



Shortlisted 2016

History and Theory

**Spotless Lilies and Foul Smelling Weeds':
Architecture and Moral Cleanliness in
Victorian Magdalen Convents**

Dr Kate Jordan, University of Westminster



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This is a fascinating story of a little known movement and a peculiar building typology that took an ethnographic, architectural and historical research approach to what is usually considered to be ‘feminist’ architecture. The significance of this work is in the demonstration the value of the built environment to reveal information on not just architectural history but also social history.

2016 Judging Panel

Spotless Lilies and Foul Smelling Weeds': Architecture and Moral Cleanliness in Victorian Magdalen Convents

Dr Kate Jordan

University of Westminster

I have undertaken a detailed analysis of the architecture of Victorian convents as part of my broader research into religious houses in Britain, built between the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829 and the present day. This is a building type that has been overlooked by architectural historians at a heavy cost – as communities have dwindled, unlisted houses have been redeveloped and demolished at a rapid pace. A root cause of this research gap has been the failure by historians to interrogate assumptions about this complex architecture and look beneath the skin. My own experience of researching religious houses has required considerable self-reflection as I continue to encounter and step beyond the frontiers of my thought processes and imagination. I embarked on the research on women's historical role in the built environment and with a view to constructing a feminist account of nuns as designers and builders with a set of pre-conceptions about convent architecture – buildings that were created by women and for the exclusive use of women under largely autonomous conditions. These assumptions were quickly challenged by the primary sources – what I had taken to be evidence of empowerment was revealed to be a paradoxical picture of women frequently using their authority to etch oppressive ideologies into their architecture. My work on convents in particular has revealed the extraordinary ways that women shaped their buildings – seeking inspiration in unexpected places and appropriating secular philosophies. The cornerstone of my research has been the voices, both contemporary and historical, of the women who made these sites – their words have provided rich ways of understanding the theology and culture of women's religious communities and cast new light on their unique architecture.

Introduction

'Innocence and guilt face to face! The bright cheerfulness of unsullied virtue so near to the most abject wretchedness of multiplied sinfulness! The spotless lily side by side with the rank, noxious, foul-smelling weed that grew up in the dark shadows of the crumbling tomb! The consecrated nun speaking to the polluted outcast!'

“The es of High Park” *The Irish Rosary*, 1897

The late nineteenth century saw a proliferation of convents dedicated to the spiritual and social

transformation of prostitutes. Various known as asylums, penitentiaries and refuges (frequently with the prefix “ attached) these foundations responded to a widespread preoccupation in Victorian Britain with the hygiene of women who sold sex. For the Roman Catholic and Anglican churches, the architecture of convents became a crucial apparatus of moral cleanliness – a complex device designed to both sanitise the spiritually unclean and protect the vulnerable under one roof but without fear of cross-contamination.

This article discusses the ways in which Roman Catholic nuns marshalled both religious and

secular philosophies of discipline, control and sanitation in the design and use of such of spaces. The demanding specifications for the convent required the physical segregation of the morally contagious from the pure or, in spaces where they were compelled to come together, control and mediation of the gaze. For the newly emerging orders and the architects they commissioned, this was a building type for which there was no pattern book – religious houses built in Britain

before Catholic emancipation in 1829, had been modelled on pre-reformation monasteries which served communities who were enclosed and whose primary occupation was prayer. The rapidly shifting terrain of religious life in Victorian Britain, increasingly dominated by orders whose vocation combined work and prayer, meant that architecture had to respond quickly and creatively, frequently facilitating not only practical functions but also conveying the culture and spirituality of

Penitents and sisters
at St Mary's Convent,
Streatham, c1880s,
Source: SMG Archive ref
Album IIG/1/3



emerging communities through a new aesthetic language. The complexity of the design brief for modern convents was such that nuns were often required to develop their own architectural solutions, drawing inspiration from a wide range of institutional building types and in so doing, fusing the modern and traditional. The article argues, however, that at the heart of this phenomena is a paradox – although religious life offered Victorian women unprecedented opportunities to engage in architectural design and construction, they used this freedom to reproduce androcentric patterns of power and control.

Convents were characterised by laundry work, undertaken by both nuns and lay women and much has been made in sociological studies of the symbolic significance of this – the ‘washing away of sins’ is a persuasive trope. However, while the striking juxtaposition of the industrial laundry with sacred architecture deserves scholarly attention, what has yet to be discussed is the specific role of architecture in the construction of social relations in these all-female institutions. I have chosen in this article, therefore, to build my discussion of architecture and sanitation around the unique use of circulation space and visibility within the convent.

Contagion and control

The dominant motif in the visual culture of the convent was the symbiosis of virtue and vice. These poles were forcefully embodied by nuns and prostitutes; contrasting figures which offered Victorians a compelling muse for depictions of purity and impurity, as suggested by the turgid

sketch of High Park Asylum above which works a metaphor drawn from Ruskin’s 1865 lecture, ‘Sesame and Lilies’. The orders who founded or refuge institutions built an entire ideology on this contraposition – one that represented a spiritual mirror to the normal/abnormal model cultivated by the emerging secular sciences of criminology and psychiatry.

In both religious doctrine and scientific theory the dichotomy of sex and chastity was a concomitant of dirt and cleanliness. In secular society, an anxiety about the relationship between sex and dirt found robust expression in the Contagious Diseases Acts of 1864, 1866 and 1869. These statutes, designed to curb the spread of venereal disease, sanctioned the compulsory quarantine in lock hospitals of women charged with soliciting.¹ For many Christians and particularly Roman Catholics who elevated celibacy as the holiest state, these polemics were a powerful articulation of the sacred and profane or bodily and spiritual. The focus of Roman Catholic anxiety was not the transmission of disease occasioned by the proximity of the defiled and virtuous but the threat of moral corruption – where lock hospitals removed the physically unhealthy for fear of contamination, convents removed the morally unhealthy. In the operation of control, however, both the secular and religious reformatories employed (whether consciously or not) the technologies of a Benthamite model of power, albeit, in different ways.

Secular institutions

Developments in institutional architecture across Europe emerged in tandem with Enlightenment discourses on human nature, discipline and control. The architectural historian Thomas Markus traces a lineage of reformatory architecture through medieval almshouses to the hospitals of the enlightenment and the utilitarian asylums, workhouses and prisons.² Markus maps shifts in design and philosophy against Foucault's analysis, laid out in *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, of the carceral architecture that emerged in response to anti-plague measures – institutions that represent a sharp departure from the charitable almshouse. The influence of both of these building types is seen clearly in

the architecture of modern-era religious houses. Looking at Markus's plans for monastic hospitals it seems likely that these provided inspiration for the design of some early convent refuges. A convincing argument has been made by Roderick O'Donnell, for example, that the Sisters of Mercy convent of St Mary's, Handsworth (Figure 1) designed in 1839 by A.W.N. Pugin drew on Brownes Hospital in Stamford (1493).³

St Mary's, Handsworth had a marked influence on English convent designs of various orders but as O'Donnell and Timothy Brittain-Catlin have suggested, the designs of this site and of its predecessor at Bermondsey were overly reliant on the traditional monastic plan and thus failed to deliver an architecture that could serve new

Figure 1
St Mary's Convent,
Handsworth, A.W.N.
Pugin, 1839. Source:
author



practical vocations and was able to separate and confine different groups of people at different times.⁴ In the complex ordering of discrete spaces, the sisters were, therefore, required to look elsewhere. Markus's analysis of the Hôpital Général (1656), with reference to Foucault's analysis of the same, is of particular interest to a study of convents. His description of this 'landmark' architecture shows the striking resemblance to the function and ideology of convents:

A system was invented for collecting and confining those who in one way or another could introduce chaos into the social order. After confinement a range of regimes could be imposed to heal, reform or punish these individuals and to make them work. There was an extensive list of categories: the physically or mentally ill, those suffering from the moral disease of crime or unable to work as a result of old age or infirmity, the poor...vagrants, orphans and deviants of all kind. For the next two centuries this programme consumed by far the greatest slice of public building resources in the construction of poorhouses, workhouses, orphanages, almshouses, prisons, hospitals and asylums⁵

The secular precursor for British religious refuges was the Hospital, established by the philanthropist Jonas Hanway in 1758 in Goodman's Fields, Whitechapel. Although the protestant Hanway, was at pains to distance the new Hospital from the convent refuges that he had visited in France, the emphasis within the Hospital on self-reflection through prayer, penitence

and reformation rather than punishment, might suggest that he had borrowed something from Catholic convent culture. The spatial arrangement of the Hospital, however, had much more in common with secular institutions such as the Hôpital Général which not only contained but also separated the contagious from the vulnerable, placing all under the carefully crafted 'range of regimes' that were designed to maintain order. The Hospital Rules, published in 1759, stated that "[s]trict order and discipline are, indeed, essential to all undertaking'. The means of achieving this order in the Hospital relied on spaces designed for constant surveillance and the segregation of different classes of women.⁶ In 1817, Reverend Prince described to *The Committee on the Police* "little outlets in the yard [which] being separate, prevents their mixing too much with each other".⁷

The new spatial articulations of the Hospital which represented, through an emphasis on surveillance and segregation, a shift from correction to atonement, were influential in the design of Victorian prisons, workhouses and asylums. These articulations are evidence of a rich cross-fertilisation of religious and secular ideas from the end of the early-modern period and throughout the Victorian era – cultural and ideological exchanges which are further illustrated by nineteenth-century convents.

