

Skirts and Politics. The Cistercian Monastery of Harvestehude and the Hamburg City Council

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IN 1482, CATHARINA ARNDES lifted up her skirts in front of the archbishop's chaplain. She was a respectable townswoman from Hamburg, and her action was carried out in defense of the Cistercian monastery of Harvestehude which was close to the city and where several of Catharina's nieces lived as nuns. The chaplain, sent by Archbishop Henry of Schwarzburg, had arrived with a delegation consisting of canons from Bremen and Hamburg in order to reform the monastery, but the delegation was unable to defend itself against this particular form of resistance: faced with Catharina's lifted skirts, the delegation was forced to withdraw. The monastery remained unreformed.¹

This skirt-lifting incident, perceived as an act of obscenity directed towards a man of the Church, occurred at the peak of a complex conflict in late medieval Hamburg. The nuns of the Cistercian monastery of Harvestehude were on one side of this conflict and were supported by the outraged group to which Catharina Arndes belonged. They stood in opposition to the City Council of Hamburg—which in itself was split at that time—on the one hand and representatives of ecclesiastical institutions on the other hand, namely, the delegates of the archbishop of Bremen and the cathedral chapter in Hamburg.²

The most comprehensive source for the conflict of 1482 is a chronicle written by Mayor Herman Langebek (also: Langenbeck), representing an early example of vernacular historiography from pre-Reformation Hamburg.³ A later text, Albert Krantz's *Wandalia*, printed in Cologne in 1519, also by a Hanseatic politician, touches only briefly on the subject and clearly uses Langebek's history as a model and source of information.⁴ Albert Krantz omits the skirt-lifting incident, but highlights the "violence" used by women in defense of the monastery.⁵ In Hamburg and

elsewhere, violent actions performed by “friends” of the nuns, symbolic forms of resistance by the nuns themselves, and the local authorities’ wavering positions were often significant factors in female monasteries’ defense against reform attempts. However, the two lay chroniclers do not think of the Harvestehude episode as a story about successful resistance against monastic reform, but rather as one of several incidents which led to a violent attempt to overthrow the city council one year later in the form of an urban uprising.

The history of the non-reform of Harvestehude in general, and the skirt-lifting episode in particular, has been dealt with uniquely in the context of Hamburg local history.⁶ The case has never been discussed in the context of late medieval monastic reform movements and female resistance against these reforms. For this context of monastic reform movements of the fifteenth century, two relevant contemporary chronicles by reformers are preserved. They describe both the reform attempts and the resistance: the *Liber de reformatione monasteriorum* by Windesheim Canon Johannes Busch (d. 1479/80), who reformed several monasteries of the Augustinian Canons in the 1430s and 40s; and the *Buch der Reformacio* by Dominican Johannes Meyer (1422–82), who was the confessor of several reformed female monasteries in southern Germany.⁷ These chronicles provide many examples of female resistance against reform attempts in other monasteries in the northern German territories, for example those in the nearby Lüneburg Heath (Walsrode, Wennigsen, Isernhagen, Lüne, Mariensee, Medingen), much more detailed than the information we have about the reform attempt in Harvestehude—which might be the reason for the lack of scholarly interest in this specific monastery.⁸ Nevertheless, records of similar incidents in other monasteries can help to explain several aspects which are undocumented in the Harvestehude case: the reasons for the reform attempt and how it was to have been implemented as well as common forms of resistance against said reforms. In the Harvestehude case, the skirt-lifting Catharina is not a nun, and the chronicle frames the story as being part of the prehistory of another, much more violent conflict in Hamburg one year later. Many of these late medieval conflicts are recorded in urban chronicles similar to the ones by Herman Langebek and Albert Krantz, and even though the involvement of a monastery in

the Hamburg conflicts seems to be unique, the conflict line between city council and religious groups is not. What is original here is the mention of women playing a significant role in the conflicts.⁹ The following article therefore aims to contextualize the historiographical accounts of the Harvestehude case with both records of resistance against the reform of female monasteries and with records of urban conflicts involving religious groups.¹⁰ The question of whether the skirt-lifting episode actually occurred or not is of little importance here; this contextualization will show, however, why it seemed relevant to the chronicler to report it, and thereby generally highlight the way in which late medieval chronicles describe the role of women in anticlerical, often violent conflicts. The family ties and interconnections between the conflicting parties reflect the complex structures of late medieval conflicts involving religious groups. The Harvestehude case is an example of a conflict which does not evolve between clerics and laypeople, but rather between different social groups fighting over the right to represent a monastery. Moreover, in this case, women play a significant role in the attempt to claim male and clerical privileges for themselves as members of an urban upper class.

Reestablishing Non-Existing Rules: Reasons for Reform

Chronicler and Mayor Herman Langebek had originally been destined for a clerical career, which might be one of the reasons why he wrote clearly in favor of the reformers and, above all, of the city council, to which he himself belonged. He had been elected as a mayor in 1482 and was in office together with Mayor Johan Hüge (or Hugen) in the years of the conflict.¹¹ Langebek recounts the Harvestehude conflict in order to illustrate the difficult situation in which the city council found itself during the later uprising when a group of local brewers and other lower craftsmen almost succeeded in overthrowing the council.¹² Men of different social classes are mentioned as negotiators and conflicting parties in the broader context, but the Harvestehude episode is to be the only one in which a woman is mentioned by name among the “rioting masses.”¹³

Langebek entirely omits the reasons for the reform attempt—his concern is not whether or not the reform was necessary. Moreover, the

reasons mentioned in other sources are relatively vague. In November 1482, the Hamburg City Council received a letter from the Bishop of Münster, Henry XXVII of Schwarzburg (1463–96), who was also the administrator of the diocese Hamburg-Bremen and thereby its archbishop.¹⁴ He wrote that he had heard that the nuns of Harvestehude “were improperly going against the righteous order of the rules in many ways, as in going to towns and villages without fear, and letting inappropriate persons into the monastery.”¹⁵ It is not possible to determine if this criticism relied on actual events in Harvestehude of which the bishop had somehow received notice, or if it was simply part of a common political strategy. Reformers almost always invoked the lack of enclosure, the nuns’ private property, and other topoi in order to establish grounds for a reform which was desired based on other, political motivations.¹⁶ There are no other contemporary sources describing the nuns’ conduct, and a critical letter written by a Carthusian monk sixty years prior to the uprising focused not on the *stabilitas loci* and *clausura*, but on the lack of personal poverty and education. Whether or not the sisters’ knowledge of Latin improved after that letter is unknown, but their practice of receiving presents and certain amounts of money as life annuities (*Leibgedinge*), even after their entrance into the monastery, did not change, according to the testaments of Hamburg citizens.¹⁷

Modern scholarly evaluations of the status quo in fifteenth-century female monasteries often rely on the reports made by reformers, as in the highly apologetic report by Johannes Busch about his visitations. Being a reformer himself, it was in his best interest to provide a negative description of the women’s conduct and to present the reform attempts as the righteous way to reestablish rules and obedience. Busch had entered the monastery of Windesheim in 1417, and after the council of Basel had entrusted Windesheim with the reformation of Augustinian houses, he travelled throughout the German territories between 1437 and 1456. The *Liber de reformatione monasteriorum* was written in 1471–75, when Busch looked back at the fights of his younger years and portrayed the early years of the reform movement as more structured and more successful than they probably were in the beginning.¹⁸

