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Religious Women and Liturgy in a Fifteenth-Century Portuguese Codex: Gendering the Reception and Profession Ceremonies in the Dominican Convents

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Abstract: The problem of whether Dominican nuns adopted the order's official liturgy, implemented in 1256, remains a complex topic. The rarity of liturgical sources containing instructions for the performance of religious ceremonies in female communities hinders the study of this subject. This is complicated by the fact that a substantial number of these texts were redacted in the masculine form, thus not reflecting the reality of the nuns' performance. Analysis of a codex from the Dominican convent of Jesus of Aveiro (1491), containing gendered vernacular versions of the *ordines* for the nuns' reception and profession ceremonies, can contribute to further clarification of this issue. Through comparison with surviving *ordines* from other territories (Spain and Italy), this study shows how, in the particular case of these ceremonies, female communities adapted and deviated from the friars' liturgy in order to mirror and respond to their own identities and realities, which, as will be shown, varied from convent to convent and revealed different degrees of autonomy and enclosure.

Keywords: religious women; Dominican nuns; monastic profession; gender; liturgy

1 Dominican Women and the Friars' Uniform Liturgy

In the mid-thirteenth century, Humbert of Romans, Master of the Dominican Order from 1254 to 1263, worked towards standardisation of the order's liturgical practice.¹

¹ For more on this see: Eleanor Giraud, "Totum officium bene correctum habeatur in domo: Uniformity in the Dominican Liturgy," in *Making and Breaking the Rules: Discussions, Implementation and Consequences of Dominican Legislation*, ed. Cornelia Linde (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 153–72, esp. 153–54.

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A definitive version of the Dominican liturgy was issued in 1256 and prototypes encompassing fourteen official liturgical books were made to disseminate Humbert's liturgical revision in the order's convents.² It is still not clear if, or to what extent, these obligations were extended to Dominican women.³ As Smith has explored in an article themed around this question, the statutes of San Sisto, arguably composed by Saint Dominic himself around 1220 to regulate religious life in female communities affiliated with the Dominican friars, prescribed a diligent religious practice without binding the nuns to a specific rite.⁴ In turn, the Constitutions of Montargis, composed for the homonymous French nunnery by Humbert of Romans in 1250, clearly state the nuns' obligation to comply with the friars' liturgy.⁵ However, this information is absent from the General Constitutions for Dominican nuns, composed by Humbert of Romans in 1259 after the standardisation of the order's liturgy in 1256 and destined to be observed in all the Dominican nunneries. As Smith has pointed out, the reason behind this absence is still not clear, but might be connected to the institutionalisation of a uniform liturgy in the order, which would make that obligation implicitly expected.⁶

Evidence shows that some Dominican nunneries were bound to Humbert's rite. In the Province of Teutonia, surviving ordinances clarifying the institution of the nuns' General Constitutions declare that the sisters should have notes and choral books according to the order.⁷ The same happened in France, in the convents of Saint Louis de Poissy and Thieuloye, where production of liturgical books was under the care of the friars of Saint Jacques, responsible for dissemination of the revised rite in

2 For studies of the prototype see: Leonard E. Boyle, Pierre-Marie Gy, and Pawels Krupa, *Aux origines de la liturgie dominicaine: Le manuscrit Santa Sabina XIV L I* (Aubervilliers: Institut de Recherche et d'Histoire des Textes, 2004). From a general point of view, the standardisation of Dominican liturgy appears to have been effective. Even so, *admonitiones* issued at the order's general and provincial chapters in subsequent years reinforce the need to comply with the prototype (Giraud, "Totum officium," 156 and 172). This lack of compliance can be traced to the late fifteenth century: Claire Taylor Jones, *Ruling the Spirit: Women, Liturgy, and Dominican Reform in Late Medieval Germany* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017), 86–92.

3 See, for instance: Clare Taylor Jones, "Negotiating Liturgical Obligations in Late Medieval Dominican Convents," *Church History* 91 (2022), 20–40; Jones, *Ruling the Spirit*; Innocent Smith, "'Lest the Sisters Lose Devotion': Dominican Liturgy and the *Cura Monialium* Question in the Thirteenth Century," in *The Medieval Dominicans: Books, Buildings, Music, and Liturgy*, ed. Eleanor J. Giraud and Christian Thomas Leitmeir, *Medieval Monastic Studies* 7 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2021), 321–33. Jones' recent book provides new insights into these questions: Clare Taylor Jones, *Fixing the Liturgy: Friars, Sisters, and the Dominican Rite, 1256-1516* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2024).

4 Smith, "'Lest the Sisters'," 323–26.

5 Smith, "'Lest the Sisters'," 326–28.

6 Smith, "'Lest the Sisters'," 329.

7 Jones, *Ruling the Spirit*, 20.

France.⁸ A Ritual written in 1491 in the Dominican convent of Jesus in Aveiro (north of Portugal),⁹ shows that this particular community also embraced the friars' liturgy, as it comprises *ordines* that either fully reproduce the Dominican prototype or adapt it to a female convent. This last case corresponds to the *ordines* for the reception and profession of nuns, whose rubrics are written in Portuguese and feminised and are thus of particular interest for this study. Representing a rare testimony revealing the nuns' practice, these *ordines* enable an analysis of the processes behind the adaptation of the friars' ceremonies to the female branch of the order. Beginning with these two cases, this study focuses on the development of the reception and profession ceremonies in the Dominican nunneries through comparison with similar texts from other convents. This is important not only to complement the brief and general guidelines recorded in the nuns' Constitutions but also to reveal the different ways in which these ceremonies evolved inside the female branch of the order, which was based on distinct traditions and levels of autonomy.

2 Liturgical Books for Nuns: The Ritual of the Convent of Jesus in Aveiro

With a foundation bull from 1461, the Convent of Jesus in Aveiro originated from a lay religious community of women that was founded *circa* 1458 and taken under the protection of the neighbouring Dominican friars of Nossa Senhora da Misericórdia. Preparations to start life as Dominican women were closely overseen by the friars and included the future nuns' training in book production, which started in 1463, one year before the community's official claustration.¹⁰ This training continued at least during the first year of enclosure, as noted in the convent's early-sixteenth-century chronicle.¹¹ The surviving liturgical books show that the nuns produced their own

8 Joan Naughton, "Manuscripts from the Dominican Monastery of Saint-Louis de Poissy," PhD diss., University of Melbourne, 1995, 40 and 42. See also: Joan Naughton, "Books for a Dominican Nuns' Choir: Illustrated Liturgical Manuscripts at Saint-Louis de Poissy, c.1330–1350," in *The Art of the Book: Its Place in Medieval Worship*, ed. Margaret Manion and Bernard Muir (Exeter: Liverpool University Press, 1998).

9 Aveiro, Museu de Aveiro/Santa Joana (MA), PT/MA/COD 15. This manuscript has not been catalogued.

10 Domingos Maurício dos Santos, ed., "Crónica da fundação do mosteiro de Jesus de Aveiro, e memorial da Infanta Santa Joana filha del Rei Dom Afonso V (1525)," in *Mosteiro de Jesus de Aveiro*, 2, part 2 (Lisbon: Publicações Culturais, 1963), 173–304, esp. 194.