Convents in Victorian Britain

The first convents to be established by Roman Catholic orders in the UK were those of the Sisters of Our Lady of Charity of Refuge (OLC) and The Sisters of Our Lady of Charity of the Good

Shepherd (GSS). The GSS, founded in France in 1835, was a branch of the OLC also founded in France in 1651 under the Rule of St John of Eudes. Both were dedicated to 'the reformation of the fallen' and the preservation of 'girls who are in danger of being brought up immorally'.⁸ The GSS were the first to arrive in Britain, establishing a convent in Hammersmith in 1843 in a house that was subsequently adapted and enlarged.⁹ The OLC followed in 1863 commissioning a large, purpose built convent in Bartestree, Herefordshire and in 1885 a convent in Waterlooville, Hampshire.

In 1887 and 1892 the Poor Servants of the Mother of God (SMG), founded in 1872 by Frances (subsequently Mother) Taylor established refuges in London, Sussex and Liverpool. Unlike the GSS and OLC, however, the SMGs were a congregation with a mixed apostolate that included nursing and social care – Frances Taylor had, herself, been a nurse in the Crimea. Though there is evidence that Frances Taylor corresponded with the GSS and drew inspiration from their Rule, a firm emphasis was placed on preparing former prostitutes for meaningful and suitable employment in the outside world – unlike the OLC and GSS, there was no intention that any penitents would remain indefinitely in the convent and they were never eligible to join the ranks of consecrated women. Other sisterhoods such as the Sisters of Mercy combined some refuge work with vocations such as teaching and pastoral care (the convent at Handsworth, pictured above, included a separate wing or 'House of Mercy') but, although there were numerous Anglican penitent refuges, the GSS, OLC and SMG were at the forefront of ministries

in the English Roman Catholic church.¹⁰

Both the OLC and GSS also founded convents in Ireland and, although they operated under the same Rule, it is important to stress that practical management was mediated by a particular relationship between the state and religious institutions – recent evidence suggests that in Ireland, involuntary detainment in refuges formed part of the government's social policy. In the UK, however, atonement through the refuge system was considered to be contingent on voluntary admission and the high turnover of penitents in the refuges of all three Catholic orders further militates against any suggestion that they were carceral. Although refuges were sometimes known by the orders as 'penitentiaries' – a term which was also used in wider society to describe penal institutions – it was applied literally in this case to connote penitence rather than punishment. While it may be the case in Irish institutions, I have not seen evidence of punitive spaces within refuges. This is by no means to suggest, however, that they were designed to be egalitarian – indeed, democracy ran entirely counter to the spirit of refuge orders.

The institutions of both the GSS and the OLC functioned according to an elaborately stratified hierarchy. Both orders were episcopally enclosed, which meant that nuns took the simple vows generally associated with active congregations rather than solemn vows associated with papally enclosed orders. The Rule of semi-enclosure stipulated that some nuns were confined to the 'monastery', while others oversaw the supervision of penitents within a separate building or wing

but none left the confines of the convent and, importantly, no-one but penitents, orphans and nuns were allowed within the institution.¹¹ The only exceptions to this rule were the *tourières*, an unconsecrated sub-group of lay sisters who were able to leave the convent to carry out necessary errands and receive tradesmen. Nuns were separated into choir sisters, lay sisters and novices. Among the penitents, women were assigned different tasks on entry and could work up through the ranks, achieving rising levels of status and privileges. In the convents of the GSS, penitents could be consecrated as ‘sisters’ and although the GSS Rule took pains to emphasise the difference between and choir or lay consecrates (positions that demanded uncompromised virtue) sisters were held in high esteem and served, as will be discussed later, a valuable purpose. Larger convents also accommodated orphans and preservation charges – girls who were at risk of going astray. A strong familial vein in the structure of the refuge was emphasised by use of the terms mother, sister and children (often used to describe both adults and girls) and underpinned spatial divisions along patterns shaped in the domestic home, as will be discussed later.

Spatial organisation of the different groups was a challenging enough task but the profound belief that sin was infectious meant that each, to greater and lesser degrees, had to be separated from one another. The preoccupation with contagion in refuge orders was such that measures to prevent it deliberately echoed those imposed to control contagious diseases. The Rule of the SMGs dedicates a number of clauses to the management

of penitents. Sections 1 and 2 under the heading:

Rules for the girls in our houses and directions for those in charge of them’ stipulate, respectively:

- 1 It is strictly and positively forbidden for any sister to touch the refuge girls, their clothes, bed, bedding or anything belonging to them
- 2 No-one is to have anything to do with the girls except the Sisters appointed to relieve them.¹²

Although the SMGs were directly inspired by the work of the GSS and OLCs in the operation of their convents, they were not episcopally enclosed, did not make the distinction between choir and lay sisters and stopped short of classifying and segregating women to the highly controlled degree upon which the GSS and OLCs insisted.¹³ This may, however, have been partially influenced by the lack of funds for producing expensive purpose built refuges rather than ideological differences. Limited budgets meant that the overwhelming majority of SMG foundations were established in pre-existing buildings which would have been difficult to adapt in such a way as those of the GSS and OLC.

Inhabiting the convent

The convent fulfilled four functions; to enable the sisters to perform their devotional vocation; to help transform and rehabilitate the penitents before returning them to society; to generate an income for the community and to provide a home for all of the women. All of these functions were written into the architecture of convents in ways that divided

the different groups and classes of women.

Unlike the buildings of male communities, convents incorporated conspicuously feminine, domestic spaces and were often structured in ways that resembled the Victorian middle-class home¹⁴ Though marriage and motherhood, naturally, were not features of convent life, nuns, nevertheless, recreated family structures as wives (of Christ), sisters (to one another) and mothers (either as individuals, administrating the religious community as a whole; collectively, to the penitent inmates who were often called 'children' or functionally, to orphaned children).¹⁵ This was explicit in the spirituality of some orders – the Rule of the SMGs for example includes the line 'We are all of one family, children of the same mother'.¹⁶

In her study of women with learning disabilities, the sociologist Mary Stuart takes as a case study, a convent care home which, in its architecture, structure and the charism of the congregation, bears very striking similarities to the SMG convent of St Marye's, Portslade. Stuart identifies a process for lay women in which: 'The experience of coming to live in the convent was like becoming a child again, a sort of rebirth. The sisters have their children. These children were the women they cared for'.¹⁷

She also notes the actual and symbolic similarities between the convent and the family home – those that are very clearly present at St Marye's:

The architecture and geography of the convent emphasise the duality of experience for those who lived there and in some respect is not

unlike most houses where front rooms and entrances are kept for visitors. The work areas were situated away from the sight of visitors and parents and...this hid the labour of these women.¹⁸

At St Marye's, the 'adult' members of the community occupied the front of the house. Their quarters included a range of reception rooms and private bedrooms. The 'children', at the rear of the house, had separate recreational and dining rooms, teaching areas and dormitories. A cell for the nun who supervised the 'children' was usually adjoined to the dormitory.¹⁹ In similar fashion, the increasing emphasis on private domestic spaces, meant that children's and adult's areas were increasingly separated in the middle and upper-class Victorian family home – children often had separate dining and recreational spaces, where possible on upper floors to the rear of the house. In addition, children frequently shared rooms, even in large houses. The 'adult' reception rooms were generally situated at the front of the house and were, if not richly, then comfortably decorated. Children were, if only ideally, not permitted unfettered access to these spaces.²⁰

In the convent, the interior design of the sisters' living areas, mirrored the family home. While the sisters had individual cells, the 'children' slept in dormitories. Reception rooms were often decorated in the style of domestic homes – many orders adapted large family houses, retaining much of the general layout and décor. At convents such as St Marye's the inclusion of a sewing room, a tea room and two lounges and the conspicuous

absence of traditional monastic spaces such as libraries, almonries and chapter houses speaks of a highly feminised, domestic gentility.