In the rare cases in which the nuns themselves produced chronicles or other sources, these portray a different picture of the moral and

spiritual status of their houses.¹⁹ In other words, the resistance becomes more understandable as a defense of autonomy and self-government rather than as a defense of unchastity and disobedience.²⁰ The question regarding which rule system the reform was to reestablish is also crucial in the Harvestehude case. The monastery was founded in 1245 and located at a site close to Hamburg's town walls. In the beginning, it had been a proprietary cloister of the Holstein and Schauenburg founding families and formal incorporation into the Cistercian order had never been the intention. Consequently, the monastery was one of those institutions for nuns which was called *ordinis cisterciensis* but that was not afforded the privilege of exemption from episcopal jurisdiction and thereby a greater amount of autonomy.²¹ The archbishop of Hamburg-Bremen was its legal supervisor, but in practice, the cathedral chapter in Hamburg was responsible for the sisters' *cura animarum* and chose the convent's confessor. The canons served as testifiers in many of the convent's legal actions, and they even traded benefits to a minor extent with the monastery.²² Harvestehude was one of the female monasteries which lived more according to tradition and customs than to a formal rule system. The reform attempt therefore had no clear model of what exactly was to be reestablished in the reform process. Generally, female monasteries belonging to or associated with the Cistercian and Benedictine orders could be reformed after the Windesheim model (as was attempted in Medingen for example, where reformers first tried to put through reforms in 1479 but did not succeed until 1494, and in Wienhausen, reformed in 1469); or after the Bursfeld model as in the cases of Walsrode (reformed in 1475), Ebstorf (1469), Lüne (1481), and Isenhagen (1488). A central point of conflict was the question regarding whom the nuns were to obey: the cathedral chapter, the archbishop, a supervisor from the Cistercian order, or the city council. In general, the Windesheim and Bursfeld reform models had many aspects in common, even though the Bursfeld model was aimed at Benedictine monasteries and implied a close orientation to the original Benedictine rule, while the Windesheim model joined houses of traditional orders and canons as well as many forms of semi-religious life. Both reform models included a simplification of the liturgy and a new social ordering of the members of the community, which usually meant that members of the

nobility had less influence and that the abbot's position was diminished. In the case of Windesheim, all abbots had to renounce the abbacy, and the houses became priories to the mother house. In the Bursfeld case, the abbot was supposed not to stand above the brothers, but rather be one of them. For female convents, this meant a weaker position of the abbesses in favor of a stronger centralization of the administration of the houses. Both reform movements also included increased activity in terms of education, book production, and library organization. The most important aspect was the acceptance of new *consuetudines* as the legal framework of the reform which were inspired, in their turn, by the Windesheim congregation. The Windesheim reform was closely connected to the *devotio moderna* movement of the mother monastery in Zwolle. It led to many lay communities and tertiary orders becoming affiliated with the Augustinian order—an order with a strong focus on the *vita communis* and writing as an ascetic exercise. The Windesheim reform resembles most monastic reform movements in that it did not take the original rule and differences between the orders into account. Resistance against it was therefore especially strong in Benedictine and Cistercian monasteries for which the reform did not signify a reestablishment of an original rule but the imposition of an entirely new one.²³

In other monasteries in which reforms were not welcomed, their economic situation could be an explanation for breaking rules.²⁴ For example, the Provosts of Ebstorf and Lüne were engaged in a long lasting urban conflict and trial called *Lüneburger Prälatenkrieg* (with peaks of conflict between 1445–58) and were therefore absent from the monasteries over long periods of time.²⁵ This had a negative impact on the houses, both economically and politically, because the nuns did not have any formal outside representation during these periods and were not able to sort out many of their internal affairs without their legal supervisor. In addition, the Provost of Medingen was part of the problem before the reform attempts since he used the monastery for personal economic gain. Furthermore, he made the bishop sign a bull which granted him a considerable amount of money from the monastery's treasury when he resigned.²⁶ Economic difficulties like these could have been the reason that some of the nuns went back to live with their families during certain periods and were thereby considered to have broken enclosure.

The economic situation at Harvestehude could also be one explanation for the specific ways in which the nuns were or were not following the rules of a monastic order, especially the sisters' duty to stay within the walls of the monastery. The monastery played a distinct role in the political and economic landscape of late medieval Hamburg. It served as a neutral venue for meetings between the city council, the cathedral chapter, and the Dukes of Holstein. The nuns loaned huge amounts of money to the city council and even some smaller amounts to the cathedral chapter, in spite of the canon law's prohibition of usury. Several transactions of land and services testify to the close association between the monastery and the city council.²⁷ The monastery was not an enclosed prison, but part of a political and economic network, and there were reasons to remain in good relations with the cathedral chapter and the town alike. This in turn made it impossible, however, to comply with the obligation to stay within the monastery's walls and not to allow entry to men.

Besides wanting to improve spiritual and communal life in the monasteries, the reformers also often had economic reasons for wanting to subject a monastery to certain rules and supervision.²⁸ In Wienhausen, the reformer's main concern was the amount of personal property the nuns had accumulated, and the first reform measure was to make them turn over all their money.²⁹ In Wennigsen, the first thing the nuns were required to do was to relinquish their personal property, particularly any tableware used for private dining purposes.³⁰ Furthermore, according to the monastery's own later chronicle, it was not only the private property of the nuns, but also liturgical objects, pictures of saints, and handmade textiles for devotional use that had to be relinquished. The monastery's chronicle sees these measures as a clear attempt to procure personal gain from the reform: "These and other things were stolen by the *Domina* of Derenburg, and she let her maidens and friends in Brunswick and other places sell them for little money."³¹

In the case of Harvestehude, there was a specific economic motivation which the archbishop did not include among his reasons for the need for reform: he wanted to re-possess the village Wellingsbüttel near Hamburg which was owned by the monastery. The Hamburg cathedral chapter had previously prevented him from repurchasing it.³²

Consequently, the reasons given by the archbishop for the need for a reform of Harvestehude cannot be interpreted as righteous moral condemnation, but rather as a *topos* he might have employed for any monastery, even though there are no primary sources from the Harvestehude nuns to correct the faulty impression given by the archbishop.

Changing the Rules: The Reform Process

Reforms of women's monasteries were sometimes welcomed, sometimes feared by the members of a monastic community. We have no record of the Harvestehude nuns' reaction to the archbishop's proclamation, nor even how they received notice of it.

The usual procedure for this kind of reform was the transfer of several nuns from already observant convents to the convent in question who were then supposed to teach the sisters how to put the new *regula* into practice. This also meant that the abbesses and prioresses in charge had to relinquish their functions to the new nuns; consequently, a forced reform was not an easy task to accomplish.³³ In this particular case, the Archbishop of Hamburg-Bremen found an abbess and four sisters in the Diocese of Magdeburg who were to be sent to Harvestehude. The agreement he made with Ernst II. of Saxony, archbishop of Magdeburg and administrator of Halberstadt, sounds like a mercantile contract:

For this purpose we have acquired and kept one abbess and four virgins from the reformed and observant rule of the Cistercian order, well-instructed and educated in the rule, from the honourable lord Ernst, administrator of Magdeburg and Halberstadt, since we had none in our monasteries, nor were we able to get any.³⁴

Archbishop Henry could not find any reformed sisters in the Dioceses of Münster and Bremen who were willing or able to move to Harvestehude, which is surprising since several monasteries under his supervision, such as the Benedictine monastery in Buxtehude in 1477, had already been included in the Bursfeld congregation's reform movement. This reform was a major task that had been undertaken by Henry's predecessor, Johan of Pfalz-Simmern. He had, for example, initiated the reform

of the monastery St. Ägidien in Münster as well as its affiliation to the Bursfeld congregation. Henry himself showed only little interest in the reform movement. He seemed to be busier with the wars with Kleve and Geldern and the subsequent conflicts with the estates of the realm in Münster. In addition, he already had a bad record regarding fruitless reform attempts. One of his early attempts to reform the Cistercian monastery at Rengering had resulted in the partial destruction of the monastery in a fire set by the bishop's ambassador.³⁵ Rengering was a monastery which had strived to become incorporated into the Cistercian order in its early days in the middle of the thirteenth century but had not succeeded. Instead, it received papal privileges that ordered that its legal status be similar to a fully incorporated monastery as far as exemption from episcopal jurisdiction was concerned. The burning of the monastery by the frustrated reformer did not help; the nuns "remained the same after as they had been before."³⁶