11 Santos, ed., "Crónica da fundação," 199.

volumes at least until the first quarter of the sixteenth century.¹² Dominican liturgical books should be made according to Humbert of Roman's prototype to conform with the order's official liturgy. The rules redacted in the opening of the prototype's Antiphonary prescribed that newly written books followed a revised volume and that no deliberate alterations be made to the official text or music.¹³ Some Antiphonaries copied in Dominican convents in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries open with these rules, including two exemplars from the nunnery of Saint Louis de Poissy, which shows that these requirements were also applied to female communities.¹⁴ In order to keep up with changes in the order's liturgy, these books should be continuously updated by the convent's *cantrix*, as shown by the instructions redacted in Johannes Meyer's *Das Amptbuch* (1454), an adaptation of Humbert of Romans' *Liber de instructione officialium Ordinis Fratrum Praedicatorum* (1257–1267) to the female branch of the order.¹⁵

This meant that, in order to produce their own liturgical books, the nuns from Aveiro needed to borrow revised volumes from another convent, for which the friars' support would have been paramount. The fact that a fifteenth-century Processional from the convent of Misericórdia survives among the liturgical books used by the nuns might indicate that the friars provided the sisters with volumes from which they could copy theirs.¹⁶ Furthermore, most rubrics in Aveiro's liturgical books use the masculine form, which indicates that the nuns copied their books from volumes used in a male Dominican community.¹⁷ This is the case for the majority of the ceremonies included in the convent's Ritual. Surviving books from other Dominican provinces often show that both friars and nuns used the same *ordines*. A Collectar from the Dominican convent of Unterlinden in Colmar shows the use of masculine forms in the main text with

12 On nuns' book production in the Convent of Jesus in Aveiro see: Paula Cardoso, "Art, Reform and Female Agency in the Portuguese Dominican Nunneries: Nuns as Producers and Patrons of Illuminated Manuscripts (c. 1460–1560)," PhD diss., Universidade Nova de Lisboa, 2019. The surviving books are kept in the Museo de Aveiro/Santa Joana, in the city of Aveiro and in the Biblioteca Pública in Évora.

13 Giraud, "Totum officium," 157.

14 Naughton, "Manuscripts from the Dominican Monastery of Saint-Louis de Poissy," 58.

15 Johannes Meyer, *Das Amptbuch*, ed. Sarah Glenn DeMaris (Rome: Angelicum University Press, 2015), 400. This text circulated mostly in German Dominican convents. However, a similar adaptation of Humbert's text existed in Portugal in the early sixteen century, as attested by the inclusion of a Portuguese, feminised, version of the *Liber de instructione officialium* in a codex commissioned by the nuns of the Convent of Paraíso in Évora (south of Portugal) in 1537 (Lisbon, Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal [BNP], Il. 152, fols. 41r^o–95v^o: *Livro dos Ofícios da Ordem*).

16 Aveiro, MA, PT/MA/ANTIF 38.

17 Processionals copied and signed by sister Isabel Luís around 1489 show the use of masculine forms in their rubrics (for instance: Aveiro, MA, PT/MA/ANTIF 8; Aveiro, MA, PT/MA/ANTIF 9).

superscripts of the feminine equivalents.¹⁸ Other surviving volumes show direct adaptation of the ceremonies' instructions and collects, as described in the prototype, to the feminine form, as can be seen in fifteenth-century *ordines* from the Dominican nunneries of Maria Medingen in Mödingen and St Katharina in Nuremberg.¹⁹

Finished in 1491 by Isabel Luís, a nun responsible for writing various liturgical books in the convent, Aveiro's Ritual is a portable book containing instructions for the celebration of several rites that shaped the community's daily life.²⁰ Setting out instructions for the celebration of rituals connected to the start of a nun's religious life, care of the sick and burial rites, this book was intended to be used by the celebrant while conducting the ceremonies. Although the Ritual is not encompassed in the fourteen liturgical books that formed the Dominican prototype, most of its contents appear in this model. With the exception of the profession, which is only summarised in the Constitutions, the remaining ceremonies are distributed across the prototype's Ordinary, the Processional and the Collectar.

This kind of volumes were arguably developed in order to facilitate the celebrant's performance by gathering, in one portable and easy-to-read volume, several ceremonies and elements dispersed across different books.²¹ This was especially relevant when conducting ceremonies that required the celebrant's mobility, such as care of the sick and burial rites, which make up the majority of the volume analysed here. In the Dominican prototype, most of these *ordines* appear in the Collectar, a type of book which originally contained the readings and collects pertaining to the celebrant in the Divine Office.²² In some cases, Collectars append to this the *ordines* for care of the sick and funerals, as in the Dominican Collectar.²³ That a few fifteenth-century volumes devoted mainly to care of the sick and the last rites survive in Dominican nunneries suggests that smaller, more specific, books started to be developed to guide the performance of these rites.²⁴

18 Karlsruhe, Badische Landesbibliothek (BL), Cod. St. Peter perg. 84.

19 Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. E. D. Clarke 29; Karlsruhe, BL, Cod. St. Peter perg. 39. These codices were studied in Miriam Wendling, "Music, Ritual and Death in a Windesheim Community in the Early Modern Low Countries," *Journal of Early Modern Christianity* 9 (2022), 17–43.

20 On the medieval Ritual see: Eric Palazzo, *A History of Liturgical Books from the Beginning to the Thirteenth Century* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1998), 187–94.

21 Palazzo, *A History of Liturgical Books*, 189–90.

22 Palazzo, *A History of Liturgical Books*, 145.

23 Palazzo, *A History of Liturgical Books*, 146.

24 See for instance the exemplars from the convent of St Katharina in Nuremberg (Karlsruhe, BL, Cod. St. Peter perg. 39; BL, Cod. St. Peter perg. 65; BL, Cod. St. Peter perg. 64) or from the convent of Maria Medingen (Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS. E. D. Clarke 29). This kind of book is not exclusive to Dominican convents as attested by surviving contemporary exemplars used in other religious orders such as the Cistercians. See, for instance: Karlsruhe, BL, Cod. St. Peter perg. 30; Lisbon, Arquivo

Aveiro's Ritual opens with the ceremonies that marked the beginning of a nun's religious life: the reception of novices and the profession. Contrary to the rest of the book, which is fully redacted in Latin and composed by *ordines* that follow the prototype thoroughly, often ignoring the gender adaptations of the rubrics, in these two rites the rubrics were written in Portuguese and adapted to a female community. However, both parts appear to be contemporary as they are written in homogeneous handwriting.²⁵ This is also suggested by the fact that a fifteenth-century Processional made in the convent also contains these two *ordines* with vernacular rubrics.²⁶

As no other exemplars of these *ordines* came down from the Portuguese Dominican nunneries, it is not possible to assess whether these translations were made for the nuns of Aveiro or whether these texts were copied from an existing vernacular version. It is possible to document the commission of translations by Aveiro's nuns as early as in the beginning of the sixteenth century, demonstrated by a codex from 1510, the colophon of which registers that prioress Maria de Ataíde and the nun Margarida Pinheira commissioned the translation of Saint Augustine's *Sermones ad fratres in eremo*.²⁷ Margarida Pinheira was also responsible for copying, in the same period, the oldest surviving Portuguese version of the nuns' General Constitutions (1259).²⁸

3 The Dominican Reception Ceremonies

The reception of novices into the Dominican order was a solemnised ceremony that took place in the convent's chapter-house and the church. This act was described in both the friars' Constitutions and the order's official Ordinary.²⁹ The ceremony started with the scrutiny. After the novice was brought to the chapter-house, he prostrated himself in front of the prior, who would ask him about his intentions and explain to him the hardships of religious life. Then, vestition would follow. The novice would be undressed of his secular clothes and take the religious habit, an act

Nacional Torre do Tombo (ANTT), Ordem de Cister, Mosteiro de Lorvão, códice 6. This last Ritual was addressed in: Catarina Fernandes Barreira, "Spaces of Seclusion and Liturgy: The Cistercian Nunnery of Lorvão – A View from Two Sixteenth-century Liturgical Codices," in *Architectures of the Soul: Diachronic and Multidisciplinary Readings*, ed. Rolando Volzone and João Luís Fontes (Lisbon: Instituto de Estudos Medievais, 2022), 48–69.