Further evidence of divisions constructed along domestic and familial lines, is offered by a contemporary description of the GSS convent at Hammersmith in the 1836 novel *The Home of the Lost Child*. The anonymous chronicler notes that, though, 'the "children" as the penitents are always called, were chiefly in the laundry²¹, the arrangements in the nuns' monastery were rather

different:

The *salle* was simply a large room, where those nuns whose duties in the large house permitted it, assembled at stated times to work and converse, as a relief to the silence of the greater part of the day, and a very merry group they were. A few tables and chairs, and other neat but poor furniture was all the room contained. There was no carpet. And the only costly ornament the room could boast were a fine oil painting and a beautiful crucifix in ivory over the chimney piece'.



Figure 2
Dormitory at the Good Shepherd Convent, Ford, Liverpool, c.1895.
(Source: Peter Hughes)

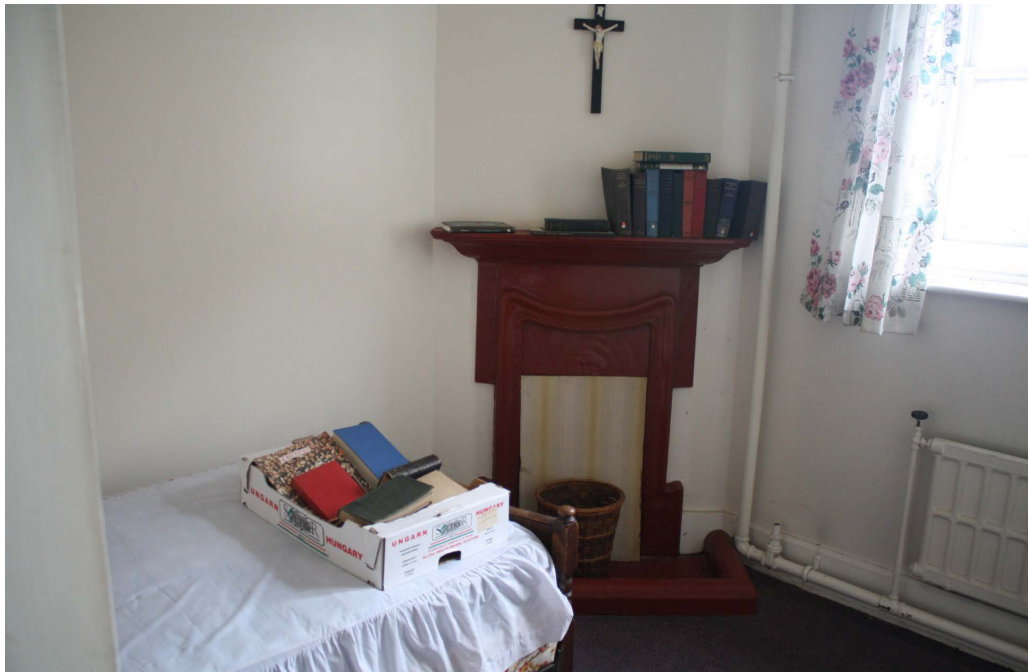
These spaces were in every respect 'adult' spaces – there were no comparable rooms for the penitent 'children'. Moreover, they often also doubled up as reception rooms for visitors, in much the same way that drawing rooms in family homes operated as suggested by Jane Hamlett, 'from the point of view of the family the most important visitors were those from their own social class, who were generally received in the drawing room'.²²

There is no evidence that nuns regarded the overtly familial structure of an organisation that manifestly rejected family life as ideologically problematic, despite the fact that it was not

rooted in any conventual tradition. The elevation of notions of family within religious communities seems to reflect the growing emphasis on the nuclear family in wider society – the familial structure was much looser in English medieval orders with Abbesses or Prioresses overseeing the community rather than mothers and there was a complete absence of either symbolic or actual 'children' within the convent.²³

Stuart suggests that the family structure of the convent deliberately infantilised the adult penitents in order to suppress their sexuality: 'for the convent residents, the closeted environment

Figure 3
Nun's cell at St
Michael's Convent,
Waterlooville.
Source: author.



of the nunnery created particular limitations on sexual expression²⁴ Keeping the women spatially and imaginatively as 'children', limited their sense of themselves as sexual beings and helped the process of reconstructing them.

Convents, then, were constructed to both enable physical segregation and also foster a sense of otherness (as children and as transgressors) within the penitents. Indeed, we might read the division of space within the convent in Foucauldian terms; the 'normal/abnormal' categories forming the basis of Utilitarian operations of power. In the refuge, 'normal' translated as clean/chaste and abnormal as soiled/defiled and while the aim was to sanitise and transform, the anxiety to prevent cross-contamination in the process was all-consuming.

How, then, did women religious imagine that sin was communicable? All of the orders that operated convents focused on sexual transgression, reflecting, as suggested earlier, a wider anxiety about women engaging in prostitution and extra-marital sex. In secular society, the ostensible justification for this was to halt the spread of sexually transmitted diseases. In Roman and Anglo Catholic circles, a fate even more wretched than disease awaited transgressors – eternal damnation. For Catholics the greatest threat of corruption was posed by the corrupted and the most vulnerable to this were the purest – thus the convent was composed of the most potentially destructive combination of inmates. Accordingly, a great deal of written material produced within the orders is concerned with the prevention of penitents introducing nuns to vice.

Outside the convent, the contrasting figures of the nun and the prostitute, unsurprisingly, provoked much comment.

In his sociological analysis of the GSS asylums Peter Hughes suggests that the rigidly enforced prohibition of any mention of the penitents' past reflected an anxiety that the subject might be sexually arousing for both penitents and nuns.²⁵ Wantonness amongst the inmates was, of course, a given but the endless iteration of chastity within the convent Rule served to also acknowledge nun's sexual desire by emphasising its corollary – self-abnegation. The plea for prayers of intercession by one GSS sister, that: 'I may never for one moment offend against my Vow of Chastity...as I know the dangers before me...and I know my own weakness by experience', illustrate this hardship.²⁶ I suggest that a gaze mediated by reprobation and self-denial was a determining factor in the architectural design of convents.

Bentham's Panopticon and the convent

The controlled gaze was central in the functioning of the convent, as it was in the structure of secular reformatories. As discussed earlier, Foucault suggests that late eighteenth-century Utilitarianism introduced a philosophy of control based on the supposedly empirical properties of human behaviour: those which could be reduced into binary subsets of a normal/abnormal paradigm. Understanding human nature in Manichaeian terms was not in itself pioneering – the philosophical shift lay in the proposal that these were mutable traits, contingent on circumstance. The necessary conclusion of this

was that if society created aberrance then society could cure it and the remedy was made concrete (in theory, at least) in Jeremy Bentham's design for the panopticon – an architectural device for transforming and rehabilitating the criminal, idle and insane.

Bentham opened his treatise on the panopticon without modesty: 'morals reformed – health preserved – industry invigorated instruction diffused...all by a simple idea in architecture!'. The 'simple idea' was a circular building composed of individual cells organised vertically around an internal 'annular area' at the centre of which was an observation hub or 'inspector's lodge'. The cells were intended for single occupation and each had two windows: one at the rear to allow daylight and one at the front to allow inspection. The inspector's lodge had windows that provided full view of each inmate but, importantly, the backlighting of the cells obscured the inmates' view of the inspector. In this way, inmates were made aware that they were under surveillance at all times even if, in fact, the 'inspector's lodge' was empty. To Bentham's disappointment, no true panopticon was ever built but the theory proved enduringly influential not simply in the production of quasi-panoptic architecture but as a tool of social control. Foucault's argument that the panopticon permanently reversed the pre-industrial model of mass observation of a spectacle to individual observation of the masses continues to be persuasive in an age minutely documented by the ubiquitous surveillance camera.