The assumption in previous research that Harvestehude was to be reformed after the Bursfeld model has been deduced from the fact that one of the archbishop's delegates, Johan Murmester, canon in Hamburg and provost in Buxtehude, had already been involved in the same process in Reinfeld monastery. Gerdt Halepage, vicar in Buxtehude, was also among the delegates and had proven to be a Bursfeld reformer in his home monastery.³⁷ Apart from the cases of these two delegates, there is no information in the sources that demonstrates whether or not the goal of the reform attempt was to affiliate Harvestehude with the Bursfeld congregation, or, for that matter, with any other reform congregation. The circumstances of the reform attempt in Harvestehude resembled those of other female monasteries in the region that had an unclear legal status concerning their affiliation with the Cistercian order and which also became targets for reform attempts. Besides the Bursfeld reform model, it is also possible that the goal was to attempt to establish an affiliation with the other popular reform model of the fifteenth century, the Windesheim congregation, which already had joined several of the non-incorporated Cistercian nunneries in Lower Saxony. Reform after the Windesheim model involved formal affiliation with a male Cistercian monastery as was carried out in Marienfeld in Westphalia and Mariensee which became a *filia* of Loccum in the fifteenth century.³⁸ The central

figure for these changes was Windesheim canon Johannes Busch. He had been personally entrusted with the reform by Nicolaus Cusanus in 1451, and he visited several monasteries of differing orders, both male and female, during his travels.³⁹

However, most of the female monasteries in northern Germany were not formally subjected to either the Windesheim congregation or a male Benedictine or Cistercian house according to the rules of the Bursfeld reform, such as the Benedictines in Ebstorf and Lüne. When not incorporated into either the Bursfeld or the Windesheim union, the monasteries were allowed to have secular clergy as confessors. This was also the case in the monasteries in Buxtehude and Reinfeld and probably also sought in the case of Harvestehude. Since the Hamburg cathedral chapter acted as their spiritual supervisors, there would not have been much change in the organization and supervision of Harvestehude after a reform, but according to contemporary criticism, the everyday life of the nuns would have been greatly affected, and the abbess would no longer have been from one of the Hamburg families. Since the archbishop's letter does not suggest any concrete model for the attempted reform, it is impossible to determine if it was supposed to follow the Bursfeld model, that of Windesheim, or no model at all. There was no general lack of reformed monasteries in the region, nor was there a general resistance towards reforms. However, Henry of Schwarzburg as the administrator of the Bremen diocese was probably not well respected or perceived as the appropriate person to spread the reform movement. The later course of events demonstrates that one of the Hamburg citizens' main arguments against the reform was that the visitors came from "abroad."

Reform Conflict: Skirt-Lifting and Other Forms of Resistance

Only one week after the archbishop's second letter, dated December 9, 1482, the visitors wrote to the city council that they were in Buxtehude (a town south of the River Elbe, about 20 km from Hamburg) and were planning to enter the monastery on the following day, at between seven and eight o'clock in the morning. Despite the short notice, the city council sent its own deputies along with the legates of the not

very beloved archbishop and cathedral chapter, but no discussion was possible:

When the deputies came to Harvestehude, they were followed by many men and women from the town, many of them violently pushing themselves into the monastery, some climbing upon the walls and making a great noise in front of the Chapter House. People were screaming, "Do not obey the traitors!" When the archbishop's chaplain kindly begged them to calm down and stop rioting, he was rudely repulsed by many and especially by Catharina Arends with mocking and shameful words, and sent back by lifting up the clothes.⁴⁰

Based on Mayor Langebek's chronicle, it is not clear if Catharina was the only one who lifted up her clothes or if several of the demonstrators engaged in this form of protest. However, Catharina is the only person mentioned by name as one of the individuals who insulted the clerics and lifted up her clothes. The grammatical structure of the sentence might even contain the possibility that it was not Catharina's clothes which were lifted, but the chaplain's clothes, since there is no personal pronoun for "the clothes." However, if this alternate reading of the text were true, it is probable that the chronicler would have provided further explanations, since there are otherwise no physical encounters reported during the entire episode. Moreover, it does not seem likely that the outraged masses, which had already moved from verbal to physical insults, would do nothing more than lift up the enemy's clothes. It therefore seems most likely to assume that Langebek wanted to recount that it was either only Catharina or she and several others who lifted up their clothes in order to repulse the chaplain and the other clerics. She or they showed either their genitals or their rear parts, but they did not touch the chaplain or any other cleric.

Their actions were effective. According to the mayor's report, the archbishop's deputies left the scene after this incident and did not engage afterwards in any personal dialogue with the town's inhabitants or the sisters. They instead sent some of the city council deputies, namely the mayors Herman Langebek and Johan Hüge and council member

Paridom Luttken, to calm down the outraged crowd with the promise not to do anything concerning the monastery's future without the consent of the sisters' "friends" and the council. After many harsh words from both sides, the Friends of the Sisters agreed to enter into negotiations about a potential reform with the council at the town hall the next day.⁴¹ The Friends wanted the council to send away the visitors "before dinner" and even threatened to kill them: "if the men from Münster would not go home soon, they would be killed."⁴² This would not have been a novelty at the time, as the merchants of Bergen in Norway had killed a bishop not long before.⁴³ Convinced by these firm arguments, the city council agreed, thereby breaking its promise of supporting the reform to the archbishop, and made the visitors leave Hamburg at least until the resolution of the question regarding a legitimate visitor for Harvestehude.

Several aspects of this narrative display similarities to events reported from other reform attempts: the outraged crowd from the nearby town, the women's obscene gestures, the townspeople's desire to support the nuns, not giving the visitors food in order to show them disrespect.⁴⁴ However, this narrative is different from reports that describe nuns themselves resisting reformers.

When nuns had to defend their monasteries by themselves, they usually took to symbolic forms of resistance. They might lie down on the ground forming a cross with their bodies and sing antiphons like *Media vita in morte sumus* and *Te deum*. By symbolically staging themselves as the *crucifixus*, they were claiming liturgical power over their spiritual authorities and, in doing so, were suggesting that the reformers were a plague or misfortune to be repelled.⁴⁵ They also sometimes positioned devotional objects, for example, wooden or wax images, stones, and rosaries, around themselves to form a symbolic wall "so that those who couldn't defend their walls and bolted gates from the duke and us [the reformers], were worthy of being at least protected by the saints," as Johannes Busch reports in his *Liber de reformatione*, although not without a sarcastic twist.⁴⁶

These actions were clearly connected to the clerical sphere, a sphere which was dominated by male clerics but of which the nuns were also a part: liturgy, devotional practices, and prayers. There is no account of

this form of symbolic resistance acted out by the Harvestehude nuns, and the laypeople acting in their favor turned instead to concrete actions with less religious allusions. However, nuns also used other physical forms of resistance. For instance, in order to demonstrate that she would never obey the reformers, one of the nuns in Wennigsen fainted in front of them. The others then splashed cold water on her and opened up her dress, exposing her chest. When she was still unconscious after an hour, two of the men (either male clerics or the duke's assistants who accompanied them) took her and carried her to the refectory. The sight of the unconscious woman caused an outcry of fear among the others that finally made them obey.⁴⁷

Obscenity as a form of female self-defense is also reported in Johannes Busch's chronicle. The sisters in the Nuremberg monastery St. Katharinen defeated the reformers with "unchaste manners and songs and gestures."⁴⁸ These nuns did not go so far as to lift up their habits, though, and the boundaries of obscenity might have been different for nuns than for laywomen.