²⁵ Aveiro, MA, PT/MA/COD 15, fol. 94v^o.

²⁶ Aveiro, MA, PT/MA/ANTIF 2, fols. 42–47v^o.

²⁷ Lisbon, BNP, Il. 219.

²⁸ Aveiro, MA, PT/MA/COD 18.

²⁹ Raymond Creytens, "Les Constitutions des frères Prêcheurs dans la rédaction de S. Raymond de Peñafort," *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum* 18 (1948), 5–68, esp. 38–39; Rome, Archivum Generale Ordinis Praedicatorum (AGOP), ms. XIV L1, fol. 16.

accompanied by the hymn *Veni Creator Spiritus*.³⁰ The Ordinary extended the ceremony with a second part developed in the church: while the convent was still singing the hymn, when the novice was dressed, the friars formed a procession to go to the church, where the rest of the ceremony took place.³¹ Here, the novice would prostrate himself at the altar while the prior initiated a sequence of verses, responsories and prayers, read from the Collectar, before the novice was sprinkled with holy water and welcomed to the community with a kiss of peace.

After a successful probation period, the novices professed their vows. Unlike in the reception, Dominican profession was not solemnised.³² While in monastic orders this ceremony was rooted in the Benedictine practice of professing in the church's main altar, where the novice presented his written vows during mass (*professio super altare*), the Dominican profession was a quick ceremony in the convent's chapter-house. The Dominicans' itinerant nature prevented their connection to a specific abbey or church, meaning that they diverged from the monastic tradition of promising *stabilitas* and focused instead on the vow of perpetual obedience, professing their vows in the convent's chapter-house instead of the church.³³ As a result of its simplicity, the Dominican profession is not described in the order's Ordinary (1256). Likewise, the friars' Constitutions record only the formula of profession and the texts for the blessing of the habit by the Master General.³⁴ The first full description of the ceremony can only be found in the *Directorium*, written *circa* 1300, as part of the Codex Ruthensis, possibly compiled for the friars of the Province of France.³⁵ While the *professio super altare* was made to God and not directly to the abbot, Dominican profession was directed to the Master General or his representative, to whom the novice promised obedience. Instead of presenting a written

30 Surviving *ordines* show that the hymn *Veni Creator Spiritus* was a common presence in the admission rituals of religious orders. Invoking the Holy Spirit, the *Veni Creator Spiritus* was traditionally part of the celebration of Pentecost and also a common feature in other solemn occasions such as consecration and ordination ceremonies. Anscar Chupungco, *Handbook for Liturgical Studies: Introduction to the Liturgy* IV (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1997), 217–52.

31 Rome, AGOP, ms. XIV L1, fol. 16.

32 Tugwell suggests that, initially, admission into the Dominican order was celebrated in one single ceremony that included both the reception and profession. Papal pressure to adopt a period of probation between the two ceremonies might have dictated their separation from around 1220 to 1221. According to this theory, profession was, initially, a solemnised ceremony. See: Simon Tugwell, "Dominican Profession in the Thirteenth Century," *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum* 53 (1983), 5–52, esp. 34–35.

33 Antoninus Hendrik Thomas, "La profession religieuse des Dominicains: Formule, cérémonies, histoire," *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum* 38 (1969), 5–52, esp. 42–44.

34 Creytens, "Les Constitutions des frères Prêcheurs," 41.

35 Edited in: Raymond Creytens, "Le 'Directoire' du codex Ruthenensis conservé aux Archives générales des frères Prêcheurs," *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum* 26 (1956), 96–126, esp. 118–19.

petition for deposit in the main altar, the Dominican novice kneeled in front of the Master General, placed his hands inside the superior's hands (*immixtio manuum*) and professed his vows directly to him (*professio in manibus*). Back on his feet, he then received the kiss of peace, followed by the blessing of the habit.

The case of women is less clear. As indicated, Humbert's official liturgy, approved in 1256, does not include a version for the female branch of the Dominicans, with the order's Ordinary providing only instructions and prayers for the friars' ceremonies. Both the Constitutions for the nuns of Montargis (1250) and the General Constitutions for Dominican nuns (1259), composed by Humbert of Romans, provide only general descriptions of how these ceremonies should be held.³⁶ From these texts it is possible to learn that the nuns were expected to follow the same guidelines offered to the friars, with the prioress assuming the role of the Master General. This included the blessing of the habit, attributed to the prioress in the nuns' statutes and representing an unusual degree of female clerical leadership for this period. By the thirteenth century, religious women were excluded from priestly duties.³⁷

Unlike with the friars, in the case of nuns, these ceremonies do not appear in the Ordinary or the *Directorium*, preventing us from knowing further details about their enactment. For such details, we have to turn to the few surviving Rituals containing the *ordines* for these ceremonies.

3.1 The Reception in Aveiro's Ritual

Aveiro's Ritual offers important information on the performance of these ceremonies in the female context in the late fifteenth century. The *ordo* for the reception of novices follows the Dominican Ordinary closely, showing that this ritual was adapted from that practised by the friars (see Table 1).³⁸ As in the instructions offered

³⁶ Raymond Creytens, "Les Constitutions primitives des soeurs dominicaines de Montargis (1250)," *Archivum Fratrum Praedicatorum* 17 (1947), 41–84, esp. 75–76; Pius Mothon, ed., "*Liber constitutiones sororum Ordinis Praedicatorum* (1259)," in *Analecta sacri Ordinis Praedicatorum* 3 (Rome: Directio et Administratio, Convento di S. Sabina, 1897), 337–48, esp. 342–43.

³⁷ Before this period, abbesses had assumed some clerical roles. This became increasingly controversial and was suppressed after the church reforms of the twelfth century. Caroline Walker Bynum, *Holy Feast and Holy Fast: The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1987), 21–22. For more on the context of this suppression see: Jeffrey Hamburger et al., *Liturgical Life and Latin Learning at Paradies Bei Soest, 1300–1425: Inscription and Illumination in the Choir-books of a North German Dominican Convent* (Münster: Aschendorff, 2016), 49–50. For more on women performing clerical duties in the central Middle Ages see: Katie Ann-Marie Bugyis, *The Care of Nuns: The Ministries of Benedictine Women in England during the Central Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

³⁸ Aveiro, MA, PT/MA/COD 15, fols. 1–4v°.

Table 1: Dominican reception ceremony – overview (Ordinary/Aveiro).

