Speaking, Writing and Performing Mary Magdalene in Irish Convents in Early Modern Spain (1499 to 1639)

This article charts how the figure of Mary Magdalene emerged as a central figure within the creative culture of Irish convents in Spain between 1499 and 1639, the period of settlement of Irish female religious and the establishment of their convents. The majority of Irish convents in Spain were Dominican, an order dedicated to an outgoing educational mission. Detailing her centrality to the lives of Irish female religious communities generally, it explores how Mary Magdalene had two purposes: teaching and entertainment to endorse and commemorate the sacred history and doctrines of the Church fulfilled by women. Although primarily pedagogical in purpose, I suggest that performances relating to Mary Magdalene, and the nature of their oral delivery in this period specifically celebrate her centrality within the Resurrection narrative and showcase a love, loyalty and faith that surpassed that of the male disciples. The oral traditions of female-created dramas, particularly those within Irish convents have received little academic attention. One problem in relation to the study of orality lies in what Ong describes as the gulf between the spoken and the written word which lies in the ephemeral nature of speech (1982: 31−36). Speech can be an imprecise memory, whilst text, by contrast, is stable. However, although it lacks the same stability, reading aloud allows for additions of interpretation, and addresses the ears as well as the eyes. Convent orality sponsored both speech and text. It also produced both individual and joint authors. Cohen has posited the question: how do we uncover the nature of delivery of the word? (2015: 24). Surviving convent collections include dramas with stage directions, catechisms in Irish which emphasise delivery, and external sources which highlight the emotional oral delivery. However,

Cohen also cites the importance of problematizing the broader issue of who first put oral narrative into writing, and how the nature of the transfer worked (Cohen 2015: 25). Cohen argues for the unique appraisal of the oral, but with attention to the dynamics of placing the oral, and tracing its influence on what appeared in writing in the period 1400 to 1700.

Throughout European cultures private reading took place alongside performance. Convent plays clearly indicate an oral performance, but need to be triangulated with directions, marginalia, the female preaching tradition, in particular the Dominican preaching tradition, music, and convent curricula. Even this triangulation does not tell us about every dynamic of convent speech. As Braddick (2015: 447) has noted speech is much older than writing, and much of it remains unrecorded. Early modern Europe was a hybrid society in which oral discourse interacted with text, and increasingly with printed text. Braddick (2015: 449) also reminds us that it is difficult to attempt, with imperfect information and tools, to enter the domain of conversational analysis in an historical context. One of the approaches which is most beneficial is to study the setting to the meaning of speech, and this is sometimes clear in both dramatic and literary sources, both of which are very conscious of the context and performance of their words. The relationship between the spoken and the written reveals the key problem of what was actually said. The effect of speech lies in the reaction of the audience (Braddick 2015: 450). This response can be measured to a degree within convents in relation to the audience response to the emotions, raised voices of the performers, and the weeping, fainting and keening traditions directed, exhibited and commented upon. In convents the female oral transmission reflected a hybridity, seen in the intermixture of oral and written, and cannot be judged as purely oral. How do we discern in the written text the

imprint of the spoken? Orality is produced in different styles, including that which is chanted, or sung, and through various responses. The Abbess had authority, and this power and credibility was lent to orality (Braddick 2015: 453). Orality was a Dominican foundation stone. The Dominican constitutions established the Brothers and Sisters as the Order of Preachers. From the very beginning of the order private ocular reading was voiced, whether this was individual or group, and was not dependent upon levels of literacy. In convents orality was never the opposite of literacy, and oral delivery was understood to enable aural reception. Within convents drama contributed to the oral-aural system of learning, and transmission. The Dominican way of life was upheld through constant developments of orality, both within the convent, and outside in broader mission.

Mary Magdalene is a compelling, yet elusive, figure within the New Testament Gospels. Luke 8:1−2 alludes to her history only briefly, naming her among the first followers of Jesus; 'With him were the twelve and a number of women who had been set free from evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, known as Mary of Magdala, from whom seven devils had come out' (New English Bible with Apocrypha, 1970). The earliest reference to her comes in Mark 15:30, towards the end of his account of Christ's crucifixion on Golgotha, 'A number of women were also present, watching from a distance. Among them were Mary of Magdala, Mary the Mother of James the younger and of Joseph, and Salome, who had all followed him and waited on him when he was in Galilee, and there were several other who had come up to Jerusalem with him'. She is the messenger in the *noli mi tangere* scene in John 20: 11-18, when she is tasked to inform the disciples of Christ's resurrection. However, she is sometimes conflated with Mary of Bethany in John's gospel, where she is recorded as the sister of Lazarus and Martha (11:1−2), and also with the penitent sinner who

anoints Christ's feet with costly ointment, and then wipes them with her hair (John 12:3). Twomey has noted that Mary of Bethany, sister of Martha, began to be identified with Mary of Magdala from the earliest days of Christianity, and this continued within convent traditions, resulting in Mary Magdalene becoming the epitome of the contemplative, because it was thought that she remained at the feet of Christ to listen to his words (Twomey 2015a: 302). Piera makes a similar point when she focuses upon the selection by both Franciscan and Dominican sisters of Mary Magdalene as a woman who inspired a central role for female preachers (Piera 2006: 313−28).

It is, however, Mary Magdalene's significance in the Resurrection narratives that secures her place in Christian history. She is directly named, alongside Mary the mother of James, Salome and Joanna, in each of the synoptic Gospels among the women who discovered the empty tomb (Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:1; Luke 24:10).

John's Gospel amplifies her significance, recording that she remained at the tomb after the other disciples had gone home to weep (20:10−11). Here, Christ appears to Mary Magdalene alone. Although she initially thinks he is the gardener, when he addresses her as Mary she recognises him, they converse, and then she is specifically commissioned to tell the disciples of the Resurrection (20:10−18). The Johannine narrative is, as Holly Hearon has shown (2004: 5), crucial among the appearance narratives as it clearly disrupts the male hegemony that otherwise dominates the appearance stories in the Gospels (Twomey 2015b). Crucially, in John's Gospel Mary Magdalene is the first witness of the Resurrection, and is specifically directed to spread the word that Christ was risen to the disciples (20:17−18). It is her responsibility to inform and direct the disciples. Twomey has also pointed to the Gospel of John (20:11−18) which alone presents the dialogue

between Mary and Christ, as a key narrative scene, and one which was embraced within convent culture. (Twomey 2013: 324).