The Monastery and Family Ties: The "Friends of the Sisters"

Usually we do not find more detailed information in the sources about the people defending a monastery against a reform attempt, even though there are cases where the nuns were assisted in their resistance. This is different in the Harvestehude case. The Langebek chronicle's central focus is the crowd of townspeople. Langebek gives the group a name: *der begebenen kinder Frunde*. *Begeben* in Middle Low German means "given into a monastery" or simply "belonging to a monastic order."⁴⁹ "Friend" was a common term used for supporters who usually belonged to the same family. *Der begebenen kinder Frunde* refers to a group that spontaneously formed itself around a central concern: the nuns' well-being.

Gatherings like this accompanied many reform attempts. Johannes Meyer writes about an attempt to reform St. Nikolaus Monastery in Strasbourg where the sisters "became so outraged that they called their friends together and these friends were moved into such great impetuosity against those of good will and especially the vicar, that they fell upon him with great anger and shamed him with bad swearwords."⁵⁰

The nuns themselves were not in a good position to negotiate because they depended on the good will of male spiritual supervisors and secular governments in order to keep their institutions alive. By gathering relatives from the nearby towns, it was possible to establish a somewhat more equal balance of power. This attempt is described as inappropriate both in the monastic chronicles and in the Langebek chronicle. The relatives were always nobles or wealthy merchants. When nuns called on their relatives for help and counselling, the result was often increased resistance, a fortification of the monastery, and an escalation of violence instead of orderly negotiations or discussions.⁵¹

In the Harvestehude case, the chronicle does not report if it was the nuns who called their relatives for help or if they came on their own. Langebek evokes the image of a spontaneous, “violent” event (*weldiglich, met grotem ungestume*), even though nobody was attacked physically. The “rioting group” consisted of “many men and women from the town.” They called the delegation “traitors” and demanded to send “the guys from Münster home.” All of this points towards the Friends of the Sisters perceiving the nuns as being members of their own group, while the members of the cathedral chapter and the archbishop’s delegates were perceived as outsiders. The same principle, that of kinship being more important than membership in an order, applies to the case reported by Johannes Busch in the *Chronicon Windeshemense*, where a nun addresses the reformers: “You are not my brother. Why do you call me sister? My brother wears iron, but you wear a vest of linen.”⁵²

The perception of the Harvestehude nuns as being different from religious in general can be clarified by the monastery’s position within the town. From its very beginnings, Harvestehude had been a place for the daughters, widows, and wives of the wealthy citizens of Hamburg. Silke Urbanski estimates that there were about thirty-nine women living simultaneously in the monastery between the years 1410 and 1520, all of them fully professed sisters.⁵³ There are no longer any complete lists of the nuns, but many of their names are preserved in other urban diplomatic sources alongside any donations they received, trading contracts they signed, or the dates of their entrance into the monastery. Johan Martin Lappenberg collected information for all known nuns during the fifteenth century, and in his list, 87% of the nuns were from Hamburg.⁵⁴

The largest group consisted of the relatives of wealthy merchants, almost half of the population of the nunnery (47%). Many of these families were also eligible for the city council and were thereby part of the political and economic elite. Another 24% were direct relatives of mayors and members of the city council. Therefore, despite living in a nunnery and under monastic vows, the women in Harvestehude continued to be members of the town's elite.⁵⁵

The nuns' close family ties to Hamburg's upper class can be exemplified in the case of the abbess who took office directly after the riots. The first record of Abbess Anna Kalen as a nun was in 1475. Her parents were the *Flandernfabrer* Albrecht Kalen, one of the merchants engaged in important and prestigious trade with Flanders, and his wife Tybbeke Swartekop, whose father was a member of the city council. Her predecessor Margarethe Vermersen, who died in the middle of the conflict, and her sister Tybbeke, also a nun in Harvestehude, had a similar family tree including members of the city council and even a mayor.⁵⁶ Besides the abbesses, there are no recorded names of any nuns from the years around 1481-82, but as wills and accounts from the city administration show, there were plenty of daughters of *Flandernfabrer* and members of the city council in the monastery in the years between 1460 and the Reformation.⁵⁷

The mutual socioeconomic links between the urban upper class and Harvestehude are also visible in the confraternity connected to the monastery, the Confraternity of St. John (*Johannisbruderschaft*), which was populated by members of the city council, *Flandernfabrer*, the lower clergy, and upper-middle-class craftsmen.⁵⁸ The confraternity—mentioned for the first time in 1461—is a sign of the monastery's high spiritual and social reputation, which did not suffer at all from either the non-canonical money lending conducted by the abbesses, nor from the fact that the monastery had been in open conflict with its spiritual government.

The Harvesthude sisters' close family ties to upper-middle-class society outside of the monastery ultimately led to the skirt-lifting episode. In the Langebek chronicle, the only persons mentioned as leaders of the rebellious party are Catharina Arndes (or Arends), the woman with the skirts, and Dietrich Mentze, spokesman for the Friends of the Sisters.

For readers familiar with the town's politics at that time, their opposition to the reform-friendly mayors Johan Huge and Herman Langebek would have been obvious as their families were central in the generally tumultuous years 1481-83 and stood for one party in a long on-going urban conflict.

Dietrich was a cloth trader (*Gewandschneider*) and a member of the Confraternity of St. John.⁵⁹ Catharina was not herself a nun in Harvestehude, but her family ties may elucidate her interest in the monastery: four of her nieces were nuns (Katharina and Alheid Bokholt, Katharina and Margarethe Mentze), and she was married to Marquard Arndes, a member of the city council.⁶⁰ Catharina's own family origins are not known, although she probably came from a family that was less prominent than the Mentze or Arndes. The act of mentioning her name might therefore have been an additional attempt made by the chronicler to discredit the rioters.

Catharina's father-in-law, Hinrich Arndes, was a member of the city council and of the Confraternity of St. John, and the aforementioned spokesman, Dietrich Mentze, was her brother-in-law.⁶¹ He in his turn was married to Katharina Arndes, sister of Marquard and Catharina's sister-in-law. Marquard's second sister Anna Arndes was married to council member Evert Bokholt. The couple placed two of their daughters in the monastery, and Evert is mentioned as a severe opponent of the reform-friendly mayors.⁶² Finally, Catharina's third brother-in-law, another Dietrich, was a cleric and became a bishop in nearby Lübeck in 1491.⁶³ The families Mentze and Arndes were therefore by no means foreign or hostile to religious life and education, but they probably had a certain proprietary attitude vis-à-vis Harvestehude.

The sisters' alliances with the citizens of Hamburg appear to be stronger than their vows of obedience to the episcopal hierarchy, and the Friends of the Sisters' loyalties are with the nuns. This explains the dynamics leading to violent conflict. To elucidate, as Roberta Senechal de la Roche has shown in her theory of collective violence, this type of action usually arises when strong patterns of partisanship, derived from a feeling of solidarity, are visible in a collective conflict. This occurs when third parties (in this case: the Friends of the Sisters) are close to one side (the sisters) and distant from another (the archbishop's delegates).

And as de la Roche claims, "Solidarity occurs when third parties are intimate, homogeneous, and interdependent."⁶⁴ All of these are factors that apply to the relationship between the Friends of the Sisters and the nuns in Harvestehude.

The solidarity between the Friends of the Sisters and the nuns relies upon their common social heritage, their family ties, and their class consciousness. Catharina displays her genitals in her role as a representative of the nuns who are not perceived as members of the clerical order, but rather as members of the urban upper class. There was not only a high level of solidarity between the outraged townspeople and the nuns, but also between the outraged townspeople and parts of the discordant city council. The conflict within the city council had originally nothing to do with the monastery, but the resistance against the reform formed along earlier established lines of conflict. This is the key reason why this episode is told as being part of an urban conflict.