Dominican Ordinary (1256)	
1. Novice's prostration and subjection to scrutiny by the Master General	Chapter-house
2. Vestition	
3. Procession to the church's main altar	
4. Novice's prostration (at the main altar)	Church
5. The Master General conducts the service	
6. Blessing of the novice (by the Master General)	
7. Kiss of Peace	
Convent of Jesus in Aveiro (MA, PT/MA/COD 15, 1491)	
1. Novice's prostration and subjection to scrutiny by the prioress	Chapter-house
2. Vestition	
3. Procession to the upper choir	
4. Novice's prostration (facing the main altar)	Upper choir
5. The prioress conducts the service	
6. Blessing of the novice (by the prioress)	
7. Kiss of Peace	

to the friars, in Aveiro the novices were received by the prioress into the convent's chapter-house, where the scrutiny and the vestition took place. As set out in the Ordinary, Aveiro's Ritual also included a procession departing from the chapter-house after vestition. However, instead of going to the church's main altar where, according to the Ordinary, the rest of the ceremony took place, the nuns went instead to the convent's upper choir, where the novice would prostrate herself facing the altar. The Convent of Jesus of Aveiro had a double choir (comprising an upper and lower choir) located in the west end of the nave and separated from this space with grilles. Although the upper choir is not mentioned in the *ordo* described in the Ritual, which registers that the procession should leave the chapter-house and the mistress of the novices should take the postulant to the altar step, a description of this ceremony registered in the convent's chronicle reveals that, in Aveiro, the procession went to the upper choir.³⁹ Here, the ceremony took place in the same manner as performed by the friars at the church's main altar, with the prioress assuming the leading role of her male counterpart in a ceremony conducted exclusively in the nuns' enclosure, without the presence of men.⁴⁰

³⁹ Santos, ed., "Crónica da fundação," 252–53. The Dominican Ordinary specifies that the friars should process to the church (Rome, AGOP, ms. XIV L1, fol. 16).

⁴⁰ Aveiro, MA, PT/MA/COD 15, fols. 2v^o–4.

This spatial divergence from the friars' ceremony arguably resulted from an adaptation of the ritual to the nuns' reality, as enclosure forbade them from accessing the church. Aveiro's nuns could only access the outer church through the lower choir, which was connected to that space through grilles. Enclosure of nuns is, however, a complex topic. Although the decree *Periculoso*, issued in 1298 by Boniface VIII, prescribed full enclosure for all professed nuns, this measure found several challenges that prevented its full implementation.⁴¹ Not until the late Middle Ages, with the rise of the Observant reforms, did efforts towards nuns' enclosure reach a broader, although still questionable, level of success. In the particular case of Aveiro's Dominican nunnery, which was founded as an Observant convent, it is possible to find a few registers that express the nuns' concerns about keeping a strict enclosure. For instance, the prioress asks for the permission of the Holy See to have the church altars decorated with flowers by two senior nuns, indicating that the community did not have access to the outer church.⁴² Similarly, according to the convent's chronicle, when a group of nuns left the convent following an episode of plague – the possibility of which was predicted in the nuns' Constitutions – they did so at night, in a customised carriage made for the event, covered with black cloths, to protect them from being seen.⁴³

3.2 Other Surviving *Ordines*: A Comparative Analysis

As demonstrated in an *ordo* written in 1571 for the Dominican nunnery of Santi Giacomo e Filippo in Genova, Italy,⁴⁴ not all Dominican *ordines* for the reception of novices were as faithful to Dominican tradition as those from Aveiro (see Table 2). As will be shown, this *ordo* combines the Dominican rite, as described in the order's Ordinary, with elements absorbed from the monastic tradition of professing *super altare* and the ancient ceremony of the *consecratio virginum*.

The influences of monastic tradition in the Dominican Genovese *ordo* can be seen in the resemblances between this ritual and the sixteenth-century *ordines* from the Benedictine nunnery of San Pietro in Padua (Italy) and the Portuguese Cistercian

41 For more on this see: Elizabeth Makowski, *Canon Law and Cloistered Women: Periculoso and Its Commentators 1298–1545* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1997).

42 Coimbra, Arquivo da Universidade de Coimbra, Convento de Jesus de Aveiro, tom. 51, fol. 522.

43 Santos, ed., “Crónica da fundação,” 209.

44 Genova, Archivio di Santa Maria di Castello (ASMC), *Modus recipiendi sororem*, Ss. Giacomo e Filippo, n. p. I would like to thank Sara Badano for kindly providing me with a digitised version of this *ordo*, which is listed in: Sara Badano, “I fondi archivistici,” in *Monache domenicane a Genova*, ed. Carla Cavelli Traverso (Rome: De Luca Editori d'arte, 2010), 159–68.

Table 2: Reception ceremony at Santi Giacomo e Filippo in Genova – overview.

Convent of Santi Giacomo e Filippo in Genova (ASMC, <i>Modus recipiendi</i>, 1571)	
1. The novice is received during mass	Church
2. The novice is taken by the priest to the convent door	
3. Procession to the nuns' choir	Convent door
4. Novice's prostration	Choir
5. The prioress conducts the service	
6. Novice's prostration and subjection to scrutiny by the prioress	Chapter-house
7. Vestition	
8. Procession to the choir (incomplete)	

nunnery of Lorvão.⁴⁵ As in these *ordines*, the Dominican novices of Genova were received by a priest in the church, during mass, rather than by the prioress in the chapter-house, as was customary in Dominican tradition. After being received in the church, the celebrant took the Genovese candidates to the convent's door, so that the ceremony could be concluded in the nuns' enclosure, a step shared with the Cistercians of Lorvão, also documented in the Clarissan convent of Setúbal in the early seventeenth century.⁴⁶ This shows that mendicant admission rituals could be influenced by monastic tradition and contrasts with the case of Aveiro where, as shown, the prioress conducted the ceremony of reception from the beginning, receiving the novice in the chapter-house.

Furthermore, the first part of the Genovese ceremony, conducted by a priest in the church, reflects the nuns' identification as *Sponsae Christi*, incorporating bridal metaphors that can also be found in the *consecratio virginum*. Used to consecrate virgins in the Christian Church from the fourth century, the *consecratio virginum* was observed in some monastic religious orders to consecrate their nuns after profession, focusing on their spiritual marriage to Christ.⁴⁷ In this ceremony, the virgin was received at the altar during mass by a bishop who consecrated her. After

⁴⁵ Padua, Biblioteca Civica (BC), BP 822/VIII. This and other Benedictine *ordines* for the reception of novices, the majority pertaining to a later period, survived in the Biblioteca Civica in Padua, see: Giovanna Baldissin Molli, "I libri Ordo et modus induendi," in *Sine musica nulla disciplina: Studi in onore di Giulio Cattin*, ed. Franco Bernabei et al. (Padua: Il Poligrafo, 2006). I would like to thank Mercedes Pérez Vidal for bringing this to my attention; Lisbon, ANTT, Ordem de Cister, Mosteiro de Lorvão, código 6, fols. 1–9.

⁴⁶ Lisbon, BNP, Cod. 7686, livro 2, cap. I. fols. 60–62v^o: Leonor de S. João, *Tratado da antiga e curiosa fundação do Convento de Jesus de Setúbal*, 1630.

⁴⁷ For more on this ceremony, see René Metz, *La consécration des vierges dans l'Église romaine: Étude d'histoire de la liturgie* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1954) and Anne Yardley,

putting on her religious clothes, the virgin would receive a veil from the celebrant, who would also offer her a ring and a fabric crown. These objects were borrowed from the liturgy of marriage and introduced in the *consecratio* in the twelfth century as symbols of the virgins' spiritual marriage to Christ.⁴⁸ Likewise, the reception of the Genovese novices in the church was an allusion to the ritual of marriage. First, the candidates kneeled in front of the priest, at the main altar, to receive communion, before being given the choice between a crown of flowers and a crown of thorns, which can be read as an allusion to the choice between a carnal marriage – as lay brides used flower crowns on their heads – and a spiritual marriage to Christ, represented in the crown of thorns used by St Catherine in her spiritual union to Jesus.⁴⁹ After choosing the crown of thorns, the novices received this insignia from the priest, who placed it on their heads.