In the earlier Gospel of Mark, Mary Magdalene is the first witness of the Resurrection (Mark 16:1−20). In this account Mary is accompanied by Mary, the mother of James, and Mary Salome, and they are the earliest visitors to the sepulchre, where they find the stone rolled away from the front of the tomb, and a young man inside, clothed in a white garment (16:1−5). He addresses them directly and instructs them to tell Peter and the disciples of the Resurrection (16:6−8). The appearance to Mary Magdalene specifies that he appears to her first, and that she is the woman out of whom he has cast seven devils (16:9). However, in Mark's account, the disciples do not believe her about the meeting or the Resurrection (16: 11). They remain doubters until Christ appears at dinner and upbraids them for their disbelief (16: 14). Mark's account clearly marks Mary Magdalene out as a true believer, and the first witness accounts from the Gospels of John and Mark became the foundation of the specific role of Mary Magdalene in cultural productions, within dramatic deliveries.

By contrast, the appearance narrative in Matthew's Gospel narrates the meeting between Christ, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary at the sepulchre (28:1). The angel addresses the women, showing them the empty tomb, and directs them to inform the disciples that Christ has risen (28:2−8). Mary's role is to take the news into Galilee where she would meet Jesus (28:7).

Mary Magdalene is, thus, centre stage in three different Gospel accounts of Christ's resurrection. This is remarkable given that Jewish law did not consider women to be valid witnesses. Nevertheless, the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and John demonstrate the importance of women in the life and ministry of Christ, associating Mary with his public ministry. The three Gospels' affirmation of Mary Magdalene's

Resurrection experience stimulated continued interest in her, however she has also been interpreted as a symbol of both resistance and of leadership within the early Christian Church. She became a symbol of resistance to the authority of the early Church's attempts to place power exclusively in the hands of men. Her role in the Gospels was also central to the debate in the early Church in relation to leadership (Hearon 2004: 5). Both the Gospels of Mark and John name Mary, not Peter, as the first witness to the Resurrection. However, orthodox churches place Peter as the first witness of the Resurrection, and hence the rightful leader of the Church. From the second century onward, orthodox churches developed the view that only certain Resurrection appearances conferred authority on those who received them, in particular Peter and the male disciples.[1] Mary Magdalene's appearance in the Resurrection narratives has long been used to authorise female leadership and preaching as well as their ordained ministries (Hearon 2004: 66; Twomey 2013: 323−25). Indeed, she has historically resonated with convent communities in particular, an exemplar of faith and spiritual devotion, and biblical herald to the importance of women within Christian ministry more generally. Dominican convents operated their own oral culture of preaching. Throughout their order, and from its foundation Dominicans saw themselves as imitators of the apostles. Their mission included oral preaching for all.

As preachers, abbesses had to be adequately trained. Irish female religious in Spain were missionaries trained in foreign languages, who used speech in both Latin and vernaculars (O'Heyne 1706: 167). It was not only Dominican female religious who focused upon oral traditions, but other Orders too. Twomey has focused upon Isabel de Villena preaching sermons in the convent of Santa Trinitat in Valencia. (Twomey 2015: 421−45). The poor Clare nuns regularly heard sermons, some

preached by visiting priests, and others by their Abbess, Isabel. Although written sermons are not extant, traces lie embedded in Villena's *Vita Christi*, which included direct address from Christ (Twomey 2015b: 421). Her unofficial equivalence to the Bishop of Valencia established her position to deliver sermons to both nuns and novices. Sermons may have been written by men, however, they were delivered through the mediation of a female speaker (Twomey 2015b: 425). In the Dominican order preaching was also the cornerstone within female houses. A sister *lector* would read the bible literally, and other readings would form the basis for a shared oral-aural reading which in turn involved some level of memorisation and interpretation. In Irish convents Irish vernacular catechisms also continued an oral-aural tradition which continued throughout the period of Irish settlement in Spain from 1499 through to the end of the seventeenth century (O'Heyne 1706: 17). The purpose of Irish catechisms, like many others, were read and repeated in Irish aloud. Catechisms were short statements of religious belief adapted from creeds and confessions. They operated as a verbalised textbook which relied on straightforward language maintained in Irish vernacular, with a question-and-answer format, facilitating memorisation by all age groups. In girls' schools this formed parts of the lessons taught. Areas constantly verbalised included the ten commandments and the seven sacraments. The exchange between Mary Magdalene and Christ in the *noli mi tangere* often demonstrated the oral inquisitiveness of Mary Magdalene using questions in order to ensure a response from Christ. Speaking Mary Magdalene's part meant that she led the sequence of questions and answers.

Mary Magdalene: A Saint for Convent Communities

By the thirteenth century, the figure of Mary Magdalene was beginning to accrue particular significance for convent women across Europe. Indeed, her position as an exemplar to female religious communities during the medieval period moved to support her authority for convent women during Easter celebrations organised and staged by convent communities. She was prominent in the special dramatic re-enactments that were staged after Mass on Good Friday, to commemorate the death of Christ, and on Easter morning, to celebrate the Resurrection (Donovan 1958: 9−12). Productions focusing on the Easter narrative also became an important part of religious festivals; commercial theatres closed during the Corpus Christi celebrations as dramatic productions were a central part of the month-long event (Sales 1828: 329). The roots of these productions can be dated to the Middle Ages, and have been traced in Spain to the eleventh century by Donovan (1958). A third revival in the thirteenth century in Spain has been noted by Cantavella (1990).[2] Donovan notes that, by the eleventh century, Easter plays with both Mary the mother of Christ and Mary Magdalene's witness of the crucifixion and then the Resurrection formed part of the Easter plays in nunneries across the Iberian Peninsula (Donovan 1958: 15). Manuscripts from convents, cathedrals, and monasteries as far apart as Santiago de Compostela in Galicia, and Ripoll in Aragón, and Limoges and Arles in France reveal close contact in terms of the transmission of plays and writing as early as the twelfth century.[3] In addition to play manuscripts, it is also important to triangulate these with church and municipal minutes and account books, in order to construct a more complete picture of Iberian theatre and performance culture. This is especially useful when plays have been lost or destroyed, as it is possible to note the former existence of the works, and the cost of staging them. (Stern 1996: 124-8). The continuation of productions such as the *Visitatio Sepulchri* and the re-writing of the dramas is

testimony to their popularity, and a demand which over-arches the Middle Ages and the early modern period.