Urban Conflict: Cathedral Chapter and City Council

The interesting aspect in the Harvestehude case regarding the interaction of the townspeople and the clerics is that, according to Langebek's account, the Friends of the Sisters and the city council seem to understand the future of the monastery as being an issue that is under their control and is their responsibility and not under the control of ecclesiastical institutions at all. At this point, the conflict about a monastery's reform becomes an urban conflict. Since the information on the reform process is scattered and sparse, but information on urban conflict is rich and detailed, this "secular" part of the conflict might help to understand the "monastic" part of the conflict as well, especially since the contemporary chroniclers report both aspects side by side. The groups of interest actively involved in both conflicts in Hamburg also resemble the conflicting groups in other urban social revolts and uprisings in the region, as a comparison with well-reported conflicts in fifteenth-century Rostock, Osnabrück, and Braunschweig will demonstrate. A short survey of Hamburg town politics as described in the chronicles dealing with the Harvestehude case will provide the context for the activities of urban and ecclesiastical actors which dictated their roles in the conflict around

the monastery as well. The disputing groups' interests and points of conflict are quite similar in all cases of urban revolt, but the mention of women as actively taking part in violent actions and gatherings is not. This makes the Harvestehude case quite special, even though the history of its non-reform is but one example of an ecclesiastical institution becoming the target of urban politics.

In all the other cases reported in the monastic chronicles, the nuns and their supporters finally have to give up and let the reformers do their work. One of the crucial reasons for this is the cooperation of the sovereigns and their threats to violently enforce the reform.⁶⁵ The Harvestehude case is different. The archbishop's deputies and the Hamburg cathedral chapter were not part of the negotiations in Hamburg after the skirt-lifting episode; in fact, they do not appear in Langebek's report at all after it occurred. All following negotiations were carried out between the city council and the Friends of the Sisters' spokesman Dietrich Mentze. The Friends did not want the visitation to be performed by the archbishop's deputies, but by the Abbot of Reinfeld, head of the oldest Cistercian monastery in the region. The Abbot of Reinfeld seemed to be willing at first. He approached the city and was given many expensive presents but still did not want to perform the visitation as he saw the problems that this would create for himself and his vows of obedience. As a result of his refusal, his food and accommodation were no longer paid. The Langebek chronicle finishes this recounting with the suggestion that those men who were city council deputies in the Harvestehude case (among them Mayor Langebek himself) became the subjects of distrust and suspicion as a result of their negotiations with both the archbishop's deputies and the Friends of the Sisters.⁶⁶

Herman Langebek, chronicler of the Harvestehude conflict, tells the story only as a precursor to an uprising one year later. He describes the circumstances leading to the uprising, starting with the food shortage and inflation of 1481, a situation in which the same individuals from the city council who were the protagonists in the Harvestehude conflict were also protagonists. The council's internal discordance and the disruption of the population's faith in them were reasons why it was impossible for them to stand up against the townspeople in the Harvestehude case.

In 1481, a new law had to be passed forbidding the buying and selling

of wheat and other foodstuffs outside of Hamburg, which was clearly one of the greatest concerns of the common people directed against wealthy merchants. However, even the city council was split, according to Langebek. One of the mayors of Hamburg, Johan Hüge was accused by another member of the council, Henning Mathias, of having bought up all the wheat along the River Elbe. The common people were irritated and provoked, because they imagined and suspected that the richest and wealthiest citizens and merchants were buying up wheat and other food and sending it to other regions, which was a major disadvantage for the common people. A meeting was held about this between the city council and the citizens, and it was decided to stop this and prohibit it with the severest possible punishment. Many citizens were sent to prison or had to pay penalties for this, and many pious citizens were falsely accused.⁶⁷

The accusation against Mayor Hüge could not be substantiated, and the council member who had incriminated him was imprisoned. Other members of the council became dissatisfied: for example, Paridom Lutken, who was Henning Mathias's brother-in-law and had stood bail for him in his case against the mayor found it unfair that the charges against the mayor were dropped and started murmurs against Johan Hüge and those in the council loyal to him. Albert Krantz sees the planting of the seeds of rebellion here:

This muttering finally stirred and teased the rebels and the common man to a tumult, because they could see that even the superiors would have liked to quarrel with the council.⁶⁸

The protagonists of this conflict are also prominent in the conflict around the Harvesthude monastery as city council legates who were sent to Harvesthude in order to calm the outraged crowd and to support the archbishop's deputation. The following individuals were city council legates: Herman Langebek, mayor (and chronicler); Johan Hüge, mayor (accused of buying wheat and selling it outside the town); Paridom Lutken (brother-in-law of Henning Mathias, Johan Hüge's accuser); Johan Mestwerten, secretary. The delegation therefore consisted of men from both sides of the previous conflict. According to the chronicles, this weakened their position in the Harvesthude case.

Except for the secretary, all three members had a personal interest in the monastery long before the conflict. They were all members of the Confraternity of St. John, which was connected to the monastery and was one of the most prestigious confraternities in Hamburg. Johan Hüge was later, at least in the years 1490 and 1491, a *Klosterbürger*, a kind of city council ombudsman for the monastery.⁶⁹ Paridom Lutken was a *Flandernfabrer* and thus belonged to the guild which had the closest ties to Harvestehude. His wife Wibke placed a daughter from another marriage in the monastery.⁷⁰

A successful reform of Harvestehude would have been a success for the city council due to the difficulties arising from the food shortage of the previous years. The council members had enacted somewhat desperate measurements to combat it and were in conflict with each other, and the population was generally at odds with the elites. It is possible that it would have helped to draw attention away from these internal conflicts and that a public announcement of the nuns' unworthy lifestyle could even have served as an explanation for the years of bad harvests—God was punishing the town for the bad conduct of the nuns. Moreover, last but not least, the monastery itself would have been placed back under the jurisdiction of the archbishop, not the cathedral chapter, which would have meant a positive shift in power relations between the council and the cathedral chapter.

This kind of conflict was very common in late medieval Hanseatic towns. In Hamburg itself, the last conflict between the city council and cathedral chapter had been only ten years prior to the Harvestehude case. The “*Schulstreit*” situation arose in Hamburg in 1472 around the question of whether the council or the cathedral chapter should be in charge of school governance in Hamburg.⁷¹ In Rostock, during the “*Domfehde*” from 1487 to 1491, citizens fought against the city council and the bishop's decision to install a collegiate church in the town.⁷²

Violence much more severe than in the Harvestehude case was also common in late medieval urban conflicts in northern Germany. In Osnabrück, in 1424, the citizens fought against the entire secular clergy because they had elected a young man as bishop who did not please the population, and the people favored another candidate. The clergy, who had gathered in the cathedral church in order to invest the candidate in

his office, was locked in the church and kept there for three days without food, water, or coal for heating. The same had happened fifteen years earlier in Minden.⁷³ In Osnabrück, a canon who fell ill during the siege died three months later. During the siege, the citizens plundered the canons' houses; at least that was what the canons claimed in front of the pope, who consequently laid an interdict of two years upon the city.⁷⁴

Not only are the actors in the conflicting groups in the Hamburg case similar to those in other late medieval urban conflicts, the chronicles for these other cases also resemble the Langebek chronicle in its description of the "rioting masses," except for the explicit mention of women actively taking part in violent actions as in the Harvestehude case. Bernd-Ulrich Hergemöller has systematically compared the sources for social conflicts involving clerical groups in Braunschweig, Osnabrück, Lüneburg, and Rostock during the fifteenth century; in none of these do any women appear to be explicitly mentioned by name. The clerical groups and orders consisted entirely of male monastic orders and clergy.⁷⁵ The "amorphous, latent and spontaneous groups" are called *populus*, *de ghemene lude*, *de ghemene man* (the people, the common people, the common man) or, uniquely in the case of Braunschweig, *borghere und borghersche*, i.e., male and female citizens.⁷⁶ The chronicler Albert Krantz, who also accounts for one of the sources of the Hamburg uprising and mentions women among the outraged masses, notes that "women, who otherwise are the soft and empathic gender" were among those who publicly beat a provost to death in Rostock in 1487.⁷⁷ What additionally becomes clear from the comparison with other contemporary conflicts in the region is that the conflicting groups were usually the cathedral chapter, the city council, and the outraged masses, and sometimes, more specifically, certain guilds and groups of craftsmen. Particular to the Hamburg uprising is the fact that the anticlerical action was carried out in defense of a female monastery. In general, the nuns were not perceived as members of the clerical order, but the cathedral chapter was a well-known enemy, and the riot over the monastery was but another occasion to fight it. Moreover, the city council's internal discord, as Langebek describes it prior to the Harvestehude report, added to the willingness of the nuns' relatives to enter the barricades.