However, the consecration of nuns was traditionally rejected by the mendicant orders.⁵⁰ The General Constitutions for Dominican nuns (1259) record, in the chapter dedicated to profession, that no Dominican nun should be blessed, as St Dominic himself ordered, to avoid vanity and promote equality among the sisters.⁵¹ The prohibition of the consecration of widows as virgins in canon law from the fifth century was probably behind Dominic's choice, as a considerable number of Dominican women were in this condition.⁵² Even so, this custom appears to have been followed in the convent of Montargis in the early days of the order, as predicted by community statutes (1250).⁵³ This tradition is only suppressed in Humbert of Romans' redaction of the General Constitutions of 1259. The Portuguese version of these statutes made for the convent of Aveiro around 1525 also includes this prohibition.⁵⁴

Performing Piety: Musical Culture in Medieval English Nunneries (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 159–78.

48 Metz, *La consécration*, 207–10 and 306.

49 The Genovese custom of gifting the nuns a crown of thorns was also followed by the Bolognese Augustines of Santa Maria degli Angeli. As Zarri has noted, this custom was inspired in the mystical marriage of St Catherine and common in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Italy. Paintings of nuns being crowned with a crown of thorns by the infant Jesus were made as *souvenirs* of the nuns' profession. Gabriella Zarri, "Consacrazione e conversione tra rito e simbolo," in *Vestizioni: Codici normativi e pratiche religiosae*, ed. Sofia Gajano and Francesca Sbardella (Rome: Viella Libreria editrice, 2021), 13–36, esp. 15 and 19.

50 Metz, *La consécration*, 10.

51 Mothon, ed., "Liber constitutiones," 343.

52 This is suggested in Hamburger et al., *Liturgical Life and Latin Learning*, 59.

53 Creytens, "Les Constitutions primitives," 76.

54 "E assy nom queremos que algumas ijmaãs freyras sejam beenzidas, porque se diz que assy ho ordenou nosso padre ssam Domingos em o seu tempo acerca dellas; e este tal beenzimento, ssooe seer a algumas dellas causa de se alterarem sobre as outras." Domingos Maurício dos Santos, ed., "Comecansse as constituicoens das freyras," in *Mosteiro de Jesus de Aveiro*, 2, part 2, 411–20, esp. 416.

The Genovese *ordo* moved closer to the Dominican tradition in the second part of the ceremony. Once delivered by the priest at the convent door, the novice, escorted by the community, went to the choir in a procession accompanied by the hymn *Veni Creator Spiritus*. This step was taken from the Dominican Ordinary, which instructed the friars to go from the chapter-house to the church after vestition, while singing the same hymn.⁵⁵ As mentioned, in Aveiro, a similar procession took the nuns from the chapter-house – where the novices received their habits – to the choir, where the ceremony was concluded.⁵⁶ In the choir, the Genovese prioress – until then taking on a passive role in the ritual – assumed the lead of the ceremony. As in Aveiro, once the novice was prostrated in the choir, the prioress started a series of verses and responsories concluded with prayers.⁵⁷ However, while this act concluded Aveiro's reception ceremony, with the prioress sprinkling the novice with holy water and giving her a kiss of peace (see Table 1), in the case of Genova this part of the ritual preceded the vestition, held afterwards in the chapter-house (see Table 2).⁵⁸

Thus, while in the Dominican Ordinary and Aveiro's *ordo*, vestition in the chapter-house opened the ceremony of reception, in the case of Genova, this was the last phase of the ritual. This characteristic also resembles the custom followed in monastic orders, such as the Benedictines or the Cistercians of Lorvão, where the novices put on their habits in the last part of the ceremony.⁵⁹ Despite following the overall structure of Dominican vestition, with the prostration and subjection to scrutiny of the novice in front of the prioress, the development of the Genovese ceremony presents variations that can once more be identified with the monastic tradition. While the novice put on the religious habit, the prioress was instructed to say the formula *Exuat te dominus veterem hominem cum actibus suis* and the text *Induat te Dominus novum hominem*, a step that is absent from the Dominican Ordinary and Aveiro's *ordo*.⁶⁰ However, the same formulas can be found in Benedictine *ordines* for the reception of novices⁶¹ and in profession rituals that follow the monastic tradition of professing *super altare*, such as the one from the Cistercian

55 Rome, AGOP, ms. XIV L1, fol. 16.

56 Aveiro, MA, PT/MA/COD 15, fol. 2v^o.

57 The cycles of verses, responsories and prayers are quite close to the Dominican Ordinary and the *ordo* from Aveiro (Genova, ASMC, *Modus recipiendi*, n. p.; Rome, AGOP, ms. XIV L1, fol. 16; Aveiro, MA, PT/MA/COD 15, fol. 3).

58 It is not clear, however, if the vestition should come immediately after the moment in the choir, as no procession to the chapter-house is mentioned in the Genovese *ordo*.

59 Lisbon, ANTT, Ordem de Cister, Mosteiro de Lorvão, código 6, fol. 6; Padua, BC, BP 830, edited in Molli, "I libri Ordo et modus induendi," 443–51, esp. 445.

60 Rome, AGOP, ms. XIV L1, fol. 16; Aveiro, MA, PT/MA/COD 15, fol. 2v^o.

61 See, for instance: Padua, BC, BP 830, edited in Molli, "I libri Ordo et modus induendi," 445.

nunnery of Lorvão.⁶² Nonetheless, although clearly influenced by monastic tradition, the ceremony in Genova maintained the authority attributed to the prioresses in the Dominican custom: while in both the Benedictine and Cistercian cases, these words were uttered by the abbot, in the Genovese convent this role fell to the prioress. The Genovese vestition ceremony subsequently continued to deviate from Dominican custom, showing a local influence, as the choir sang chants in the vernacular, including the antiphon *Che fai qui core* which text was written by the Dominican reformer Girolamo Savonarola (1452–1458).⁶³ The *ordo* proceeded with a procession to the choir, the objective of which is not clear as the document is not complete.

A similar mixing of traditions is apparent in an *ordo* for the reception of novices produced in Padua in the early sixteenth century.⁶⁴ This text shows an interesting combination between the Dominican ritual for the reception of novices and the Benedictine oblation ceremony. In the monastic oblation, parents offered their children to monasteries during mass, professing in their names.⁶⁵ As noted in a previous study, the *ordo* from Padua documents a silent profession (*professio tacita*), a kind of oblation, where the child had already reached the age of *pueritia* (6–7 years old), which spared the need for parents to profess in her name.⁶⁶ In this case, the child was received into the monastery to later confirm her intention of keeping a religious life.

According to this *ordo*, the young novice was received at the altar during mass in the presence of her parents, who were blessed by the celebrant. However, this was followed by the main elements of the Dominican reception ceremony – the scrutiny and the vestition – which were performed by the prioress.⁶⁷ The *ordo* also included some mentions of St Dominic (*pater Dominice*), suggesting that it was used in a Dominican context.⁶⁸ Furthermore, as registered in the colophon ending the text, the document was revised by both a Dominican friar and a Dominican nun in 1577.⁶⁹ As

⁶² Lisbon, ANTT, Ordem de Cister, Mosteiro de Lorvão, códice 6, fols.12v^o–13.

⁶³ Patrick Macey, “The Lauda and the Cult of Savonarola,” *Renaissance Quarterly* 45 (1992), 439–83, esp. 451–52.