Bentham's design for the panopticon was developed simultaneously with, not only

the fledgling 'human sciences' but also the expansion of medicine broadly and, specifically, the development of epidemiology – fields of knowledge which were in continual dialectical conversation. The notion of contagion gained particular purchase in nineteenth-century social and scientific discourse, giving rise to both significant medical breakthroughs but also credence to a raft of pernicious pseudo-sciences – among the least edifying being those concerned with the sexual behaviour of women.²⁷ Out of this ideological miasma emerged both secular and religious institutions dedicated to curbing the spread of moral decay: a disease, according to the propaganda of these establishments, carried largely by women. Curative and transformative technologies in such places were informed by enlightenment sciences even where, as in the case of convents, the ideology of an establishment stood in defiant opposition to empiricist philosophy.

Despite its widespread influence in the architecture of reformatories, there is no evidence that any convents were built specifically according to Bentham's directions for a panopticon. None were circular in layout and none had central observation towers. There was little in the highly specialised design of these buildings that appeared to promote transparency – In addition to direct supervision, observation of the penitents was effected through a variety of oblique methods, such as the positioning of mirrors (which were forbidden in the penitents quarters so as not to encourage vanity) in strategic places.²⁸ And yet, tightly controlled (if indirect) observation and

segregation, the rationale for the panopticon, were also the principal mechanisms for operation of the orders' Rules.

Although a loosely 'panopticalised' philosophy is discernible in the architecture of the convent, I suggest that the observational framework within these institutions was unlike those of any other correctional, medical or educational facilities of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. From a secular perspective, the convent was neither a reproduction nor an inversion of the unidirectional gaze of the panopticon but instead was a finely wrought, multi-dimensional organism in which a range of different groups were, for very particular reasons, visible at certain times, in certain places and to certain people. A single uninterrupted view of the whole was afforded to the only figure qualified to pass judgment on all members of the community – God. The gaze was critical to the formation of both the architecture and the Rule of orders, permeating every aspect of the industrial, domestic and ritual functions of convent life.

Staging the spectacle

The mission of the convent was to provide refuge and care whilst at the same time inculcating penitence and thus effecting spiritual and moral reformation. To this end, the spectacle of inspirational or devotional figures was the cornerstone of a process of learning by example. As discussed earlier, Foucault has suggested that the panopticon reversed the paradigm of mass onlookers to observed masses. If we accept Foucault's account, then the convent, though influenced by secular principles of discipline, fails

to conform to a rigidly panoptic model, for it is through observation of spectacles such as the Mass, devotional processions and iconography, the ritual of consecration and the exemplary nuns themselves that transformation of the penitent masses was intended to take place.

The gaze had a particular theological role in Roman Catholic culture. The centrality of devotional effigies in worship, a feature that was spotlighted in the nineteenth-century by Protestant accusations of idolatry, suggests that visual stimuli played an important part in the spirituality of female religious orders. Nuns and penitents alike sought inspiration in representations of the Virgin Mary, the Sacred Heart and images within the convent were carefully selected for their edifying properties. The Rule of the GSS demanded, for example, that 'There shall be no pictures or images in the convent or chapel except such as are calculated to excite devotion'. Saints were intercessory in the relationship between God and worshipper and their effigies refracted the human gaze heavenward. In return, the Divine, omniscient gaze was diffused across humanity.

A controlled bilateral gaze operated between sisters and penitents. In those orders whose apostolate included the reformation of penitents, transformation was effected through the studied observation of exemplary figures, both allegorical and real. Here, sisters as 'spotless lilies', provided the penitents with a constant, highly visible source of inspiration. A constitutional endorsement of this tactic appears in the introduction in some communities of the Order.²⁹ The sister, a figure marked out by her black dress and silver cross

was installed within the penitent ranks as a visible exemplar, in the belief that atonement ‘needed to be sustained by good example’.⁵⁰ The penitents’ aspirational gaze took place under the supervisory gaze of the sisters assigned to watch over them.

I suggest, however, that the ‘supervisory gaze’ of the sisters was more than observational. Those sisters who did not supervise penitents were either physically prevented or directly instructed not to look at them, as the SMG Common Rule directs: ‘The sisters are to pass the girls by as if they never saw them...’⁵¹ Here, the desire **not** to see presumes an involuntary desire **to** see.

Masking the spectacle

Whilst real women were not to be looked upon, the fall of the penitent operated, as it did for many others, as muse for women religious (Mary, for example, was frequently represented in the paintings and statues that decorated convents) and the literature and imagery of the ‘fallen’ was often sentimental as figure 4 illustrates. Of the great many photographs that were taken of convents, a surprising number were of penitents and, though these were not romanticised, they were certainly composed in ways that were rich with meaning. The photographs taken of penitents by the SMGs are particularly interesting as the penitents are only ever shown with their backs to the camera. Though it is very likely that these images were composed in order to protect the anonymity of women who would be returned to secular society, the staging also seems to echo the traditional classroom punishment of facing the wall and, importantly, reveals a great deal about

the structures of observation in refuge orders. The picture in figure 5 is of penitents and sisters outside the Russell House refuge in Streatham, South London. The group of sisters is oriented slightly towards the group of penitents who are facing the wall. Neither group can see the other: the penitents because of their orientation and the sisters because their eyes are closed in prayer. The image perfectly illustrates the notion of imaginary screens that is suggested by the SMG Rule quoted above – here the women are present in the same space but invisible to one another.

The need for sisters to create visual barriers between themselves and the penitents (whether material or imaginary) in all of the refuge orders suggests a preoccupation with the appearance of the penitents. In her 1975 essay ‘Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema’, Laura Mulvey employs the notion of *scopophilia* to make a psychoanalytical reading of the gaze. In discussing ‘fascination with the human form’ she suggests that: ‘there are circumstances in which looking itself is a source of pleasure, just as, in the reverse formation, there is pleasure in being looked at.’⁵² In figure 6 it would seem that the very act of not looking apophatically emphasises the significance of looking. As the custodians of a secret and dangerous knowledge, the penitents must have been objects of curiosity for the sisters and the instruction not to look, whether consciously or not, acknowledges this. Moreover, the symmetry in the configuration of the photograph in figure 6 – both are separately but simultaneously engaged in prayer – hints at an important theological feature of refuge life: that both sisters and penitents were sinners who

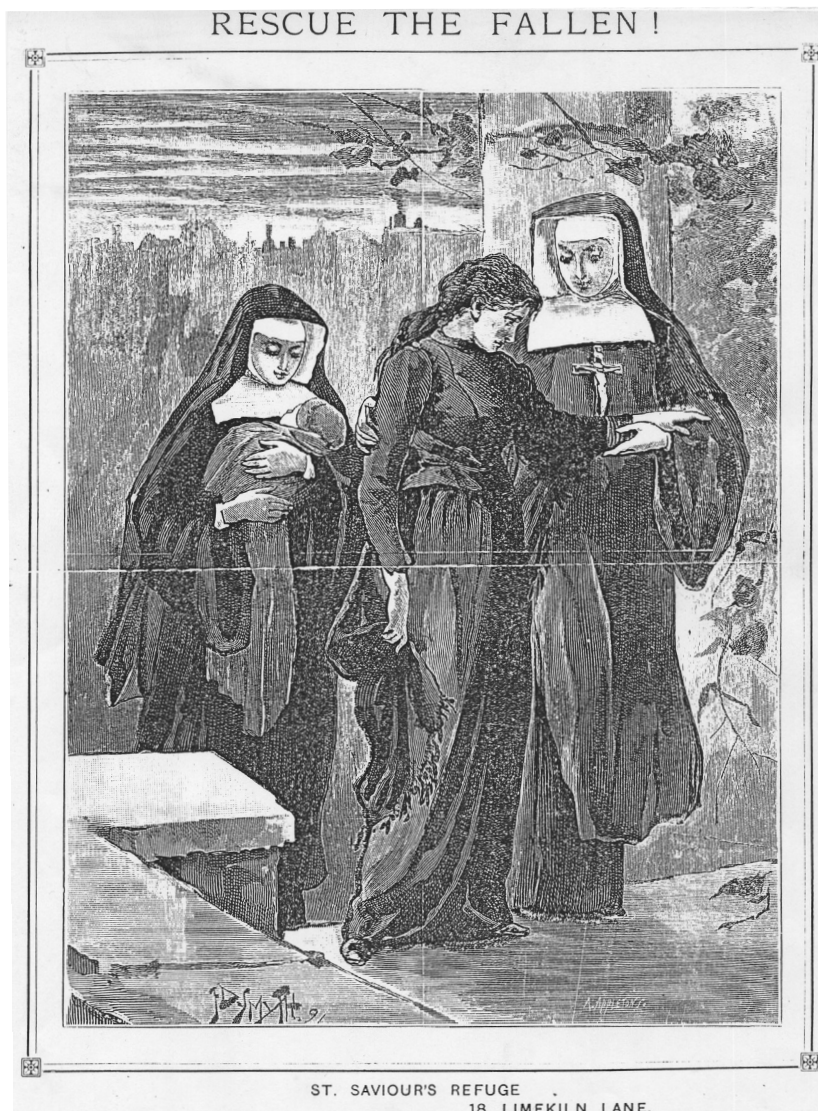
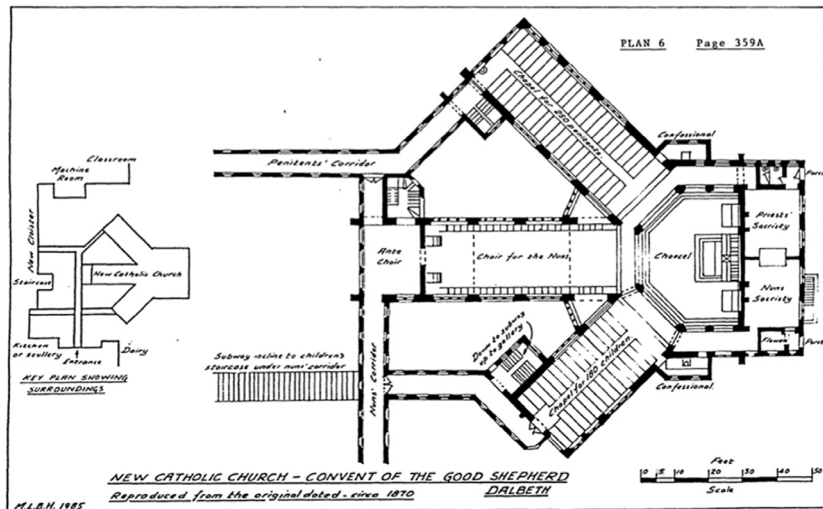