Uprisings in late medieval towns involving clerical groups and

burghers like the one in Hamburg were by no means unique. However, the act of explicitly mentioning a female protagonist in the historiographical accounts is quite peculiar, as a comparison with records of other uprisings in the late Middle Ages in northern German Hanseatic towns demonstrates. Therefore, even considering the numerous similarities between the Harvestehude case and resistance against reform on the one hand, and urban conflicts with clerical groups on the other, the skirt-lifting episode remains unique.

Skirt-lifting: Obscenity and Privilege

Catharina Arndes's lifted skirts are described in an attempt to discredit the rioters as obscene. On a scale of aggression, obscenity is placed between the symbolic actions of the antiphon-singing nuns and the violence carried out by the "masses" in urban conflicts. The revelation of the concealed, the voluntary exposure of genitalia, is a gesture which is frequently used as a form of powerful transgression against that which cannot be defeated by any other means. In the Hamburg chronicle, the chaplain has no defense against Catharina's lifted skirts and surrenders.⁷⁸ Why is that gesture so powerful?

Female genital exposure is deemed to be something shameful and punishable. Forced exposure can serve as a punishment in itself.⁷⁹ This corresponds to the biblical tradition, where the prophets Ezekiel, Jeremiah, and Isaiah use the imagery of exhibitionism in regards to the relations between God and Jerusalem. Both Jerusalem's unfaithfulness and God's punishment are expressed in the metaphor of female genital exposure.⁸⁰ This act is understood as a means of figuratively committing adultery and leads to a kind of "corrective rape" by the husband, and thereby the danger in the gesture becomes obvious: exposing oneself means exposing oneself to potential sexual violence.⁸¹ The women in the Harvestehude "riot" of 1482 seem not to fear any of these dangers; Catharina Arndes is surrounded by other men and women who support her. However, the biblical allusion of female self-exposure and adultery shows one potential interpretation of what Catharina's gesture might have communicated to clerics in the context of late medieval anticlerical

criticism: if you commit adultery yourself, you are not allowed to give orders to our nuns.

There are, however, other possible readings. The chronicles themselves do not contain an interpretation of the skirt-lifting act. However, when the two interdependent chronicles are compared, there is an explicit connection between the skirt-lifting (reported in the earlier chronicle by Mayor Langebek) and the “insanity” of the rioting women (reported in the later chronicle by Albert Krantz): “From the crowd of the foolish women something was shouted: the rioters shouted at the men, but it was not clear at whom they shouted. . . . The insulting and offending women, carried away in the tumult, lost their minds: they claimed to be the counsellors of the people and to be sent to be heard by and talk to the council.”⁸²

Albert Krantz invokes an image of general chaos supporting the reading of Langebek’s text as a report of riots dominated by female agents. He sees their claim of being the righteous ambassadors of the monastery’s affairs as the primary insult and reports on their “insanity” instead of reporting on the skirt-lifting story from Langebek’s chronicle.

In the Hamburg case, the chroniclers might have taken up the account of rioting women just in order to depict them as foolish. Evidence of their insanity is their claim of being the representatives of the townspeople and the nuns and their act of negotiating with the city council. The latter is clearly perceived as being a male privilege. This corresponds with one possible interpretation of medieval representations of self-exposure. In her study, *Die Bedeutung der Baubo*, Monika Gsell analyzes scenes of female genitalia displays in late medieval German literature. She links the strong taboo placed upon this act to a general prohibition of female aggression which can be interpreted as an act of phallic self-presentation with the intention to demand male privileges for oneself.⁸³

The interpretation that the women were claiming male privileges as negotiators might be in the chronicler’s interest, but Catharina and the Friends of the Sisters were probably not only interested in claiming privileges for themselves, but also wanted to point out to the archbishop’s delegates that the clerics’ privileges ended at the monastery’s walls: “You go only this far.”

Conclusion: Female Violence, Town Politics and Church Politics

Harvestehude's defensive reaction to the archbishop's reform attempt is both a common and a peculiar story. It is common because resistance against attempts to reform female monasteries was a frequent occurrence, even though it often went unreported. Still, even without the Harvestehude nuns themselves speaking or acting in the conflict, the issues are similar to those in other cases: the vague accusations made by the archbishop given as reasons for reform, the lack of a clearly defined rule to which they could resort, the impossibility of keeping vows of enclosure and poverty for a female convent. All of this is not included in the report on the Harvestehude case, but a comparison to the situation of other convents before the reform can help to explain the fact that this convent did not welcome the reformers either.

The social composition of Harvestehude and the nuns' family ties to the Friends of the Sisters explain how the engagement of the outraged crowd of townspeople was an action in support of the nuns, both because they were their relatives and because they belonged to the same urban upper class, unlike the clergy. According to the monastic chronicles, this was a common pattern as well. The clergy, the archbishop's delegates, consisting of members of the Hamburg cathedral chapter in this case, was a proven enemy in Hamburg and elsewhere. The cathedral chapter was an internally conflicted party, repeatedly struggling with the city council over financial and administrative issues. The defense of the monastery in Harvestehude was thus both a family issue and part of a broader pattern of conflict. Therefore, the nuns in Harvestehude and their supporters on the city council shared a common goal: independence from their formal spiritual supervisors. For the conflict in the town, it was important to get rid of the cathedral chapter as a conflicting party during the situation between 1481 and 1483. Accusing the cathedral chapter of acting as agents of a foreign master in the reform attempt was an argument which fitted both the political line of conflict and the nuns' family ties to the townspeople.

Both chroniclers of the Harvestehude episode place it within the context of an urban social conflict. They portray it as one of the aspects

which led to a general disrespect for the government and, ultimately, to the brewers' attempt to overthrow the city council, to a revolt. The mention of women as participants in the outraged crowd is extremely rare, and the naming of an individual woman is unique to the Hamburg chronicles. Though in the description of the Rostock *Domfehde*, Albert Krantz did see women among the outraged, common men, no individual is named. The description of the "soft gender" acting violently or, in the Harvestehude case, obscenely, serves as a reinforcement of the description of the outraged crowds as disorderly, lawless, and insane.

The skirt-lifting episode is therefore a direct consequence of the lay chroniclers' partisanship with the ecclesiastical and secular government. Moreover, since the monastic chronicles were also written clearly in favor of the reformers and not of the nuns, the descriptions of the forms of resistance become similar even though Johannes Busch writes about monastic resistance and Catharina Arndes is a laywoman in a lay chronicle. Symbolic actions taken in an attempt to drive the reformers physically from the monastery are the first actions in all cases—only in the Harvestehude case, they were successful.