⁶⁴ *Ordine che si ha da tenir nel vestir le novizze et la benedittione de vestimenti inanti il vestire, Monastic Ritual or Ceremonial*, fols. 1–4v^o (sold by *Les Enluminures*). Although it was not possible to consult the *ordo*, as it is in private possession, *Les Enluminures* provides an abbreviated description of its contents here: <https://www.textmanuscripts.com/medieval/padua-ordo-dominicans-60603> (accessed February 7, 2024).

⁶⁵ On this subject see: Mayke de Jong, *In Samuel’s Image: Child Oblation in the Early Medieval West*, Brill’s Studies in Intellectual History 12 (Leiden and Boston, MA: Brill, 1996).

⁶⁶ Hamburger et al., *Liturgical Life and Latin Learning*, 57 and 61.

⁶⁷ *Ordine che si ha da tenir*, fols. 1–4v^o.

⁶⁸ *Ordine che si ha da tenir*, fol. 4.

⁶⁹ *Ordine che si ha da tenir*, fol. 10. Although oblation was not contemplated in the Dominican nuns’ Constitutions, these convents seem to have received young children as well (Hamburger et al., *Liturgical Life and Latin Learning*, 66–67).

noted by *Les Enluminures* it is possible that this *ordo* belonged to the Dominican convent of Sant'Anna in Padua.⁷⁰ If so, this could explain the intertwining of traditions as, despite being founded as a Dominican convent in the early fourteenth century, this community adopted the Benedictine rule in 1459. The Genovese convent of Santi Giacomo e Filippo, however, remained in Dominican jurisdiction throughout its history, with the origins of the strong monastic influence shown in its reception ceremony difficult to trace.⁷¹

4 The Dominican Profession Ceremonies

As already noted, the Dominican profession ceremony, as described in the *Directorium* (c. 1300) for the male branch of the order, was a quick and simple ritual in which the novice professed their vows to the Master General or their representative in the convent's chapter-house. The brief instructions in the nuns' Constitutions let us know that, as with the friars, Dominican novices professed to the prioress responsible for blessing their habits.⁷² This outlines a ceremony distant from the ritual observed by female religious houses that followed the monastic *professio super altare*. As shown by the Ritual from the Cistercian nuns from Lorvão, in these cases, instead of professing directly to the abbess, the novices read a petition to God at the altar, in a ceremony conducted by the abbot, during mass.⁷³ To learn more about the enactment of the Dominican ceremony for nuns we need to turn, once more, to the surviving *ordines*.

Aveiro's Ritual shows some deviation from the *Directorium* in the ritual of profession (see Table 3). Instead of professing their vows in the chapter-house, in the convent of Aveiro the nuns did this in the lower choir.⁷⁴ As well as being stated in the *ordo*, this location is also revealed in the convent's chronicle, where the lower choir grille is referred to as "the profession grille."⁷⁵ According to Aveiro's chronicle, the first professions in this convent were exceptionally made in the church's main chapel, where the founder, Beatriz Leitão, covered with her black veil, received the vows of the novices. The reason for this was the presence of King Afonso V (r. 1438–1481), who

⁷⁰ <https://www.textmanuscripts.com/medieval/padua-ordo-dominicans-60603> (accessed February 7, 2024).

⁷¹ The convent was in Dominican jurisdiction from its foundation *circa* 1266–1268 and was reformed by the Dominican nuns of *Corpus Christi* in Genova between 1445 and 1453 (Badano, "I fondi archivistici," 159).

⁷² Mothon, ed., "*Liber constitutiones*," 342–43.

⁷³ Lisbon, ANTT, Ordem de Cister, Mosteiro de Lorvão, códice 6, fols. 9–14.

⁷⁴ Aveiro, MA, PT/MA/COD 15, fol. 4v^o.

⁷⁵ Santos, ed., "Crónica da fundação," 220.

Table 3: Dominican profession ceremony – overview (*Directorium/Aveiro*).

Directorium (c. 1300)	
1. Novice's prostration and subjection to scrutiny by the Master General	Chapter-house
2. Profession to the Master General (<i>immixtio manuum</i>)	
3. Kiss of Peace and blessing of the habit (by the Master General)	
Convent of Jesus in Aveiro (MA, PT/MA/COD 15, 1491)	
1. The celebrant delivers the veils to the prioress (in the choir)	Lower choir
2. Novice's prostration and subjection to scrutiny by the prior	
3. Profession to the prioress (over the text of the Rule and Constitutions)	
4. Blessing of the habit by the prior or the prioress	
5. Imposition of the black veil	

came with his entourage to attend the ceremony.⁷⁶ It is not clear if professions continued to be open to the public in Aveiro as no other records survive. The possibility of the public having access to the church might therefore be connected to the choice of this ceremony taking place in the lower choir, as the chapter-house was located inside the enclosure. Nevertheless, Dominican nuns also observed the friars' custom of professing in the chapter-house, as in the case of the Dominican nuns of Segovia in Castile.⁷⁷ During this ritual, the Castilian nuns professed in the chapter-house and processed to the church's main altar, replicating the second part of the friars' reception ceremony.⁷⁸ This demonstrates that different approaches to enclosure in the same religious order influenced the development of ceremonies.

Aveiro's *ordo* suggests that, in this convent, nuns remained in the lower choir for the entire ceremony of profession. The role played by the prioress in this ritual might have decreased in importance over time. The instructions reveal that, after the daily mass, Aveiro's nuns, holding candles, descended from the upper choir, where they attended the mass, to the lower choir. The priest approached the choir

⁷⁶ Santos, ed., "Crónica da fundação," 200.

⁷⁷ Segovia, Archivo de Santo Domingo el Real de Segovia (ASDRS), *Forma y manera de cómo las monjas del orden de Sancto Domingo de los Predicadores han de hacer profesión a sus prioras*, n. p. I would like to thank Mercedes Pérez Vidal for kindly providing me with images of this manuscript, which she previously discussed in Mercedes Pérez Vidal, *Arte y liturgia en los monasterios de dominicas de Castilla: Desde los orígenes hasta la reforma observante (1218–1506)* (Gijón: Ediciones Trea, 2021), 137 and 260.

⁷⁸ Tugwell's suggestion of a unified ceremony combining the reception and the profession in the early days of the Order might be behind the tradition held in Segovia. According to this author, in this primitive ceremony, the friars processed from the chapter-house to the church after professing. Tugwell suggests that, after the division, this part of the ceremony was allocated to the rite of reception (Tugwell, "Dominican Profession," 34–35).

grille and handed the blessed veils to the prioress, who received them inside the choir.⁷⁹ As in the reception, a scrutiny then took place to ascertain the novice's will to join the order permanently. However, according to these instructions, this scrutiny should be conducted not by the prioress, as in the reception, but by the prior.⁸⁰ The folio containing this rubric shows that the original text was erased, raising the hypothesis of this being an alteration to the original wording. As mentioned, the same *ordo* appears in one of the convent's fifteenth-century Processionals. Nonetheless, this copy remains unaltered, recording, instead, that this should be done by "the prioress or the prior."⁸¹ This suggests that the same words were present in the Ritual's original version. A similar situation is presented in the Ritual's following line, where what was previously "the prior or the prioress" (*diga o prelado ou a prelada*) was later replaced by "the prior," with the word *prelada* (the feminine form of "prelate" in Portuguese) crossed out.⁸² This instruction refers to the person in charge of uttering the formula *Dominus qui incipit, ipse perficiat*, which is said by the prioress after the scrutiny in the *ordo* for the novices' reception. Once again, the Processional keeps the original wording.⁸³ This was followed by the profession of vows, in which the duality disappears for both sources, with the prioress taking charge of receiving the vows from the kneeling novice.⁸⁴ However, both sources again register that the subsequent blessing of the habit should be conducted by "the prioress or the prior."⁸⁵ This case is particularly striking since, as mentioned, according to the nuns' Constitutions, the prioress should bless these garments.⁸⁶ Thus, unlike in the reception of novices, Aveiro's *ordo* for profession appears to reduce the centrality of the prioress in the ceremony, offering the possibility of this being conducted by the prior.