Figure 4
Liverpool Refuge
illustration, 'Rescue
the Fallen' Source:
SMG Archive ref C.L
p.66. Reproduced by
permission of the
Generalate of the Poor
Servants of the Mother
of God

Figure 5
 Penitents and Sisters
 at St Mary's Streatham.
 Source: SMG Archive
 ref Album IIG/1/3.
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 Generalate of the Poor
 Servants of the Mother
 of God



Figure 6
 Plan of 'fan-shaped'
 chapel at the Good
 Shepherd Convent,
 Dalbeth, Glasgow.
 Source: Peter Hughes



sought spiritual transformation.

As the photograph indicates, sisters and penitents had to share communal spaces and partake in communal activities such as Mass and since budgets rarely allowed for separate chapels, a range of strategies to simultaneously display and conceal were devised.

Controlling the spectacle

The most extraordinary spatial articulation of the mediated gaze in the convent were the fan-shaped chapels built in England and Scotland between the mid-nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries by the GSS and OLC.³³ In fact, the fan-shaped chapel appears to be the first significant deviation from either the basilican or cruciform layout in any British Catholic Church and it would not be until the reforms of the Second Vatican Council in 1962 that the architects of parish churches would experiment with liturgical space to this degree. I will argue that the fan-shaped chapel is the only space within the convent in which the structure of the gaze is choreographed to reproduce the panopticon, albeit in ways that entirely unsettle the Benthamite model.

The first fan-shaped chapel in the UK was probably built at the Convent of the Good Shepherd in Dalbeth, Glasgow.³⁴ The convent annals indicate that, although plans were submitted for a chapel in 1855 by George Goldie, the chapel was not completed until 1866 and it is unclear whether Goldie, who designed the rest of the convent buildings, was the architect. The plan in figure 6, taken from the GSS archives, bears the date 1870 and since the church was

built just four years earlier, it is reasonable to infer that these plans record the layout of church as it stood, perhaps for the purpose of some addition or amendment to the design.

The space comprises two naves set at forty-five degree angles to a central nave (the nun's choir). At the eastern end is the sanctuary, with the altar abutting the eastern wall. The position of the altar against the wall distinguishes Catholic from Protestant churches – in traditional Catholic worship, the presence of God in the consecrated sacrament means that the priest cannot turn his back to the altar and so the Mass is said with all communicants, including the priest, facing the eastern wall.

The Mass was observed with orthodox ritual in all refuge orders and accordingly the priest faced the altar throughout the ceremony. Though the configuration meant that some worshippers had a restricted view of the Mass, it enabled the three separate congregations to participate at the same time but without sight of one another. As has been discussed, the desire to categorize and segregate informed all aspects of refuge life and its significance was such that even catching sight of one another in uncontrolled circumstances was thought to be a danger. Although the design of the work and domestic areas required a complex conceptualisation of the space, the provision of separate buildings or wings for penitents ensured that most nuns could be kept apart from most penitents at most times, the one place where all were compelled to be together was the chapel and the maintenance of segregation presented obvious logistical problems.

The difficulty of separating congregations was not new. It was relatively common for pre-reformation contemplative orders to build chapels that served a lay parish. Strict enclosure demanded that religious were kept from view of the laity and so extern chapels, attached to the convent or monastery were built at right angles to the sanctuary. The religious received the Eucharist through a grille in the wall separating the extern

chapel and sanctuary. This simple configuration, which continues to be reproduced today in the chapels of some enclosed communities (albeit without the grille) allowed an easy separation of two congregations. Even simpler divisions were sometimes made by erecting a screen to bisect the chapel across an east/west axis. A common feature of convents which housed a novitiate was to create a screened area behind the nuns

Figure 7
Nun's choir at the
Good Shepherd
Convent chapel at Ford,
Liverpool, c.1880s.
(Source: Bootle Times)



choir (the nave bisected north to south) where the novices could observe mass. Here, however, where the need to segregate was less pressing, the Eucharist was received communally.

Where multiple discrete groups were present in large refuge institutions, however, base-line separation could be achieved in no less than three groupings. In earlier convents, the groups comprised nuns, penitents and preservation girls (the need to separate the latter – women who had fallen and girls who easily might – having some urgency). Later, the fan-shaped device was used to separate the nun and penitent congregations from lay parishioners – bishops frequently asking women's orders of various ministries to provide places for lay worship in burgeoning parishes.

Both the OLC and GSS had experimented with configurations other than the fan shape for their chapels. At the GSS chapel in Ford, Liverpool (Figure 7) the nave was bisected east to west by a screen, with a transept at right angles to the sanctuary – a design that combined two pre-reformation devices. This was less effective than the fan shape at separating the three congregations but was probably a cheaper alternative. The *Bootle Times* of 1889, reported of the chapel: 'There is a peculiarity about it that we believe is only found in one other church in the kingdom, which is the possibility for three congregations to worship in at the same time, all being able to see the altar, but yet unable to see one another.'³⁵

In fact, there were at least two other chapels that fitted this description by 1889 – Dalbeth and the OLC convent at Bartestree – but the

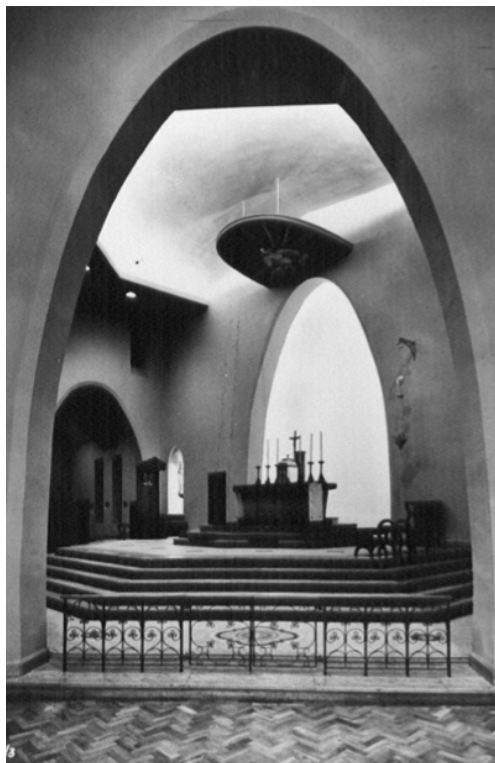


Figure 8
Fan-shaped chapel at the Convent of the Good Shepherd, Bishopton by Thomas Cordiner, 1955. (Source: reproduced by permission of the Good Shepherd Sisters, Province of Great Britain).