Mary Magdalene's increasing importance within convent communities was further testified by a more general proliferation of her images in sculptures, frescos and songs, and a boom in Magdalene legends.[4] Mary Magdalene was pictured on psalters, including the Queen Mary psalter (*c*. 1310−20) reputedly made for Isabella, wife of Richard II (Haskins 1995: 220). Tellingly, the illustrations show Mary preaching to the disciples, whilst they are a quiet audience. Jacobus de Voragine's *Legenda Aurea* was a popular version of the Magdalene legend, widely disseminated (Coletti 2004: 22).[5] His text contained chapters on Mary Magdalene as well as Mary of Egypt, a harlot from Alexandria, converted in Jerusalem. She later became a penitent who lived a solitary life in the wilderness, and speaks to the way in which these two figures were often conflated in contemporary thought. The blending of these figures resulted in an imaginative extension of Mary Magdalene's history to encompass the sustained contrition of Mary of Egypt. In many legends, she evolves from the dedicated follower of Christ, as recounted in the Gospels, to a penitent prostitute who endured long penance as a hermit in the desert (St Sophronius, 634-8, *Vita*).[6] As Theresa Coletti explains 'the late medieval understanding identified her as a sinner saint who had embraced and renounced sexual and worldly pleasures' (2004: 2). Absorbing the personal sacrifices of Mary of Egypt, Mary Magdalene's life obtained a trajectory comparable with that of nuns, whose final vow began a life-long dedication to poverty, celibacy and obedience.

Her importance in disseminating the news of the Resurrection ensured that she had become a model within female orders, and was increasingly used to justify the spiritual authority of women in late-medieval convents. Jansen maintains that the

Dominicans claimed Mary Magdalene as their patroness as early as 1297. (Jansen, 1995: 2). Both in France and in Italy she was the most popular late medieval saint, and was used in campaigns to bring preaching to the people (Jansen, 2000: 6). By the fourteenth century, commonplace books, providing a history of Mary Magdalene, were being used for teaching purposes. In published sermons collected and curated by sisters in the Orders of Saint Dominic and Saint Clare, Mary Magdalene was associated with medieval preaching (Jansen 2000: 8). Jacobus de Voragine (d. 1298), the Dominican author of the *Legenda Aurea* (1275), constructed his own vita of Mary Magdalene and intended it as a reference tool for preachers (Jansen 2000: 40). As a preacher, Mary was a direct model for women in religious Orders as she could preach, announce, and proclaim (Twomey 2015b: 435). Understood in this way, she acquired specific significance among nuns; a point illustrated by the fact that the Dominicans adopted her as patroness of their Order. As Susan Haskins (1995: 147) has demonstrated, this Order was instrumental in spreading the Magdalene cult throughout Europe.

Haskins points to mass publication as a method of transmitting the cult, in particular the Magdalene's *vita* became a medieval best-seller from the 1480s onwards when publishing houses were established across the peninsula, one example being Joan Roís de Corella's *Vida de Maria de Magdalena*. In addition, Mary Magdalene was purported to have travelled across Europe as far as Turkey in order to spread Christianity (Haskins 1995: 138). A number of wills from women show that Voragine's copy of Mary Magdalene's life was widely owned in Spain, and that in England and Ireland, at least, the Caxton Press produced mass copies (Coletti 2004: 22). In addition, a widely respected *Book of Miracles of Saint Mary Magdalene* (c. 1458) recorded a number of miracles attributed to her, including her conversion of the

ruler of Marseilles and his wife to Christianity, and their subsequent ability to have a child. Jansen maintains that this was used as a reference tool for both male and female Dominican preachers (Jansen 2000: 48).

Medieval dramatic performances in France, Italy, and England also used texts about Mary Magdalene's life as a companion of Christ (Coletti 2004: 2) and many sacred plays written within convents during the fourteenth century by female religious in France and Italy represented Mary Magdalene as a preacher (Jansen 2000: 57). Although there were prolific civic dramas in England by the fifteenth century, some religious dramas, especially those involving female saints and Mary Magdalene, were developed by female Orders of Dominicans and Franciscans. Such performances reflected the instruction given to girls at a time when convent schools were developing their curricula. These plays were vehicles of instruction of female spirituality and a way of conveying religious teaching. Learning lines and delivering lines were a central means of transmission. Speech had a theatrical lineage used in convents as a method of transmission. Emotions could be easily transmitted through orality from an impassioned text, producing emotional fluidity. Plays were also expressions of communal will, including the involvement of the fully professed, novices, that is, nuns in training who had not made their final vows, and other girl pupils. Performances were produced by novices (Coletti 2004: 8−9).

There were a number of other ways in which the cult was spread. Dominican preachers ran teaching missions from their foundation onwards. An emphasis was placed upon learning, and legends travelled as the Order spread. Dominican sermons often focused upon Mary Magdalene, and, between the thirteenth and the fifteenth centuries, her feast day was one of the most important in the calendar, and was marked in liturgical books as a *duplex* feast day (Haskins 1995: 134). Mary

Magdalene's feast was not simply for internal consumption, nor was her legend recounted just to those within the Order, but instead it was preached in churches and formed part of the broader communal celebrations, which involved eating and drinking, and a day when female sponsors were invited.

Haskins notes that, by the twelfth century, Spain was reputed to have Magdalene relics, including some of her hair at the Cathedral in Oviedo (Haskins 1995: 112). Pilgrimages to Spain to visit this shrine were undertaken by many Europeans throughout the Middle Ages, further developing the cult.

Tensions did emerge in Spain during the early modern period in relation to female writing and female produced religious drama. The Council of Trent (1545−63) intended to reform Catholicism in Europe, attempted to reduce women's active teaching missions and their involvement with audiences outside of convent communities (Perry, 1990: 79-80). The establishment of the Spanish Inquisition buttressed internal prohibitions of many cultural projects including writing, publications, performances and music in vernacular languages.[7] Convent drama had a range of interpretations as well as the literal Resurrection.

Women's roles within the Church impinged upon convent drama. Over time, this drew the Inquisition's attention and convent drama had suspicions of heresy attaching to it. (Lehfeldt, 2005: 199). In addition, the conflation of Mary Magdalene with Mary of Egypt meant that Inquisition authorities were suspicious of the figure of Mary Magdalene, and this drew disapproval by the onset of the sixteenth century.

Convents staged Mary Magdalene legends, her miracle at Marseilles, and her preaching, by now wedded to her biblical narrative, in ways that celebrated her importance in Christian history and relevance to female religious communities. The novices at the Dominican Convent of Corpus Christi, Valladolid in 1558, performed

an enactment of the miracle attributed to Mary Magdalene, when she saved a ship in which she was travelling with Mary, the mother of Christ, and Mary Salome, the mother of James the Apostle, in 1560 (Valladolid, Archivo General de Simancas, *Cámara de Castilla* MS 353).[8] The miracle parallels the Gospel account of Jesus's calming of the storm in Mark 4: 35−41, which similarly takes place on a ship with the disciples. This legend, thus, served to emphasise Mary Magdalene's affinity with Christ and demonstrated how she too had been divinely appointed for a miraculous earthly ministry.