The description of Aveiro's first professions in the convent's chronicle contrasts with the *ordo*, showing the importance of respecting the centrality of the prioress in this ceremony. After all the women went through a year of probation, the founder Beatriz Leitão professed her vows, along with two other nuns, to the prior of Misericórdia, with the rest of the women professing to her a few days later, after she was elected vicar, a position she held before the convent could elect her prioress.⁸⁷ The *ordo* from the Dominican nunnery of Segovia also shows the

79 Aveiro, MA, PT/MA/COD 15, fol. 4v^o.

80 Aveiro, MA, PT/MA/COD 15, fol. 5.

81 Aveiro, MA, PT/MA/ANTIF 2, fol. 44.

82 Aveiro, MA, PT/MA/COD 15, fol. 5.

83 Aveiro, MA, PT/MA/ANTIF 2, fol. 44.

84 Aveiro, MA, PT/MA/COD 15, fol. 5v^o.

85 Aveiro, MA, PT/MA/COD 15, fol. 5v^o; Aveiro, MA, PT/MA/ANTIF 2, fol. 44v^o.

86 Santos, ed., "Comecansse as constituicoens das freyras," 416.

87 Santos, ed., "Crónica da fundação," 200.

prioress' authority in the ceremony of profession, attributing the blessing of the garments solely to the prioress.⁸⁸

It is possible that the duality presented by Aveiro's *ordo*, both in the Ritual and the Processional, was born from the close proximity kept between this community and the friars of Santa Maria da Misericórdia since before the convent's foundation. The nuns were trained by the friars who, during the convent's first year, often entered the enclosure to guide them.⁸⁹ Such proximity might have led to the custom of having the prior sometimes conducting this ceremony. However, it appears that, at some point, the task of inquiring the novice was attributed solely to the prior, at least according to the Ritual. This change might have been influenced by the Tridentine decree demanding that all novices be interviewed by the bishop or their representative before joining a religious order.⁹⁰ The fact that it appears only in the Ritual and not in the Processional might be explained by the detail that the former was used by the celebrant – to which this rubric referred – and the latter by the nuns.

It is also interesting to note that, instead of replicating the friars' *immixtio manuum*, Aveiro's novices said their vows while resting their hands over a book containing the rule and the Constitutions, placed on the prioress' lap.⁹¹ This gesture reinforced the words of the profession formula, in which the novices promised to follow St Augustine's rule and the nuns' Constitutions.⁹² This might not have been the procedure in all Dominican nunneries – it is not mentioned in the *ordo* from Santo Domingo el Real de Segovia, which records only that the novices should kneel to say their vows to the prioress.⁹³ It was, nevertheless, observed in other religious orders, as shown by the Colettine Constitutions followed in some Clarissan convents from the mid fifteenth century onwards.⁹⁴ Nevertheless, in this case, the nuns observed the gesture of *immixtio manuum*, also adopted by the Franciscans, with the abbess holding the novice's hands over the book.

88 Segovia, ASDRS, *Forma y manera*, n. p. The scrutiny is not mentioned in this *ordo*, which starts directly with the novices' vows.

89 Santos, ed., "Crónica da fundação," 199.

90 *The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, trans. Theodore Alois Buckley (London: George Routledge and Co., 1851), 226, chapter XVII.

91 The nun Margarida Pinheira produced a codex for the convent containing both texts in the early sixteenth century (Aveiro, MA, PT/MA/COD 18).

92 "Ego N. Facio professionem et promitto obedientiam Deo et beate Marie et beato Dominico et tibi N. Priorisse, vice N. Magistri ordinis fratrum Predicatorum, secundum regulam beati Augustini et institutiones sororum quarum cura predicto Ordini est commissa, quod ero obediens tibi aliisque priorissis meis usque ad mortem" (Mothon, ed., "*Liber Constitutiones*," 343).

93 Segovia, ASDRS, *Forma y manera*, n. p.

94 Faro, Biblioteca Municipal de Faro, Cod. 03347, fol. 22v^o: *Regra de Santa Clara*. This was the case of the Clarissan convent of Setúbal, which, according to the surviving chronicle, followed this custom (Lisbon, BNP, Cod. 7686, livro 2, cap. I, fols. 71–71v^o).

5 The Imposition of the Black Veil

In the convent of Aveiro, the imposition of the black veil was an integral part of the ritual of profession.⁹⁵ This step is absent from the nuns' General Constitutions arguably because of its affiliation with the *consecratio virginum*, a ceremony forbidden to Dominican women by the same statutes.⁹⁶ As mentioned, in the *consecratio*, virgins were consecrated through the imposition of a veil performed by a bishop, to whom this right was reserved. In turn, Aveiro's nuns, as in other nunneries, received their veils from a priest.⁹⁷

The instructions for the imposition of the veil in Aveiro mirror a *consecratio* in a number of ways. According to Aveiro's *ordo*, after receiving the cloak from the prioress in the lower choir, the newly professed nun was presented by the mistress of the novices to the priest, before whom she kneeled in order to be veiled. This was accompanied by the antiphon *Veni Sponsa Christi*, started by the priest. Taken from the *Song of Songs*, this chant can also be found in the *consecratio* as early as the beginning of the twelfth century, when other bridal metaphors, such the imposition of a crown and a ring, were also added to the ceremony.⁹⁸ The antiphon was sung by the bishop in the opening of the ritual – as in Aveiro, inviting the virgin to come to the celebrant.⁹⁹

However, unlike in the *consecratio*, Aveiro's nuns did not appear to receive their veils at the main altar, rather by the grille dividing the church from the lower choir. Although nothing is said in the *ordo* about the place where the veiling should happen, the fact that the priest previously delivered the veils to the prioress in the choir suggests that the novices were veiled in this space, interacting with the celebrant through an opening in the choir grille.¹⁰⁰ Given that Aveiro's nuns performed the reception of novices inside the enclosure and not in the church, as predicted by the

95 In Santo Domingo el Real de Segóvia, the nuns' profession and the imposition of the veil could be held separately, as stated in the convent's *ordo*. Segovia, ASDRS, *Forma y manera*, n. p.

96 On this see: Hamburger et al., *Liturgical Life and Latin Learning*, 60.

97 Although the *consecratio* should only be performed by bishops, it is not unusual to see this ceremony performed by abbots, chaplains or even abbesses in medieval nunneries (Metz, *La consécration*, 100–3).

98 Metz, *La consécration*, 207–10 and 306.

99 Metz, *La consécration*, 266. The thirteenth-century Roman Pontifical, however, places it in the last part of the consecration ceremony when the bishop invites the virgin to receive the crown. Michel Andrieu, *Le Pontifical romaine au moyen âge*, II (Vatican City: Bibliothèque Apostolique Vaticane, 1940), 417.

100 The wicket in the grille dividing the lower choir from the church in Aveiro arguably served this function. As two other openings, destined for both confession and communion, were built in the same wall, the wicket on the choir grille arguably served other functions such as the one suggested here.