The chronicles place Catharina Arndes's central act of resistance against both the church administration and the city councillors who supported them within the context of a disruption of the legal and social order caused by the ruling group's internal discord. The entire situation between 1481 and 1483 demonstrated the helplessness of the secular, and consequently, the ecclesiastical government. Regardless of whether or not the skirt-lifting incident actually happened, it was a gesture commonly understood as a form of female aggression, an attempt to claim male privileges, and an indication of the boundaries of male and clerical spheres of power. The rioting women in general, and the lifted skirts in particular, were, in the text composition of the lay chroniclers, a symbol of something larger: the insanity of the rioters, the distortion of the righteous (i.e., the traditional social order), and the impossibility of controlling the people's madness when the leaders were in disagreement. For the nuns and the townspeople, the episode led to a successful claim to the self-governance of Harvestehude; for the chroniclers and the ecclesiastical rulers, female resistance, both clerical and lay, was the ultimate evidence of the rioters being in the wrong.

It is a commonly known fact that women and their actions tend not to appear in most medieval sources. The incidents in Hamburg in 1482 show that even in the rare cases where female actions are reported, the motives for these actions are either excluded from the report entirely or are described as madness and insanity. The treatment of the case of the Harvesthude reform conflict in the chronicles is representative of an additional factor which has contributed to the invisibility of women in historical accounts. Resistance against the reform attempt is only reported as a minor incident amid a selection of other incidents, all of them belonging to the area of male-dominated town politics and all of them considered to be more important and relevant for the history of the town than the case of monastic reform and the women's desire to prevent it. Most of the modern scholars who have dealt with this case have adhered to the medieval chroniclers' initial estimation: the non-reform of the monastery of Harvesthude still holds a low position in the hierarchy of political importance. As demonstrated in this article, the scarcity of sources cannot be the only reason for the lack of interest modern scholarly research has shown for this particular reform attempt. Although the incidents are practically buried beneath other political incidents, it is indeed possible to uncover the male and female actors' motives for their actions as well as the reasons for the chroniclers' contempt for female participation in political processes.

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∞ END NOTES

1. I am profoundly grateful to the anonymous—and patient—reviewers for their recurrent comments and suggestions, which have undoubtedly led to a significant improvement of the text. I would also like to thank Professor Helmut Puff, Ann Arbor, for his critical comments, and PD Dr. Britta-Juliane Kruse, Wolfenbüttel, for guiding me towards relevant research about fifteenth-century monastic reform movements. Significant parts of this article were written during my stay at Herzog August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel. I would like to thank the library's foundation for their generous assistance in making that possible.

2. The sources are sparse concerning the monastery during the fifteenth century, and even modern scholarly interest in Harvesthude has been

very limited. There is only one monograph on Harvestehude. It lists all of the surviving archival sources in Staatsarchiv Hamburg concerning the monastery from its founding until its decay during the Reformation: Silke Urbanski, *Geschichte des Klosters Harvestehude "In valle virginum." Annäherung an die wirtschaftliche, soziale und politische Entwicklung eines Nonnenklosters bei Hamburg (1245–1530)*, 2nd ed. (Münster: Lit, 2001). One article deals with the conflict of 1481: Silke Urbanski, "Der begebenen Kinder Frunde. Soziale und politische Gründe für das Scheitern eines Reformversuchs am Kloster Harvestehude 1482," in *Recht und Alltag im Hanseraum. Gerhard Theuerkauf zum 60. Geburtstag*, hg. Silke Urbanski, Christian Lamschus, Jürgen Ellermeyer, Gerhard Theuerkauf (Lüneburg: Deutsches Salzuseum, 1993), 411–28. The uprising of 1481–83 in Hamburg—of which the conflict around Harvestehude is only a small part—is described in detail in Helga Raape, "Der Hamburger Aufstand im Jahre 1483," *Zeitschrift des Vereins für Hamburgische Geschichte* 45 (1959): 1–64. Klaus-Jürgen Lorenzen-Schmidt basically details the same information, with a focus on the later part of the conflict, in "Von 'bösen' und 'frommen' Leuten. Der Hamburger Aufstand von 1483," in *Das andere Hamburg. Freiheitliche Bestrebungen in der Hansestadt seit dem Spätmittelalter*, hg. Jörg Berlin, 2nd ed. (Cologne: Pahl-Regenstein, 1982), 24–35. Lorenzen-Schmidt also describes in detail the financial affairs of the monastery: "Umfang und Dynamik des Hamburger Rentenmarktes zwischen 1471 und 1570," *Zeitschrift des Vereins für Hamburgische Geschichte* 65 (1979): 21–52.

3. "Des Bürgermeisters Herman Langebek *Bericht* über den Aufstand zu Hamburg im Jahre 1483," in *Hamburgische Chroniken in niedersächsischer Sprache*, hg. Johan Martin Lappenberg (Hamburg 1861), 340–375; the section about the monastery, 340–45.

4. Albertus Krantz, *Wandalia: in qua de Wandalarum populis, et eorum patrio soso, ac in Italiam..migratione: et de eorum regibus, ac bellis domi forisque gestis* (Coloniae, 1519). Eighty years later, a German translation was printed: *Des Fürtrefflichen Hochgelahrten Herrn Alberti Krantzii Wandalia Oder: Beschreibung Wendischer Geschicht... erstlich vom Authore in Latein vorfertiet: nun aber denen, so derselben Sprach unerfahren, in Hochteusch transferiret und übers. durch Stephanum Macropum* (Lübeck, 1600).

Albert Krantz (1448–1517) studied at the University of Rostock and also became Dean of the Faculty of Arts, 1482–86. After that, he served as a solicitor and syndic for the towns of Lübeck and Hamburg. All his historiographical works were printed after his death. Heinz Stoob presents a brief

biography of him: "Albert Krantz (1448–1517). Ein Gelehrter, Geistlicher und hansischer Syndikus zwischen den Zeiten," in *Von der Christianisierung zur Vorreformation. Hamburgische Kirchengeschichte in Aufsätzen*, Bd. 1 (Hamburg: Verlag Verein für Hamburgische Geschichte, 2003), 350–79.

5. Krantz, *Wandalia*, lib. 13, cap. 29.

6. Urbanski, *Geschichte*, 37–43, describes the conflict in detail but does not discuss the skirt-lifting episode in any more detail. Raape, "Hamburger Aufstand," also discusses the conflict but mentions the skirt-lifting in only one sentence and states that Catharina's name and her actions are mentioned "to her shame," 17.

7. *Des Augustinerpropstes Iohannes Busch Chronicon Windeshemense und Liber de reformatione monasteriorum*, hrsg. Karl Grube, *Geschichtsquellen der Provinz Sachsen und angrenzender Gebiete*; Bd. 19 (Halle an der Saale, 1886); Iohannes Meyer Ord. Praed., *Buch der Reformatio Prediger-Ordens*, hg. Benedictus Maria Reichert, *Quellen und Forschungen zur Geschichte des Dominkanerordens in Deutschland*; 2.–3. Heft. (Leipzig, 1908).

8. Gabriela Signori, "Gehorsam wider Eigensinn. Wertekonflikt in Frauenklöstern und –stiften des 15. Jahrhunderts," in *Norm und Krise von Kommunikation. Inszenierungen literarischer und sozialer Interaktion im Mittelalter*, hg. Alois Hahn, Gert Melville, Werner Röcke (Münich: Lit, 2006), 291–309; Hans-Joachim Schmidt, "Widerstand von Frauen gegen Reformen," in *Fromme Frauen – unbequeme Frauen? Weibliches Religiosentum im Mittelalter*, hg. Edeltraud Klueting, *Hildesheimer Forschungen: Tagungs- und Forschungsberichte aus der Dombibliothek Hildesheim*; Bd. 3 (Hildesheim: Olms, 2006), 143–80; Ulrike Hascher-Burger, "Zwischen Liturgie und Magie: Apotropäischer Zaubergesang in niedersächsischen Frauenklöstern im späten Mittelalter," *Journal of the Alamire Foundation* 3 (2011): 127–43.

9. A collection of urban chronicles about social conflicts from the late medieval Hanseatic towns is printed in Bernd-Ulrich Hergemöller, *"Pfaffenkriege" im spätmittelalterlichen Hanseraum. Quellen und Studien zu Braunschweig, Osnabrück, Lüneburg und Rostock*, Bd. 2 (Cologne: Böhlau, 1988).