Positioning Mary Magdalene in this way is suggestive of how biblical women could be used to bolster theological debates on women's spiritual authority, a point more clearly demonstrated by the medieval saint play commonly referred to as the Digby *Mary Magdalene* (Bodleian Library, Digby MS 133). Dating from late fifteenth-century East Anglia, this play presented Mary Magdalene as a 'visionary and apostle' in a way that, as Coletti explains, 'call[s] to mind spiritual identities of medieval holy women and resonate[s] with concerns about female authority in mystical experience and the evangelical sphere' (2004: 23). The Spanish Magdalene miracle could have had much the same purpose.

Female spiritual authority was established through the relatively independent role of abbesses and their convents throughout the Iberian Peninsula. Philip II was particularly keen to appoint Dominican Orders to control and eradicate heresy. Paradoxically, this afforded Irish Dominican sisters, and, to a lesser extent, the Clarians, the opportunity to establish their own convents at a time in Spain's history when orthodoxy was assumed by monarchs and their advisors, to be fashioned at city, town and village level by convents and monasteries.

Spiritual authority of women, in particular abbesses, throughout the medieval and early modern period was relied upon to fashion the spiritual lives of those in convents, and to those accessing convents for spiritual matters. In Spain a medieval abbess had similar powers to an abbot. Twomey has focused upon the example of abbess Isabel de Villena, whose use of language in her convent constructed self-fashioning which allowed female religious as leaders even within the male hierarchical norm (Twomey 2015a: 300). This spiritual authority was further buttressed when, under Philip II, the first Irish convents professed. Abbesses, even under Tridentine enclosure rules, aimed to maintain a level of learning comparable to male monasteries. The powers of an abbess were legitimate under law as well as custom.

In late medieval Spain, the abbess was elected by vote, and exercised authority as head of a corporation with legal privileges. She governed the cloister. Abbesses were in charge of souls, domestic discipline, and education. As Inquisition pressures were brought to bear upon whole Orders, the Dominican sisters and the sisters of St Clare found that they had to defend their educational and cultural production. Debates about the status of women in the church and female leadership ebbed and flowed.

Mary Magdalene's role as first witness and as preacher after the Resurrection was central to many convent productions. These two interpretations took Irish Dominicans and their pupils to the heart of contemporary anxieties about female leadership within the Catholic Church, which manifested in concerns about influential women such as Teresa of Avila (O'Reilly, Thompson and Twomey forthcoming). Mary Magdalene's role appeared to subvert the legitimate authority of those who held authority in the Catholic Church in Spain. They would brook no disturbance of their theological and also their political function (Lehfeldt, 2005: 178). Convents writing

and performing Mary Magdalene plays may have been thought to, at times, espouse heretical beliefs. Bishops and papal authorities were very uncomfortable with female religious who looked to Mary Magdalene as a leader, and as a female interpreter of the Resurrection, considering it did not fit with an approved view of the Resurrection.

Irish Dominican girls' schools used the Resurrection as an event experienced in both past and present. What mattered to Irish female religious was the spiritual vision of Mary Magdalene for the current generation, rather than as a character in an event sited in the past. Contemporary use of Mary Magdalene afforded a conduit of power for female communities, and directly supported their own spiritual agenda. Mary Magdalene could be, and was, understood as a figure that resonated with real-life female spiritual authority.

By the sixteenth century, the convent curriculum included creative writing competitions which also formed the content of the performances staged within convents during Easter week. The relationship between the two was performed orally. Mary Magdalene's position within convent communities thus directly involved both the novices and the other pupils.

It is because Mary Magdalene became imbued with debates about female authority, and female behaviour more generally, that plays and articulations about her attracted the attention of the Spanish Inquisition.[9] The Inquisition censors focused upon prohibition of performances of Mary Magdalene plays and, as a result, on April 5, 1566 they banned, amongst others, the Easter play in Gerona (Donovan 1958: 103−04), a directive replicated in several areas visited by the Inquisition. When the Inquisition reached Catalonia in the 1570s attempts were made to quash plays which were also celebrated with dancing (Kamen 1993: 188). The problem was, however, that the Inquisition forces did not have enough permanent censors travelling around

the Peninsula to put a stop to plays except in one area at a time. As a result, bans were often haphazard, or impermanent.

In the case of convents, the Inquisition was often unsuccessful in its endeavours as most of the buildings were private, and inaccessible. Convent performances were uniquely difficult to prevent since they were within a feminised space. Performances which took place entirely within convent walls could not be accessed by male authorities. This was also the case with libraries and writing rooms which were private rooms and could not be accessed by visitors, even the paid functionaries of the Inquisition. Convents did not allow any men apart from the convent confessor into the building, and even then it was only into the church and chapel buildings and not into the private rooms (Lehfeldt 2005: 180). Although Irish convents, both Dominican and Clarian, were never part of an enclosed tradition, they did maintain their 'private rooms', where performances were held, such as the sisters' parlour. An invited female audience would be entertained there, away from prying eyes.[10] Hence, close observation of literary and performance culture was, in practice, closed off to men. Celebrating Mary Magdalene continued despite Inquisition scrutiny and prohibition within Spain's migrant convent communities

Performances were to an invited audience, including wealthy and elite sponsors who were not in any way supportive of the Inquisition's efforts to alter the curriculum. By contrast, boy's schools and the staging of performances by males in schools, churches and cathedrals were overseen by the Inquisition, allowing a culture of direct and gendered censorship. As the influence of the Counter-Reformation grew, the Inquisition was tasked with not only banning performance but also with overseeing the destruction of banned texts, whole libraries, and even printing presses of those convicted of necromancy or 'heresy of the mind' (Madrid, Archivo Histórico

Nacional, *Inquisición Legajo* MS 4520). Investigations continued throughout the early modern period, albeit on a spasmodic basis.[11] This focus upon the eradication of heresy in books and manuscripts affected female religious communities in the sense that they were forced to hide forbidden books, manuscripts, and even art collections, or give them up for destruction.[12]

A Magdalene Education: Irish Convents and Female Learning in Spain

The first recorded Irish convent to profess in Spain was the Dominican convent of the Incarnation established in Bilbao in 1499 (O'Heyne 1706). After the Bilbao convent, the convent of Corpus Christi was founded in Valladolid in 1545, with further convents set up in Esterri d'Aneu, La Coruña, Santiago de Compostela, Zamora, Madrid, and Lisbon between 1560 and 1639.[13] Irish female religious Orders developed their own educational niche within Spain and Portugal, with a record number of Irish colleges, seminaries, convents and schools founded across the Iberian peninsula between 1499 and 1639 (see O'Connor and Lyons 2006; O'Connell 2007; Downey and McLennan 2008; Hernán 2009, and Morales 2010).