Dominican Ordinary, they would probably not have entered the church on this occasion. Some communities, such as the Clarissan nuns of Setúbal and the Bolognese Augustines of Santa Maria degli Angeli, professed and received their veils in the choir, interacting with the male celebrant through the choir grille (Setúbal) or through a turn (Bologna).¹⁰¹

On the other hand, the nuns from the Dominican convent of Segovia, who, as mentioned, went to the main altar after profession, returned to this place to receive their veils from the celebrant, responsible for starting the antiphon *Veni Sponsa Christi*.¹⁰² At the altar, the priest veiled the nuns with the formula *Accipe velamen sacrum puella*, usually found in *ordines* for the *consecratio* from the twelfth century onwards and also shared with the sixteenth-century profession *ordo* from the Cistercian nuns of Lorvão.¹⁰³ In turn, Aveiro's nuns were veiled with the less common formula *Accipe puella pallium quod preferas*, which first appeared in an early rite for consecrating virgins included in the *Missale Francorum*, produced between the seventh and eighth centuries.¹⁰⁴ In 1595, the reformed version of the Roman Pontifical abandoned the formula used in Aveiro in favour of the words used in Lorvão.¹⁰⁵ The *ordo* from Segovia presents other elements that, despite being shared with the *consecratio*, do not appear in the text from Aveiro. This is the case for the chant *Posuit signum* – the nuns' response to the formula *Accipe velamen sacrum puella*, or the singing of the responsory *Amo Christum*, sung in twelfth-century versions of the *consecratio*.¹⁰⁶ This chant, taken from St Agnes' office, functions as a metaphor for the nuns' symbolic marriage to Christ, mirrored in this ceremony.¹⁰⁷

The metaphor of a symbolic marriage to Christ was also present in Aveiro's ceremony. The ceremony closed with the prayer *Deus castorum corporum*, one of two consecration prayers used in the *consecratio virginum*, the text of which emphasises the veiled nun's status of virgin and *Sponsa Christi*.¹⁰⁸ The ritual performed in Segovia, however, is more inclusive, missing this prayer and prescribing alternatives to the chants that refer to the nuns' virginity, in case the veiled nun does not fit with this condition. This is the case of the antiphons *Ista est virgo* and *Afferentur*

101 Lisbon, BNP, Cod. 7686, livro 2, cap. I, fols. 71–71v^o; Zarri, “Consacrazione e conversione,” 20.

102 Segovia, ASDRS, *Forma y manera*, n. p.

103 Metz, *La consécration*, 203; Lisbon, ANTT, Ordem de Cister, Mosteiro de Lorvão, códice 6, fol. 13.

104 Aveiro, MA, PT/MA/COD 15, fol. 8; Metz, *La consécration*, 176–77.

105 Metz, *La consécration*, 338–39.

106 Segovia, ASDRS, *Forma y manera*, n. p.; Yardley, *Performing Piety*, 159.

107 Yardley, *Performing Piety*, 159.

108 Aveiro, MA, PT/MA/COD 15, fols. 9–9v^o; Metz, *La consécration*, 297–98; Katherine O'Brien O'Keefe, *Stealing Obedience: Narratives of Agency and Identity in Later Anglo-Saxon England* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 199–200.

regi virgines.¹⁰⁹ This does not mean, however, that only virgin nuns were veiled in Aveiro. As demonstrated by the case of the convent's founders, Beatriz Leitão and Mécia Pereira, this convent was open to widows who, like the virgins, were veiled in their profession.¹¹⁰ This shows that Dominican nunneries found a way to include ceremonies rooted in the metaphor of a spiritual marriage to Christ on their ceremonial, without promoting the inequality brought by the consecration of virgins, rejected by the Constitutions, and feared by Dominic.

6 Final Remarks

When analysed in conjunction with other similar sources, the Ritual from the Dominican convent of Aveiro can provide important information on the processes through which Dominican liturgy was used and transformed to serve the needs of the female branch of the Order. The surviving *ordines*, along with other important accounts such as convent chronicles, help to complement the brief and general guidelines offered in the nuns' Constitutions. For the particular case of Dominican nuns, it was thus possible to see that, despite being rooted in the order's custom, the ceremonies varied from convent to convent, as revealed in the analysed sources. The communities' different approaches to enclosure along with the influence of other traditions were paramount in the shaping of these ceremonies: the analysis of the surviving *ordines* revealed variations on procedures, formulas, spaces and also different levels of female autonomy. While, in the case of Aveiro, the reception of novices was arguably a direct adaptation of the friars' liturgy to an enclosed convent – with the part corresponding to the church taking place in the upper choir – the Dominican *ordo* from Genova shows a ceremony that mixes the Dominican tradition with elements absorbed from the profession *super altare* and the ancient rite of the Church for consecrating virgins.

In what was perhaps the result of an austere enclosure, the community of Aveiro conducted this ceremony entirely in the nuns' enclosure, without the presence of male celebrants, with the prioress assuming the role originally attributed to the Master General or the prior. Instead, the *ordo* from Genova reveals a greater dependence on men to perform the ceremony. As in the monastic tradition of professing *super altare*, according to this *ordo*, the novices were received in the church

¹⁰⁹ Segovia, ASDRS, *Forma y manera*, n. p.

¹¹⁰ As noted in Hamburger et al., *Liturgical Life and Latin Learning*, 59, Dominican convents received widows and married women accompanying their daughters. As mentioned already, this might have been behind Dominic's rejection of the consecration of Dominican nuns, as this ceremony was restricted to virgins by canon law.

by the priest and then brought to the enclosure, where the prioress would conduct the rest of the ceremony. This procedure was shared with other religious orders, demonstrated by the cases of, for example, the Clarisses from Setúbal and the Cistercian nuns from Lorvão, where dependence on men to perform the ceremony went even further, especially with the latter. The *ordo* from Genova reveals the influence of local traditions in the development of these ceremonies through the imposition of matrimonial insignia on the novices and the use of vernacular chants.

Unlike with the *ordo* for the reception of novices, Aveiro's instructions for the ritual of profession are not so faithful to Dominican custom, placing the ceremony in a different space and proposing an increased level of participation from the prior. This change, which might be connected to the community's proximity to the friars in charge of their *cura monialium* or, in the case of the later corrections, the Tridentine decree that imposed that all women be interviewed by the bishop before joining a convent, reduced the prioress's responsibilities in the ceremony, despite what is described in the nuns' Constitutions. In the case of Aveiro, these peculiarities, along with the fact that both *ordines* were written in Portuguese, unlike the rest of the Ritual, suggests that these texts were adapted or possibly translated specifically to this convent.

Following the profession of vows received by the prioress, the ceremony for the imposition of the black veil showed, once again, that these communities had different views on enclosure. While the Dominican nuns of Segovia went to the main altar twice during Procession, the other analysed communities interacted with the male celebrant through the choir grille to perform the ceremony. The connections between the ritual for the imposition of the black veil and the ritual for consecrating virgins in the analysed Dominican convents show that, despite the Constitutions' prohibition against the consecration of nuns, these convents developed traditions deeply inspired by that act.

This ceremony complements the simplicity of the Dominican ceremony of profession with bridal metaphors that spoke to the nuns' condition and were, naturally, absent from the friars' liturgy. Originally designed for men, ceremonies to receive new members into a religious community or to profess religious vows evolved, when used by female communities, to include elements reflecting their own reality. The resemblance between the Dominican *ordines* analysed and those followed in other nunneries demonstrates that some of those elements were shared by all the examined religious orders despite their different natures.

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