en embuche en entencion de les desrobber et destrousser; car non obstant qu'elles fusent povres et vivans de mendicité, nientmoins pour la prelecxité du chemin et apreté de la voye et aussy pour la foiblesse feminin, il les convenoit mener en chars qui sont de grande apparisance et demonstrance; sur elles soudainement et tempestueusement vindrent et comme ceulx qui avoient malvaise volenté et qui esoiert pres de mal faire, commencerent à parler rudement et espoentablement. La petite ancelle de notre Seigneur qui devotement avoit dit la sainte letanie et qui par la grace du benoit saint esprit come les glorieulx apostres entendoient toutes langaiges, doucement et benignement leur respondi. Et soudainement qu'ilz ouyrent le son de sa douce voiz leur volenté cruelle fust transmüée en amour et en charité, car non pas seulement ilz l'assurerent que nul mal ilz ne leur feroient, mais se offrirent charitablement à les conduire sceurement en quelque lieux où elles voudroient aller. De laquelle offre charitablement et humblement les remerchya et ainssy sans nul malfaire se despartirent<sup>116</sup>.*

At the time when in the whole kingdom of France wars were so cruel and murderous that few people dared to leave the fortresses and the good cities, and notwithstanding that she was timid and very anxious, as is appropriate for a religious lady, she undertook several journeys to different far away regions out of love of God and for the salvation of souls. In order to do so securely and safely, she assured herself of a safe-conduct by celebrating each day that she left home the sacred mass of the three Kings. As soon as she had left, she started to recite devoutly the litanies and thanks to the grace of God and the merits of all the saints mentioned in the litany in question, she escaped and got away from dangers that were sometimes so big that they involved the risk of life. Some of these dangers are revealed and briefly described in what follows.

Once when she was in a foreign region with several of her religious sisters where they did not understand the language, they passed through a dangerous place in a forest and they encountered well-armed men riding good horses and with all their crossbows bended. These men had laid themselves in an ambush with the intention of robbing and plundering them. For despite the fact that they were poor and that they lived from mendicancy, they had chosen to travel around

116. Pierre de Vaux, *Vie de sainte Colette* cit., c. 10/76-77, pp. 69-70. Perrine gives approximately the same story and depicts herself as one of the sisters involved. See Perinne de Baume, *Vie de sainte Colette* cit., c. 32, p. 226: «Ad cause que nous estions en charios c'estoit grand monstre, mais la feblesse de nous et la prolixité du chemin ainssy contraignoit se faire».

in chariots with an impressive appearance because of the length of the road, the roughness of the journey and their feminine weakness. These men suddenly and tempestuously came forward as persons with wicked intentions and prepared to do harm and began to speak in a rude and terrifying way. Then the humble servant of Our Lord Jesus Christ who had devoutly recited holy litanies and – as was the case with the apostles – understood all languages through God's grace, answered them kindly and benevolently. And suddenly when they heard the sound of her gentle voice, their cruel intention changed into love and charity, since not only did they assure her that they would not harm them but they also charitably offered to take them safely to whatever place they wanted to go to. For this offer she very charitably and humbly thanked them and thus they each went their own way without any harm.

par entour la d<sup>e</sup>e villette ¶ Aulcuns no-  
tables marchans auoiet propose que tout  
quanquils poroient gaagner en leurs mar-  
chandises es Jours des solemnitez Ilz dou-  
roient entieremēt pour lamour de dieu  
ouiques ny vout consentir den recepuoir  
Jusques ala vaillance dun seul denier disāt  
que ce nestoit point de iuste acquest. Coniet  
Dieu li mōstra vne espoentable vision et  
du consentemēt q̄ par constrainte de dieu elle  
donna po' reformer lordre de madame s<sup>a</sup>inte  
Clare . le v<sup>e</sup> chapitre .