Their educational mission and shared aim was to retain control over the transmission of their own religious culture. To this end, they operated autonomously within the broader framework of the Catholic Church, with a clear gender divide within this experience, after the introduction of Tridentine reforms during the 1560s. The same gender divide that affected Magdalene plays affected the curriculum, and meant that boys' schools were more thoroughly inspected in relation to books and teaching materials. The independence of Irish female religious Orders in Spain was important, as it enabled the convent communities to devise and deliver their own

curricula from the first foundation in 1499 through to the later foundation in Lisbon in 1639. A sense of autonomy was further facilitated by the fact that Irish female Orders had no tradition of enclosure, leaving the women free to venture beyond the confines of the convent (Kenny 2007: 183).

Orality was a foundation of Irish convent curricula in relation to the study of texts addressing saints' lives, religious and political thought as well as Psalters, Catechisms, Masses, chants, and medical accounts (O'Heyne 1706: 159−60; O'Neill 1994: 12−13). Reading aloud would often take the form of the *maestra* or *lectora* reading the bible or another text, and then having the novices and pupils reply. Convent curricula also included a range of languages, such as Spanish, Latin, Greek and Hebrew, while Irish continued to be used, particularly for teaching the catechism (O'Heyne 1706: 135).[14]

Beyond these traditional academic disciplines, the education offered by Irish convents afforded specific opportunities to celebrate and develop literary and performance traditions, as a means of enhancing female learning more generally.[15] Irish orders encouraged women and girls to pursue creative writing, particularly play writing, and competitions were organised to reward those works with most merit.[16] From the earliest convent in Bilbao in 1499 through to the latest in Lisbon in 1639 works were made available to a small, well-chosen audience as a means of attracting benefactresses and sponsors who would contribute to the convents' education and mission programmes (O'Heyne 1706: 229). Elite female sponsors included Queen Luisa de Gusmão of Portugal (1613−1666), and Countess Iria de Brito, Countess of Atalaya (1566−1640), who both used their own finances to support creative cultural production within convent curricula which included writing music and song as well as dramatic productions (McCabe 2007: 65).

The religious play-writing that was part of convent curricula in the later sixteenth century coincided with the growth of commercial theatres in Spain's major cities (see Bass 2008). From the 1560s onwards, playhouses were established in Madrid, Seville, and Valencia with the work of Lope de Vega (1562−1635), Tirso de Molina (1584−1648), and Calderón de la Barca (1600−81) performed every day of the week.[17] The religious plays performed were diverse in subject matter as well as genre with comedies as well as liturgical dramas attracting large audiences.[18] Calderón de la Barca is credited with producing eighty *autos sacramentales* performed during Easter week (Bass 2008: 3).[19] These eucharistic dramas were extremely popular throughout the Iberian Peninsula, performed in convents, hospitals and courtyards, especially fitted with a stage and benches, as well as theatres (Sales 1828: 315; McKendrick, 1989 51−55; Weaver 2002: 77−79). Cathedrals and churches also regularly hosted dramatic productions derived from the New Testament, most commonly from the Nativity and Easter narratives (Vollendorf 2007: 95−98). The playwriting undertaken by women in religious Orders was, then, part of a growing, and lively, culture of religious theatre in Spain in the late sixteenth century. One known woman playwright whose work was performed on stage during the Golden Age was Ana Caro Mallén de Soto (c. 1600−c. 1650) whose corpus of work included three sacramental plays and two love comedias. These works were performed in Madrid and Seville (Merrim 1999: 83−85).

Central to convent education and recreation, the creative writing projects encouraged within convent education stimulated a particular vogue for dramas focusing upon Mary Magdalene in convents throughout the peninsula. Novices and pupils were encouraged to write plays about her. Throughout the sixteenth century, emphasis was placed upon production by convents, and these productions were staged

in religious centres as part of Easter celebrations.[20] Convents, particularly Dominican ones, chose to model some of their teaching methods on Jesuit methods of learning through performance. Griffin has noted that Jesuit dramatic performances in Spain involved audiences, and their full-scale public dramatic performance was central to pedagogy (Griffin 1973: 796−806). The competitive element and the reward of a prize supported the writing and performing of Mary Magdalene plays across the Iberian Peninsula. The Dominican sisters of Corpus Christi convent in Valladolid staged their own performance of the Resurrection play, the *Elevatio,* annually on Easter morning (*Elevatio sección, Libro del Cabildo,* [1598]. Archivo de la Catedral, Valladolid). The audience, including clergy, patrons, nuns, novices, and pupils processed through the church and up to the altar where the sepulchre was arranged to the side. The play recounted the events of Christ's Resurrection, the centre-piece of which was Mary Magdalene's role in spreading the news of the Resurrection. Mary Magdalene declares, 'Se elevó'. (*Elevatio, sección, Libro del Cabildo* (1598) Archivo de la Catedral, Valladolid). These words draw upon Mark and John's accounts of the Resurrection, affording Mary Magdalene a central role as first witness. The staging of Mary Magdalene on her own, recounting the Resurrection message delivered to her by Christ, as the only witness, is drawn from the account in John (20:15−18). The staging of this event referenced the role of women in spiritual leadership, something Irish female Dominicans held dear as part of their religious culture, and one which did not become strictly enclosed. The Mary Magdalene plays then reinforced, through a cultural event, the agency of Dominican sisters.

On Easter Monday in 1599 the Irish nuns of Corpus Christi convent, Valladolid staged the play *La Magdalena* to an invited audience of the convent community, families and sponsors (Madrid, Archivo Histórico Nacional,

Processionale Sacrum, xv, MS. 1180, folios not numbered). The play encompassed the Resurrection narrative of the Gospels and focussed upon Christ's appearance to Mary Magdalene, as detailed in Matthew 28:9 10, Mark 16:9−11, and John 20:17−18. The event was staged at the sepulchre and the female pupils of the convent performed the roles of Christ and two angels. A novice played the part of Mary Magdalene, who is directly addressed by the risen Christ and then commissioned to inform the disciples of the Resurrection.[21] After this exchange, the audience processed from the choir to the chapel altar where the tomb was constructed. At the altar, they sang a Latin antiphon proclaiming the Resurrection, after which everyone processed around the chapel. Each year, a different novice was selected to play the part of Mary Magdalene, and just as the play each year formed part of the creative writing tradition of competition, so did the title role. Voting for positions within the convent normally only involved those who were fully professed, however, in the case of writing competitions, the girls were able to vote for the winning play.