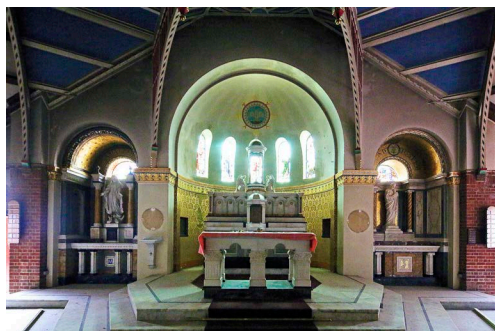


Figure 9
Chapel at St Michael's Convent, Waterloo. (Source: Sirj Photography)

Figure 10
Chapel at St Michael's
Convent, Waterlooville.
(Source: Sirj
Photography)



report confirms that this was a highly unusual configuration.³⁶ By the end of the nineteenth century both the GSS and OLC seem to have favoured, where budgets and space permitted, the fan shape. In addition to Dalbeth, fan-shaped chapels were built at Waterlooville, at Stapleton in Kent in 1901 (by Pugin and Pugin) and another, as late as 1955, in Bishopton by Thomas Cordiner (Figure 8).

I have noted, here, the names of the architects responsible for providing plans for these churches but it seems clear that, with the possible exception of the first example in England (Dalbeth) the sisters themselves requested the fan shape.³⁷ The annals of the OLC, for example, reveal that Bishop Vertue gave his consent for the sisters to 'think out [a] plan'³⁸ for the new church at St Michael's, Waterlooville, and they travelled first to the OLC Convent in High Park to inspect the chapel (a T-shape configuration). The sisters at High Park suggested that they visit the GSS convent at Dalbeth for inspiration (Figures 10 & 11).³⁹ The sisters did so and made the decision to base their

church on the fan-shaped plan, as the annals record:

...it was there that they found exactly what they required, at least the idea of three in one, and the Sisters part completely private and enclosed. Though the journey was tiring, it was worth it. After a few hours with these dear Sisters, the visitors returned to High Park, quite pleased with the place. It is practically on these lines that the present beautiful church is built in our monastery, with many improvements and additions to suit the needs of the Children and the public.⁴⁰

The plan for the chapel at Dalbeth shown in figure 7 indicates that, as at St Michaels, Waterlooville, access to the chapel was complex – indeed the children (in this case actual children) appear to have entered their nave from a subway. This has echoes of the vast GSS Mother House at Angers in which a network of tunnels allowed the many different groups to traverse the site without being seen by one another (Figure 11).

I have not been able to uncover an obvious precedent for the design of the fan-shaped chapel and it is not clear whether it was one that the sisters had already experimented with in France, developed in Ireland (the OLC arrived in Ireland in 1833 and the GSS in 1835) or designed, perhaps with the help of Goldie, for the first time in Dalbeth.⁴¹ It is certainly the case, however, that there were a range of architectural devices employed in both religious and secular institutions that might have been influential. Radial plans such as those at the Maison de Force in Ghent (c1770s) which

comprised eight trapezoidal arms, and Pentonville Prison (1842) comprising five radiating wings, were well-known models for correctional architecture.

Though this article is chiefly concerned with the internal spatial arrangements of the convent, it is important to note the significance of aesthetics. The question of architectural style, though perhaps not the most pressing consideration for nuns was, nevertheless, an important matter. It is not a coincidence that the convent at St Michael's, Waterlooville, for example, resembles the mother house in Caen. Nor is it by chance that the OLC sisters selected, from a range of mid-Victorian possibilities, an ostentatiously gothic style for

their convent at Bartestree, or that the GSS chose gothic for their convent at Hammersmith – in both cases, this was likely seen as an appropriate monastic style that would mask the secular appearance of the laundry work that took place either inside or behind the convent. In all cases, the chapels of convents were built in either neo-gothic or neo-byzantine styles.

The plans for the chapel at Dalbeth and the standing architecture at St Michael's, Waterlooville (the only extant fan-shaped chapel in England) offer a vital insight into the theological and social structures of the convent. As the Dalbeth plan shows, the three congregations were made up of

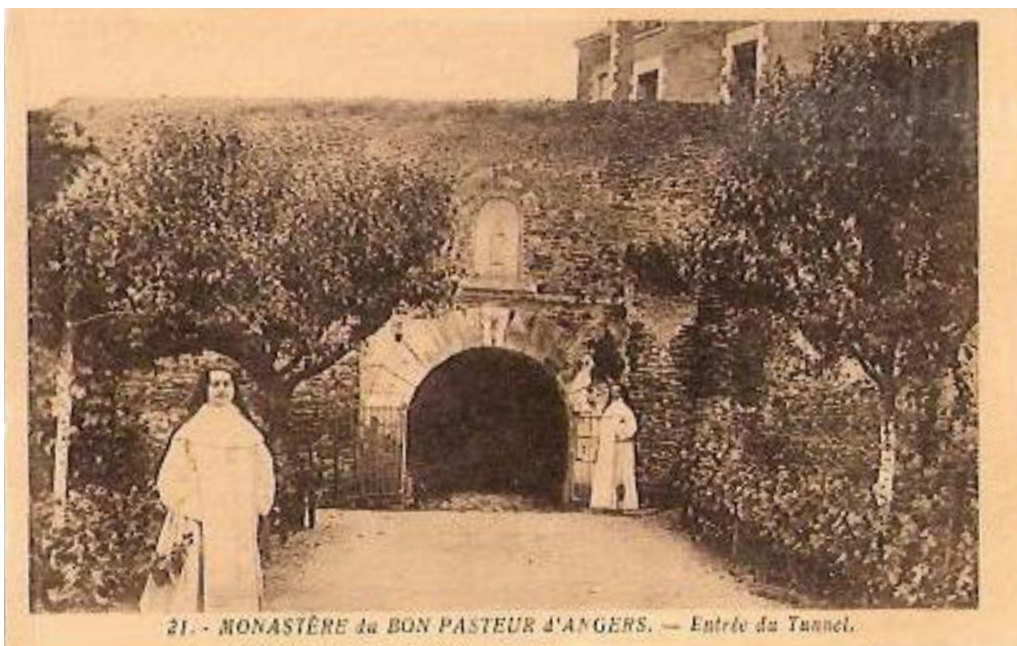


Figure 11
Tunnels at the Mother House in Angers.
Source: GSS Archives, Angers.

refuge inmates. The different access routes give an idea of the complexity of the wider refuge and the way that the chapel operates as a locus, connecting all of the discrete areas of the site and symbolically bringing all inmates together, as equals, before God. The uniform decoration in all three naves of chapels such as that at St Michael's, Waterlooville, indicates, perhaps surprisingly, that despite segregation there was a commonality in the sensory experience of worship. Here only the superior, the mistress of novices and the mistress of penitents occupy markedly different positions to the other worshippers within the space (Figures 14 and 15).

Figure 12
Mother Superior's
throne in the Church
of the Sacred
Heart, Waterlooville.
(Source: author)



I have suggested that observation was organised across multiple axes throughout the convent but in the chapel the arrangement of the gaze altered. Here *all* deferred to God who replaced all observers and reduced all to the observed. At first glance, the fan-shaped chapel appears to reverse the panoptic model by situating the priest as a central focal point for multiple groups of observers. But, in fact, the mechanism of control through observation is played out in the fan-shaped chapel in a way that almost perfectly reproduces the panopticon. The transformands are positioned radially around the altar but cannot see each other. Although the priest can be seen by the congregation, he cannot see them as he celebrates Mass with his back to the naves. In this way, all are oriented towards the actual body (and eye) of Christ which resides in the sacrament placed upon the altar or within the Tabernacle (standing in for the inspector's lodge). All worshippers know that they are being watched and modify their behaviour accordingly. But the compelling paradox in both the material and conceptual design of the fan-shaped chapel is that it borrowed from an atheist architecture that explicitly replaced God with the human, in order to install God as the 'inspector'. Had the nuns rationalised it in such terms, they may have enjoyed this irony. An alternative reading, of course, is that the most potent articulation of the fan-shaped chapel is not of a shared and sacred humility before God but rather a profane expression of control of one human over another – a spatial apartheid that continually buttressed authority and superiority.