PLATE 1 – Colette as recluse in her cell, protected by an iron cage which suddenly appears while she receives a vision of hell. Illustration of Pierre de Vaux, *Vie de sainte Colette*, c. 5/29 (Ghent, Poor Clares, ms. 8 (c. 1468–77), fol. 19r).

pitieux et misericors par deuers les pource  
 pecheurs. La glorieuse ancelle de nre signe  
 a dit maintes fois de li. que ouques peche  
 ne se parti de sa presence quil ne fust aulaine  
 ment reconforte. Quants pecheurs Il a con  
 uert et ramenez a dieu par ses saintes predi  
 cations et belles exhortations. Et quates  
 psones Il a fait renonchier au monde z en  
 trer en religion. Cest come innumerable chose  
 Il auoit la parole de dieu come cotinudniēt  
 en la bouche. Plusieurs malades de diuses  
 maladies en faisant le signe de la croix Il  
 garu et saulua et aulcuns demoniacles lane  
 mi hors Il getta



PLATE 2 – Colette's journey to Pope Benedict XIII. The noble lady who is sent ahead to announce Colette's arrival gets possessed by the demon and starts to undress. After being dressed again, she is received by the Pope and cured from her sudden madness. The Pope becomes convinced of the importance of receiving Colette as well. Illustration of Pierre de Vaux, *Vie de sainte Colette*, c. 6/36 (Ghent, Poor Clares, ms. 8, fol. 23r).