The role of the novices in the creation of convent oral and performative culture is noteworthy. When a novice professed, plays demonstrated her marriage to Christ, with a young female novice voicing and enacting the part of Christ (O'Heyne 1706: 159). Sometimes Christ was dressed as a beautiful shepherd, a reference to a lengthy pastoral tradition in drama and art.[22] Profession culture, therefore, had a very clear performance element, and this appears to have grown over the course of the sixteenth century with the time set aside in the curricula for performance, and the creating, purchasing, and storing of clothing and props needed for sustained productions. On occasion, Mary Magdalene was a shepherdess, fusing folk traditions and idealised pastoral forms. When Mary Magdalene announced Christ's Resurrection to the disciples, this was accompanied by musical praise in a laude, and also by

dancing.[23] The sisters at the convent of Nuestra Señora de Atocha, in Madrid retained a tradition of liturgical dancing to accompany their *La Magdalena* play, performed from the date of their foundation in 1592, through the seventeenth century, despite rigorous opposition by Church authorities (Madrid, Archivo Histórico Nacional, *Processionale Sacrum*, MS 1180).

Other convent productions placed similar emphasis on Mary Magdalene's particular role in the appearance narratives. The dramatic procession on Easter morning at the convent of Nuestra Señora de Atocha ended with Mary at the tomb on her own with the risen Christ and ready to take the message to the disciples (Madrid, Archivo Histórico Nacional, *Processionale Sacrum*, MS 1188). In this representation, the production specifically leans on the Gospel of John which affords Mary Magdalene a more sustained and significant role, as it is she alone who remains after the disciples have all gone, meets the risen Christ, and is personally tasked with disseminating news of his Resurrection (20:10−18).

The message in this play contrasts Mary Magdalene's apostolate with that of the male apostles who have left, and are therefore not constant as she is. It is her love, and not theirs, which is infused with fear for themselves, which is brought to the foreground. In John 20:11, Mary Magdalene stoops down and looks inside the sepulchre, overcoming her fear, and searching for Christ. Many productions including that of the version performed at Nuestra Señora de Atocha include this action, again reiterating Mary's bravery set against that absence of all of the male disciples (Madrid, Archivo Histórico Nacional, *Processionale Sacrum*, MS 1188).

It must be remembered that these plays, produced in creative writing competitions each year, were written by young girls, then delivered by young voices, foregrounding young females in convent communities, and directly allowing them to

bear their own verbal testimonies. The Council of Trent established that girls could not fully profess before the age of sixteen, so the writers must have been under that age. They were actively involved in telling and re-telling a story which had a great deal of meaning for those setting the task. Writing in their capacity as novices and schoolgirls meant that they could exercise their influence both within their convents, and also to an invited audience, which often included influential and elite women in their communities. Although young, they were exercising their own vocal interpretations not just about the place of Mary Magdalene as an Apostle, but also as a spiritual vision for their own generation.

The robing and costuming of Mary Magdalene was vital in order to emphasise her visual importance. Mary Magdalene's significance within convent performances of the Gospel narratives was visually reiterated through costuming, particularly in the way she was regularly featured wearing a crown, a visual signifier of how her importance surpasses the disciples and the other women of the Resurrection narrative.

Performances where the crown was used included a number held in the convent of the Incarnation, at Bilbao. In 1685 Julian Nolan was elected Prioress, and Maria Lynch elected sub-Prioress (O'Heyne 1706: 159). It was Maria who was placed in charge of the fourteen girls who were received into the convent that year. Their performance notes include the creation of a crown for the young novice to wear, and also they record that in performances they were clothed in secular dress (O'Heyne 1706: 163). The crown was usually reserved for saints, martyrs, virgins, and preachers in this period. The girls' wearing of the crown, therefore, is a clear indication of the status they accorded her, even though she was not considered a virgin, and their understanding of her importance as a preacher and Apostle.

Convents also engaged in material production to develop appropriate robes which could be used to emphasise oral points. A sub-Prioress or novice mistress such as Maria Lynch would record fabric and other props acquired, and the sister bursar would record the cost of these items (O'Heyne 1706: 163). Clothing of red, white and green was dyed for her, as well as for the robes of Mary, the mother of Christ and Mary the mother of James. Coletti noted that the colours used in costuming added to the dramatic spectacle for the audience (Coletti 2004: 137).

The novices at the convent of the Incarnation in Bilbao used fabric they had taken into the convent with them as part of their dowries, and they also asked for rich fabrics from their wealthy female sponsors (O'Heyne 1706: 229). In this way, they were able to show Mary Magdalene as person of considerable status.

Sponsorship was also evidenced in funding from elite women who paid for cultural productions. Throughout the period of Irish female religious settlement in the Iberian peninsula, female sponsors were committed and generous donors, and included Penelope O'Connor, an early donor to the Bilbao convent, through to Iria de Brito and Queen Luisa de Gusmão, donors to the Lisbon convent (O'Heyne 1706: 229; McCabe 2007: 43−46).

At the convent of Corpus Christi in Valladolid hairpieces were fashioned into elaborate wigs for the three Marys, while the convent of St. Clare gave the three Marys silver ointment jars, which they held when they searched the sepulchre before Mary Magdalene found Christ.[24] The use of ointment jars was a direct reference to the account in Mark's Gospel (16: 1), where the women brought special anointing spices to the sepulchre to use on Christ's body for preservation purposes. The symbol also became increasingly used in pictorial representations of Mary Magdalene, as well as representing her role as patron of, amongst others, pharmacists and perfumiers.[25]

These symbols dovetailed with the declamatory delivery of the words from the Gospel accounts of Mary Magdalene, and the scene from John 20:13 where Mary weeps whilst she does not immediately recognise Christ.