The structure of both the fan-shaped chapel and the convent, though deviating, as has been described, in particular ways from secular models of control and discipline, nevertheless produced patriarchal forms of power. There has been some suggestion that the refuge work undertaken by nuns represented a feminised and therefore compassionate and understanding attitude towards prostitution. There is certainly evidence to suggest that nuns took the trouble to consider the root causes of vice – rape, abuse and poverty

but the overarching emphasis in refuge orders on penitence, particularly in light of the fact the nuns were apparently aware that many women had been raped and exploited, rather undermines this argument. Indeed, as the historians Susan Mumm, Maria Luddy and Martha Vicinus point out, at no point were nuns involved in movements that sought to address the causes rather than palliate the effects of the sex trade.⁴² No religious orders lent vocal support to Josephine Butler's campaign to repeal the degrading Contagious Diseases

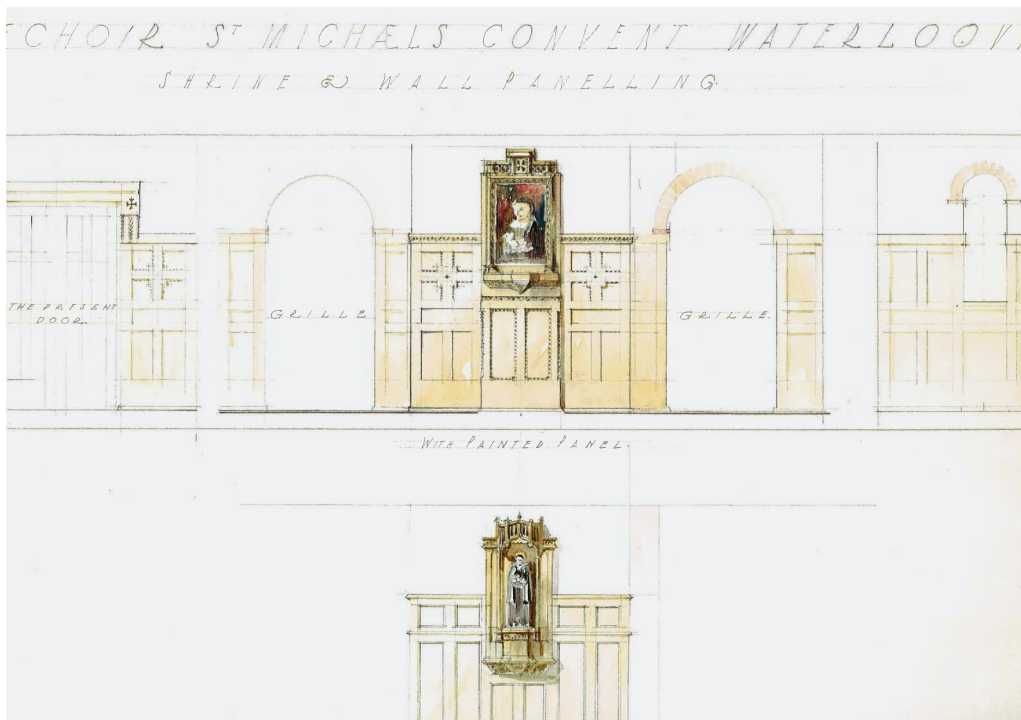
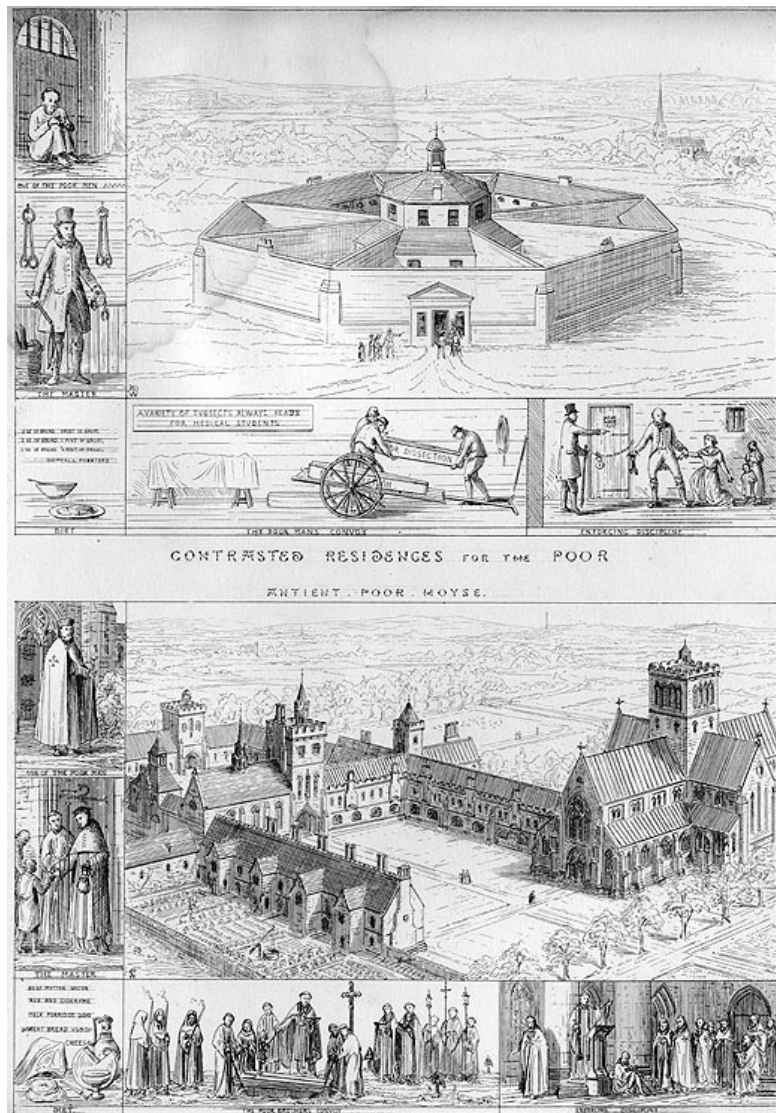


Figure 13
W.C. Mangan's sketch for the Mother Superior's throne, Waterloo. (Source: Archives of the Sisters of Our Lady of Charity and Refuge.)

Figure 14
 'Contrasted residences
 for the poor' suggested
 by Pugin in his 1836
 publication, *Contrasts*.
 (Source: *Contrasts*
 or a parallel between
 the noble edifices of
 the middle ages and
 corresponding buildings
 of the present day;
 shewing the present
 decay of taste.
 www.archive.org)



Acts or to raise the age of consent. While it is clear, then, that refuge orders were driven by the desire to do good, this was bound by a doctrine that refused to challenge the deeply unjust status quo. That this was the case, perhaps reflected nineteenth-century Christian teaching on the nature of women and original sin and it might be reasonable to infer that nuns saw refuge work, in some measure, as atonement for the sins of their sex.

This does not mean, however, that they operated under the direct auspices of men. All of the convents discussed in this article were managed autonomously by nuns and two of the orders (the GSS and SMG) were founded by women according to Rules that they themselves had written. The phenomenon of women choosing to exercise autonomy to ends that appear self-limiting is not confined to women's religious orders but it finds a powerful expression here. What can be said of female agency in refuge orders is that, for whatever reason, many women were drawn to and chose this mission. From within the boundaries of a theological framework, they conceived ways of inculcating atonement, then designed and built the conceptual and physical structures required to enact it. A critical analysis that aims to view the agency of nuns engaged in refuge work through the historical prism of feminism needs to be made cautiously.

Conclusion

Victorian convents were a unique and complex synthesis of Roman Catholic theology and the Enlightenment philosophies of discipline

articulated in secular reformatories. They sought to assert themselves as religious institutions by wrapping the mechanical, utilitarian structure of the convent in a politely historicised architectural skin. In so doing, they fuse the 'ancient' and 'modern' imagined by Pugin in his polemical treatise *Contrasts*, and thus reveal the inherent fallacy of his dichotomy (Figure 14).

This is not to suggest, however, that there was a conflict between the technology of the convent and its outer appearance or that there was anything disingenuous about its operations. The expansive and creative religious culture of Roman Catholic orders embraced paradox – it is not by chance that the symbolic figurehead of these orders is Mary who is at once both saint and sinner. For the sisters who shaped the rules and material spaces of convents, the desire to transform and spiritually cleanse the fallen was paramount and inspiration for ways to achieve this might be sought wherever necessary – if prisons rather than monasteries provided a convenient plan for convent chapels then this was God's will. Convents, as with modern-era religious houses of other orders and denominations represented a new building type – neither sacred spaces nor institutions, neither residential sites nor reformatories, neither industrial nor domestic. They are simultaneously all of these things, intoning a chorus of secular and religious ideologies that reveal vital insights into shifting attitudes towards sexual morality through the nineteenth century.