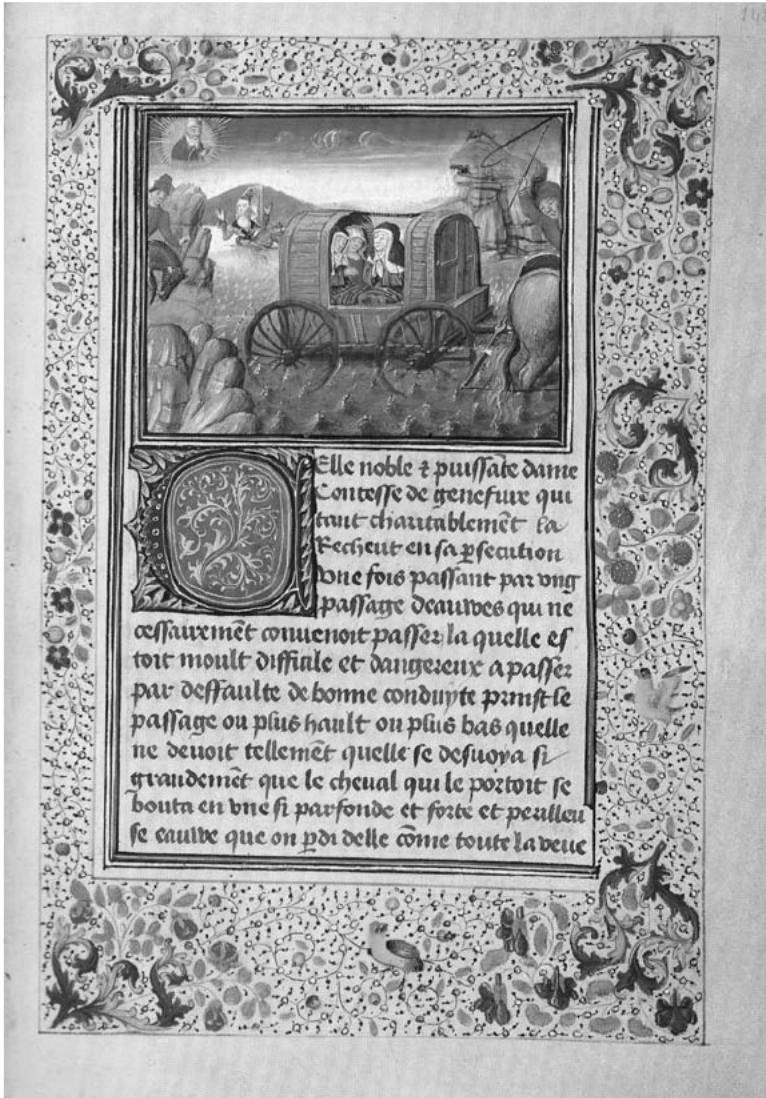


PLATE 3 – Travellers underwent various miracles thanks to the intercession of Colette. Blanche of Savoye is rescued from drowning when she crosses a dangerous river on horseback. A travelling Burgundian nobleman falls with his horse from the edge of a river but is saved. Coleta and her companions, while travelling with their carriage to a convent, tip into a river because of the negligence of their coachman but they are miraculously saved. Illustration of Pierre de Vaux, *Vie de sainte Colette*, c. 20/207 & 210 (Ghent, Poor Clares, ms. 8 (c. 1468-77), fol. 142r).

## SOMMARIO

vii Stefano Pittaluga, *Premessa*

### PARTE PRIMA

FEMALE TRAILS. HISTORICAL SOURCES ON MOBILITY AND GENDER IN THE LOW COUNTRIES (1200-1550)

5 Thérèse de Hemptinne - Katrien Heene, *Foreword*

### NARRATIVES AND FICTION

15 Jeroen Deploige - Katrien Heene, *Colette's Travels. The Discursive Framing of the Mobility of Women in Saints' Lives from the Low Countries (Thirteenth to Fifteenth Centuries)*

57 Martine De Reu - Katrien Heene, *Chaste and Confined: Ideal Women in Sermons and Exempla*

91 Renaat Gaspar, *Women on Pilgrimage to Jerusalem: the Evidence from Travellers' Tales*

131 Jozef Janssens, *Women Seeking Adventure: Itineraries in the Medieval Chivalric Literature*

165 Hermina Joldersma - Dieuwke Van Der Poel, *Across the Threshold to Maturity: Gender and Mobility in the «Antwerp Songbook»*

### DIPLOMATICS

227 Thérèse de Hemptinne, *Women's Mobility in the Late Medieval Low Countries: the Evidence of Diplomatic Documents (12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> Century)*

255 Femke Prinsen, *Female Mobility in the Courtly Environment: the Evidence of Late Medieval Household Accounts*

- 301 Monique Vleeschouwers-Van Melkebeek, *Emotional Mobility and Gender in the Court Room: the Perspective of the Consistory Courts of Cambrai, Brussels and Tournai*

DEPICTIONS

- 329 Hanno Wijsman, *Images between Stories and History: Late Medieval Miniatures Showing Travelling Women*

- 383 ON THE AUTHORS

PARTE SECONDA

LETTERATURA ODEPORICA

- 389 Silvana Rocca, *Una strana navigazione: il viaggio di Europa*  
 407 Maria Teresa Vitale, *Su alcuni «itineraria» poetici al femminile*  
 421 Maria Franca Buffà Giolito, «*Terra marique*»: frammenti di «viaggio» dall'epistolario senecano  
 435 Lucia Di Salvo, «*Maurorum barbara tellus*»  
 449 Mariarosaria Pugliarello, *Viaggio reale e percorso intellettuale nelle «Noctes Atticae» di Aulo Gellio*  
 465 Anna Maranini, *Mitologie, personificazioni e simboli nel «De reditu suo». Rutilio Namaziano e un viaggio alla ricerca degli dei perduti*  
 541 Marianna Cerno, *La trasformazione della Terrasanta agli occhi del pellegrino occidentale: da Egeria al monaco Bernardo*  
 567 Paolo Rosano, *La geografia nel «De rerum naturis» di Rabano Mauro*  
 603 Cristina Cocco, *Citazioni poetiche e reminiscenze allusive nella «Narracio de mirabilibus urbis Rome» di «Magister Gregorius»*

*Indice dei luoghi, degli autori, delle opere anonime e degli studiosi*

- 635 *Parte prima*, a cura di Valeria Van Camp  
 649 *Parte seconda*, a cura di Clara Fossati