Collaboration between convents also contributed to the development of narrative, staging and variety of props used during the Easter performances. Records show that the Dominican sisters from the convents in Valladolid and Zamora, who were invited by the convent of the Incarnation at Bilbao to be part of their Easter celebrations and dramatic production, brought with them fabric, props, and food for the dramatic enactment of a penitent Mary Magdalene in the desert, a narrative informed by her conflation with Mary of Egypt, a point made by Scarborough (2013: 299-319) in relation to the prolific circulation of the story of Mary of Egypt. This is a revealing point, as it shows that despite huge geographical distances, oral and written communications between sisters in different convents were robust, and that they supported one another. Collaboration throughout the sixteenth century buttressed the Dominican Order, and their continued commitment to an Irish female tradition.

The collaboration of these women supported the enactment of Mary Magdalene in the desert. Traditionally, this episode of the Magdalene's story represented her wearing a mantle of wheat, covering her breasts, but exposing her shoulders, neck and the top of her back, with her loose hair falling down her back, as depicted in the chapel and convent paintings and sculptures of Juan de Juni and Pedro de Meña found in the Museo Nacional de Escultura in Valladolid.[26] When Mary Magdalene plays, or *ejemplos*, were staged in convents, churches and cathedrals, and the altars, canopies, and sculptures in these surroundings were woven into the dramatic action (Sales 1828: 330; McKendrick 1989; Hearon 2004). The purpose of such performances was both devotional and pedagogical and extended beyond the

dramatic retelling of the Easter narratives. The performance of the post-Resurrection stories, in particular the three Gospel accounts of the Mary Magdalene stories, was deployed to resolve tensions around the relationship of women to the newly risen Christ.

Convent oral retellings of Mary Magdalene's penitent reclusion to the desert did not feature nudity but recalled artistic representations in their use of the shorn hair from fully professed nuns, made into long wigs for the use of the novices and pupils who acted the role of Mary Magdalene in the desert.[27] The shorn hair was used for the specific purpose of covering the body as it would have grown in the desert, however, it also referenced one of the physical sacrifices fully professed nuns made, when they took their solemn vows. Whoever played the role also dressed in a wheat mantle (Maquettes, Convent of St. Joseph and St. Anne, Valladolid).

While the wheaten mantle was by this time a common motif for Christ's sacrifice, signalling the bread broken at the Last Supper and thus the body of Christ, in Irish convents it acquired further symbolic resonance.[28] In Castile Irish convents were more involved in the wheat trade than other Orders. The successive purchase of lands around Valladolid, Simancas, and Geria allowed the Irish community to grow substantial wheat crops.[29] The funds from wheat production therefore, had a real, financial significance as well as a symbolic one.

The use of the wheaten mantle in performances, then, can be said to symbolically fuse the ministry of Mary Magdalene with the lives and activities of the Irish religious communities, a point further illustrated by inclusion of legendary material in the Corpus Christi *Elevatio.* This performance of the appearance narrative included a tableau of a floating ship crossing the sea containing the female passengers, an image that engages with Mary Magdalene's legendary role in saving a

ship carrying the other women of the appearance narrative (Valladolid, Archivo General de Simancas, *Cámara de Castilla,* MS 353). Yet, it is an image that, when performed by Irish female religious, also becomes reminiscent of their journey from Waterford, and other Irish ports, to Galician ports and beyond. Demonstrating how the divine protection of these biblical women could become conflated with the safe passage of the Irish religious, the addition signifies how Mary Magdalene's own story resonated with women through the ages as well as convent women.

Conclusion

Mary Magdalene was a central figure in Irish Dominican convent dramatic culture in spite of significant opposition from Church authorities. Performances recur in Irish convents after 1639, and continued to be performed in front of an invited audience. The convent of the Incarnation in Bilbao recorded plays and creative writing continuing under the tutelage of Maria Lynch in 1686 (O'Heyne 1706: 159). The themes of the plays continued to reflect a feminised discourse of the role of Mary Magdalene and the role, reflected in this, of the Irish female missions in Spain. The transmission of ideas about the writing and production of plays continued with the networks of nuns and female sponsors who travelled and witnessed a number of productions throughout the Iberian Peninsula. Both the Dominican convents in Madrid and Valladolid record the hosting of visitors during the period of Easter, witnessing new plays and staying to enjoy the hospitality of the convent (Valladolid, Archivo General de Simancas, *Cámara de Castilla,* MS 353).

For Irish convent women, any external orthodox views about the ambiguity of Mary Magdalene as a figure of celebration were, effectively, ignored. One of the most successful and well-loved figures, Mary Magdalene, remained as a recurrent theme in

creative writing, and convent production throughout the seventeenth century and beyond. Artistic commissions continued throughout the seventeenth century.[30]

Late medieval and early modern female migrants may have been expected to maintain orthodoxy, and not attract any attention by continued use of a female figure disputed and disapproved by some in the Church hierarchy. In the light of increasing enclosure rules, Tridentine reforms, and the broader censorship of the Inquisition, it is striking that this level of subversion continued. This may have been because Irish sisters, never enclosed, were used to selecting their own inspirational figures, not necessarily taking a lead from their host nation.

Using Mary Magdalene in educational projects also maintained her presence as a figure for the younger generation. Despite the development of a theology of purity during the Counter-Reformation that spawned an outpouring of proscriptive literature, as well as countless laws, regulations, and disciplinary institutions, the attempts to require a separation of the sacred from the profane never quite succeeded in all-female communities. Irish female incomers showed quiet subversion in their continued use of Mary Magdalene as a teaching tool. For Irish female religious, Mary Magdalene was never a static iconic figure, but had an enduring appeal as a creative subject.

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[1] For recent critical scholarly work which interprets the role of Mary Magdalene and her cultural legacy see Pagels (1980); Cantavella (1990); Haskins (1995); Jansen (2000); Coletti (2004); Hearon (2004); de Boer (2005); Pearson (2005); Twomey (2013, 2015a, 2015b).

[2] Donovan’s study dates from 1958 but is still one of the most comprehensive studies of Liturgical Drama in medieval Spain, more recent work by Cantavella notes the revival of Mary Magdalene as a subject, and Vollendorf has traced the progression of nuns as writers and performers of their own work from the Middle Ages and into the early modern period.

[3] For a discussion of early manuscripts and the transmission of these across the borders of France and Spain see Donovan (1958: 54−58). See also a later address of this in Stern (1996: 25-52).

[4] Mary Magdalene’s popularity in this period was also marked by a feast day on 22 July and, in Spain, this date became a red-letter day, one of the very few female saints to attain this status.

[5] This text was later published in English in 1483 which ensured its popularity spread beyond the Iberian peninsula and into England during the later middle ages. Coletti emphasises that wills from this period detail a great many people owned a copy of Voragine's text (Coletti 2004: 22).