Notes and References

- 1 For a full discussion of prostitution and the Contagious Diseases Act see J. Walkovitz, *Prostitution and Victorian Society: Women, Class and the State*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1980.
- 2 T. Markus, *Buildings and Power: Freedom and Control in the Origin of Modern Building Types*, London, Routledge, 1993.
- 3 R. O'Donnell
- 4 See R. O'Donnell, *The Pugins and the Catholic Midlands*, Gracewing Publications, 2002 and T. Brittain-Catlin, T., 'A.W.N. Pugin's English Convent Plans' *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol. 65, No. 3, Sept., 2006.
- 5 T. Markus, *Buildings and Power*, p. 95
- 6 M. Ogborn, *Spaces of Modernity*, New York: The Guildford Press, 1998, p. 64
- 7 S. Nash, 'Prostitution and Charity: the Hospital, a Case Study' in *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 17, No. 4 (Summer, 1984) p.621
- 8 F. Steele, *The Convents of Great Britain*, Roehampton: John Griffin, 1901, p. 121
- 9 D. Evinson, *Pope's Corner: Historical Survey of the Roman Catholic Institutions in the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham*, Fulham & Hammersmith Hist.Soc., First Edition edition, Dec. 1980. p.37.
- 10 It should be noted that the SMGs introduced laundry work not only for refuge women but also as a means to generate an income for the sisters who, themselves often worked in the laundries and as employment for poor women in the community as the following makes clear. 'The primary idea was that each house should have some industrial work by which the members living therein should be supported wholly or in part, while labouring among the poor, but experience proved this plan to be unfeasible. The employments by which religious women can gain their bread and the bread of the poor are not numerous, and it was found that laundry work was the best occupation for the purpose that could be found.' 'Memories of the Early Days by Sr Mary Katherine' n.d. [post-1884] (ref SMG Archive ref C.D.11)
- 11 M. E. Herbert, *The Two Sisters, a Tale for the Good Shepherds* p. 41. 'In two separate wings of the same building lived, according to the arrangements of Father Eudes, his daughters of light and peace, and the daughters of the deepest of degradation and misery. There was but one door of communication between the monastery'. For a description of spatial division according to the Rule see also, 'Second Report Of The Order Of Our Lady Of Charity And Refuge', *Irish Quarterly Review*, (1860:Jan.)
- 12 'Rules of Mother Foundress for the guidance of the Sister in Charge of the Girls' - SMG Archive ref C.C2 p.146
- 13 Taylor, F., *Religious Orders or Sketches or Orders and Congregations of Women*, London, Burns and Lambert, 1862.
- 14 M. LaMonaca, *Masked Atheism: Catholicism and the Secular Victorian Home*, Columbia, The Ohio State University Press, 2008 and M. Wheeler, *Catholic and Protestant in nineteenth-century English Culture*, Cambridge, 2006.
- 15 Although nuns regarded themselves as being 'married' to Christ and often wore rings on their marriage finger, they referred to themselves as 'brides' rather than 'wives'.
- 16 Rules and Constitutions of the Poor Servants of the Mother of God, no.58.
- 17 M. Stuart, *Not Quite Sisters: Women With Learning Disabilities Living in Convent Homes*. Worcestershire, BILD Publications, 2002. p.117.
- 18 *Ibid.*
- 19 In her volume, *Convents of Great Britain and Ireland*, Francesca Steele describes the distinctive layout of

Good Shepherd convents: 'The penitents' part of the house is entirely separate from the nuns' convent, there is a cloister between, but the door is always locked, and never under any circumstances do the penitents enter the convent. The nuns are said to be at home in their convent, and on duty when with their 'children.' Steele, p. 245.

- 20 Stefan Muthesius describes the private sphere of the family as being a 'relentless process of differentiation and segregation' Quoted in J. Hamlett, *Materialising Gender: Identity and middle class domestic interiors 1850-1910*, PhD thesis, Royal Holloway, University of London, 2005. Also J. Hamlett, *Material Relations: Domestic Interiors and Middle Class Families in England, 1850-1910*, Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2010. For further analysis of domestic interiors, see L. Davidoff and C. Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and women of the English middle classes 1780-1850*, London, Hutchinson, 1987.
- 21 Anonymous, *The Home of the Lost Child, a tale of the Asylum of the Good Shepherd, Hammersmith*, London, C. Dolman, 1848, p.24. Although this is a work of fiction, it was written by a member of the community and is set at the GSS convent at Hammersmith. The outline of the Rule, Charism and operations of the community clearly describe those of the GSS and so it can be assumed that this is an accurate description of the real convent.
- 22 J. Hamlett, *Material Relations: Domestic Interiors and Middle Class Families in England, 1850-1910*, Manchester and New York, Manchester University Press, 2010, p. 33
- 23 The ascent of the nuclear family has been the subject of much debate since Lawrence Stone asserted, in L. Stone, *The Family Sex and Marriage*, Weidenfeld, 1977 that kinship networks were elided by a growing emphasis on the smaller family. Naomi Tadmor and others have argued that this is an oversimplification of a complex picture of continuity and change. Whilst the picture of actual relations is certainly more complicated than Stone suggests, the proliferation of prescriptive Victorian literature implies that the idealised nuclear family had a strong and widely influential cultural currency.
- 24 Stuart, *Not Quite Sisters: Women With Learning Disabilities Living in Convent Homes*. Worcestershire, BILD Publications, 2002.
- 25 Hughes, p. 52.
- 26 Ibid. p. 353.
- 27 See Ferrero, G, L., *Criminal Man, According to the Classification of Cesare Lombroso*, London, G. P., Putnum's Sons, 1911.
- 28 In her unpublished research, Mary Coote suggests that at the Anglican Clewer asylum, mirrors were positioned so that nun's could observe women, unseen.
- 29 GSS and some Anglican communities such as the Sisters of St John the Baptist at Clewer
- 30 Hughes, p. 76.
- 31 SMG common rules no 18 - it is important to remember that the SMGs did not segregate lay women from sisters to the same degree as the GSS and OLC. The lack of physical boundaries meant that imaginary ones sometimes had to stand in their place.
- 32 L. Mulvey, 'Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema' originally published in *Screen* 16.3 Autumn 1975 pp. 6-18. <http://imlportfolio.usc.edu/ctcs505/mulveyVisualPleasureNarrativeCinema.pdf> pp 2-3
- 33 No evidence exists that any other religious orders in the UK built chapels in this configuration
- 34 I have found no evidence for a chapel of this configuration in any of the standing chapels if the OLC or GSS in France.
- 35 'Our Churches Past and Present', Article VI Church of the "Sacred Heart" Ford. *The Bootle Times*, 30th March 1889
- 36 By 1889 there were numerous GSS and OLC foundations in the UK. If there were more three nave

chapels in other of their refuges, the novelty of the one at Ford described in this article suggests that they weren't a common feature of the institutions built by these orders, at this point. It is important to note, though, that these spaces fiercely guarded their privacy and the *Boole Times* was unlikely to have conducted very extensive research.

- 37 This configuration is exclusive to the GSS and OLC and none of the architects who supplied plans are known to have replicated it elsewhere.
- 38 *Annals of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd*, p. 28.
- 39 The chapel at St Michael's Convent (1885) is outside the time frame of this article being built in 1925. However, it followed precisely the same pattern as earlier fan-shaped chapels, serving a community whose practices had remained the same since the order arrived in the UK in 1840s.
- 40 *Ibid*
- 41 There is some anecdotal evidence that the GSS convent in Limerick, founded in 1848, had a chapel that accommodated three congregations but it is not

clear when this might have been built a new chapel was built in 1929). I have not been able to find any evidence for it in photographs of the extant building, now the Limerick school of design. http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_6941/is_2_35/ai_n28434176/. This article suggests, further, that the chapel was accessed by separate tunnels as at Dalbeth. It is not clear who designed the original convent but, significantly, plans for a new oratory in 1877 were drawn up by the firm Goldie and Child. Further three nave churches in Irish GSS refuges might be Wexford 1893, where there was a nave with side aisles, one of which was the 'penitent's chapel'. The GSS in Belfast had just 2 choirs – one for nuns and one for penitents. <http://www.dia.ie/works/view/2853/building/CO.+WEXFORD%2C+NEW+ROSS%2C+CONVENT+OF+THE+GOOD+SHEPHERD>.

- 42 S. Mumm, 'Not worse than other girls: The convent-based rehabilitation of fallen women in Victorian Britain', *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 29, No. 3, Spring 1996, pp. 527-546. M. Vicinus, *A Widening Sphere: Changing roles of Victorian Women*, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1977.

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