[6] Sophronius covers the evolution of Mary Magdalene to Mary of Egypt, and this is discussed in Haskins (1995: 111), who notes the development of the Egyptian Mary as a hermit in the desert. See also Jansen (1995: 5−12), for a discussion of the development of the hermit legend in both literature and pictorial sources throughout the middle ages.

[7] For a discussion of the Inquisition and the Index of banned materials see Elliott (1970: 225−30).

[8] Miracles were attributed to Mary Magdalene in many medieval legends, for more on this see Haskins (1995: 225−27).

[9] The *querelle des femmes* controversy ebbed and flowed in Spain as well as other European countries, with clergy and humanists alike debating the nature of women. Although Spain, in particular, had a strong tradition of advocating education for girls, certain subjects such as Greek and astronomy remained or became contentious.

[10] Even the priest confessor to a convent could not enter the nuns' chapel without special license, and Inquisition functionaries including Dominican brothers were only ever allowed into the cloister, or cloister garth and no further. In effect, they would have to wait outside until they were met by the abbess.

[11] Elliott (1970: 224-28) highlights the systematic inspection of both public and private libraries across the Iberian Peninsula.

[12] Female religious were made an example of if they were found to possess or have produced material which was banned. The *beata* Catalina de Jesus was forced by her confessor to burn her manuscripts (Vollendorf 2007: 119−21). It should be said that scholarship has shown how female convent communities in particular retained many banned texts and even put them into production (see Vollendorf 2007; Merrim 1999). Indeed, there is evidence that female religious continued to publish and circulate manuscripts beyond convent walls. See Vollendorf (2007: 93−117) for a full discussion on cultural production beyond the cloister.

[13] The names of these convents and their specific dates are as follows: the Convent of Corpus Christi was established in 1545 in Valladolid; the Convent of St. Clare in Esterri d'Aneu in 1560; Our Lady of Anguish in La Coruńa in 1589; St. Clare in Santiago de Compostela in 1590; the Virgin Mary of Las Dueñas in Zamora in 1590; Our Blessed Lady of Atocha in Madrid in 1592; and Our Lady of Good Success in Lisbon in 1639. All of the convents were Dominican apart from those in Santiago de Compostela and Esterri d'Aneu which belonged to the Order of St Clare.

[14] Female religious orders were renowned for their linguistic skills. Abbess Mary O'Halloran, who professed at the convent of the Virgin Mary of Las Dueñas in Zamora, was a celebrated linguist, fluent in Irish, Latin and Spanish, as well as an historian (O'Heyne 1706: 167−68; Stevenson 2005: 400).

[15] The contribution of the Irish orders to female education in early modern Spain was supported by the endowment of private libraries to many convent communities (MacCurtain 1991: 161) and there is evidence that senior religious figures esteemed the learning of the Irish female religious Orders in particular (Elliott, 1970: 90). As a result, the convents secured support for their educational endeavours from the senior advisers to the King. Cardinal Cisneros, one of the most influential figures in Spain in the late medieval period was an ardent patron of the unenclosed model of vocation and education of young women in Spain (Madrid, Archivo Histórico Nacional, *Libro,* MS 1224). It should also be said that there is a long history of involvement of Irish orders in education. Active educational missions were established by Irish female religious throughout the middle ages (Hall 2008: 174−75), a context which facilitated Irish female orders to grow their own schools within Spain.

[16] The prizes awarded for these competitions varied and ranged from sandals and books to a length of velvet, a ruby, a marzipan cake, and a sailing map. See Twomey (2008: 6).

[17] Sunday was the most popular day for play attendance. As in early modern English theatres plays typically had short runs, with as many as four different plays performed per week, a turnover rate that stimulated demand for new plays. Lope de Vega is credited with the production of as many as eight hundred plays (see Bass 2008: 1−4; Vollendorf, 2005: 74−89).

[18] For a discussion of the development of theatre for a mass audience in sixteenth-century Spain see Vollendorf (2005: 74−75).

[19] These sacred dramas, performed throughout the medieval and early modern period moved from churches into communities by the sixteenth century (Sales 1828: 327; Vollendorf, 2007: 96-7). This form of drama was also performed in England and France (Sales 1828: 310).

[20] This development was part of a broader, Europe-wide interest in Easter plays involving the three Maries flourishing in England, France, Germany and Spain by the eleventh century. See Donovan (1958: 13).

[21] For a discussion on early modern convent structure and ordination process see Lehfeldt 2005: 174−77.

[22] See Vollendorf (2007: 106−17) for a discussion of the pastoral writing in Spain.

[23] Jansen notes that convent dancing was preached against by Jacques de Vitry who compared women's songs and dancing to a demonic liturgy. See Jansen (2000: 159).

[24] The staging of the sepulchre was often quite vivid with the use of real stone, which was rolled away from the entrance. In some convents thunder and lightening was used to further reinforce the dramatic tension. This was achieved through the use of instruments such as trumpets or an organ (Cortés 1917: 600).

[25] Throughout the late medieval and early modern period, Mary Magdalene became the patron saint of musical performances, apothecaries, contemplatives, convents, glove-makers, hairdressers, penitent sinners, perfumers, pharmacists, reformed prostitutes, those suffering from sexual temptation, leather tanners and women. Altogether this is a disparate group of sinners, many are associated with luxury goods and performances.

[26] A number of these traditional depictions of Mary Magdalene are found in Haskins (1995: 267; Coletti 2004: 215).

[27] At profession, when nuns took their final solemn vows, their hair would be shorn. This refutes the sin of pride. The hair, however, would be used to make wigs and hairpieces for dramas. Some of this hair can be seen today on the maquettes and sculptures curated by the Convent of St Joseph and St Anne, Valladolid.

[28] Audits from the convent of Corpus Christi in Valladolid, for example, show that wheat was grown on nearby land owned by the convent and leased out (Valladolid, Archivo General de Simancas, General de Tesoro, MS 24, *Inventario*).

[29] The wheat was a hardy variety, similar to durum wheat which thrives in very hot, even arid climates. It was a staple, and brought considerable funding to the convent.

[30] The sculpture, Mary Magdalene, created by Pedro de Mena, was commissioned in 1664, and was also used in churches during Easter. It is now curated in the Museo Nacional Colegio de San Gregorio, Valladolid. Many seventeenth-century sculptures were used in Easter week celebrations until relatively recently, although their value and fragility has meant that many are now curated in churches and museums. However, during the Semana Santa Easter week celebrations some are temporarily used on huge floats which are drawn around the streets. Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of Christ and the other women from the Resurrection narratives are still central figures during these Easter events in Spain and Portugal.