10. Studies on anticlericalism often focus on southern German regions or the Netherlands, as in John van Engen, *Sisters and Brothers of the common Life: The Devotio moderna and the World of the Later Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008). The contributions by Hans-Jürgen Goertz and Bob Scribner in the anthology *Anticlericalism in*

Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe, ed. Peter A. Dykema and Heiko A. Oberman (Leiden: Brill, 1993), focus on the northern towns but leave out the female monasteries. The Cistercian monasteries in what is now known as Lower Saxony are relatively well researched in particular, but these studies never include the Hamburg monasteries. Heike Uffmann conducted a study valuable for a general view of female voices on reform attempts, *Wie in einem Rosengarten. Monastische Reformen des späten Mittelalters in den Vorstellungen von Klosterfrauen*, Religion in der Geschichte; Bd. 14 (Bielefeld: Verlag für Regionalgeschichte, 2008), and presents historiographical texts written by nuns during reform processes in their houses.

11. Gerhard Theuerkauf, "Hinrich Murmester und Hermann Langenbeck, Bürgermeister von Hamburg (1467–1517)," in *Akteure und Gegner der Hanse. Zur Prosopographie der Hansezeit*, hg. Detlef Kattinger; Horst Wernicke, Ralf-Gunnar Werlich, Abhandlungen zur Handels- und Sozialgeschichte; 30/Hansische Studien; 9 (Weimar: Böhlau, 1998), 173–81. There were always four mayors at the same time in medieval Hamburg, two of them in charge for a year, here Langebek and Hüge.

12. Helga Raape, "Der Hamburger Aufstand," 1–13, analyzes in particular the economic reasons for the uprising: the export restrictions on beer that the city council set up to the disadvantage of local brewers and the restrictions on trading activities with Iceland.

13. "The rioting masses" and their specific sociology have been the subject of many studies using medieval and early modern material. A survey of work by Charles Tilly, Eric J. Hobsbawm, and others on the topic can be found in Natalie Zemon Davis, "The Rites of Violence: Religious Riot in Sixteenth-Century France," *Past & Present* 59 (1973): 51–91; 53.

14. Only one of the later letters between the archbishop and the city council is edited, the one by Henry Schwarzenberg, December 9, 1482, in Johann Martin Lappenberg, "Von der Cistercienserinnen-Abtei Herwardeshuthe und deren Umwandlung in das St. Johannis Kloster," *Zeitschrift des Vereins für Hamburgische Geschichte* 4 (1848): 513–80; 537–39. The other letters are quoted according to Raape, "Hamburger Aufstand," 14.

15. "Dat se sick in velen articulen unborliken weder de schickinge der rechte hebben, wo dat si in stede unde dorpp zunder vruchten ghaen, ok in ere cloester unborlike personen laten." Raape, "Hamburger Aufstand," 14. In the next letter, the bishop calls for a reform "because of indecorousness, not holding to the regulations, and other memorable defections ("umme unschicklicheit, mysholdinge der regulen vnde ander mecklige

ouertredinghe"). Lappenberg, "Cistercienserinnen-Abtei," 537. All translations are the author's.

16. Schmidt, "Widerstand," 169. Guy Geltner, "Brethren Behaving Badly: A Deviant Approach to Medieval Antifraternality," *Speculum* 85 (2010): 47–64; 48–49, surveys recent scholarship differentiating topoi of criticism of monastic orders.

17. Urbanski, *Geschichte*, 105–10, mentions the admonishing letter sent to Harvesthude in 1420 by the Carthusian monk Johann Rode. Harvesthude appears frequently in testaments from Hamburg. We know of donations both for specific purposes within the monastery, as in for construction or the reading of masses, and as donations to individual sisters. Marianne Riethmüller, *to troste miner sele. Aspekte spätmittelalterlicher Frömmigkeit im Spiegel Hamburger Testamente (1310–1400)*, Beiträge zur Geschichte Hamburgs; Bd. 47 (Hamburg: Verlag für Hamburger Geschichte, 1994), 53–56 and 134–39.

18. Bertram Lesser, *Johannes Busch: Chronist der Devotio moderna. Werkstruktur, Überlieferung, Rezeption* (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 2005), 277–93.

19. Uffmann, *Wie in einem Rosengarten*, 124–31, describes the historiographical records written in Ebstorf and Lüne that are linked to the reform processes.

20. Hans-Joachim Schmidt sees the small amount of modern scholarship on resistance against the reform movements of the fifteenth century, especially concerning female monasteries, as a result of the general perception that the reforms were a righteous measure against secularization and decline in monastic life. His attempt to frame the topic in a less judgemental way can be found in "Widerstand," 145–47.

21. Gerd Ahlers, *Weibliches Zisterziensertum im Mittelalter und seine Klöster in Niedersachsen*, Studien zur Geschichte Kunst und Kultur der Zisterzienser; Bd. 13 (Berlin: Lukas, 2002), 96–97.

22. The sources for the economic connections between Harvesthude, the city council, and the cathedral chapter are presented in Urbanski, *Geschichte*, 10–13.

23. A comparison of the concrete rules of the reform according to Bursfeld and Windesheim and a short description of the outcome of the reform attempts in the Lüneburg Heath monasteries can be found in Rudolf T. M. van Dijk, "Kirchliches Reformklima in der zweiten Hälfte des fünfzehnten Jahrhunderts. Zur Buchkultur im niederländisch-deutschen

Raum," in *Humanistische Buchkultur: Deutsch-niederländische Kontakte im Spätmittelalter (1450–1520)*, hg. Jos M. M. Hermans, *Niederlande-Studien*; 14 (Münster: Lit, 1997), 37–64.

24. Ida-Christine Riggert, *Die Lüneburger Frauenklöster*, Veröffentlichungen der Historischen Kommission für Niedersachsen und Bremen; 37/Quellen und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte Niedersachsens im Mittelalter; Bd. 19 (Hanover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1996), 331.

25. On the connections between Hamburg and Lüneburg during the Prälatenkrieg, see Hans Feldtmann, "Hamburg im Lüneburger Prälatenkriege und der zweite Rezeß vom Jahre 1458," *Zeitschrift des Vereins für Hamburgische Geschichte* 26 (1925), 1–106.

26. Riggert, *Lüneburger*, 316.

27. Urbanski, *Geschichte*, pp. 190–91.

28. Riggert, *Lüneburger*, 331.

29. *Des Augustinerpropstes . . . Liber de reformatione*, 629–33.

30. *Ibid.*, 559.

31. "Solche und dergleichen Sachen hat die domina von Derenburg diebischer weise zu sich genommen und durch ihre Jungfern und Freunde in Braunschweig und anderswo um geringen Preiß verkauffen laßen." *Chronik des Klosters Wienhausen*, ed. Horst Appuhn (Celle: Bomann-Archiv, 1956), 22–23.

32. Urbanski, *Geschichte*, 151. After an intervention by the city council, the village was given back to the archbishop. Urbanski presumes that the monastery remained unreformed because the economic reason for the reform, namely, the village, had disappeared after the conflict had been solved in favor of the archbishop.

33. On reform attempts in the Cistercian order in general, see Immo Eberl, "Die Zisterzienser im Mittelalter. Der Orden zwischen dem Aufbruch des novum monasterium und den Reformen des Spätmittelalters," *Jahrbuch für Internationale Germanistik A* 71 (2005): 63–76; Kaspar Elm, "Westfälisches Zisterziensertum und spätmittelalterliche Reformbewegung," *Westfälische Zeitschrift* 128 (1978): 9–32.

34. "Unde hebn darto . . . van deme erwerdigen hogeborn fursten, heren Ernste, to Magdeburg unde Haluerstat administratoren . . . erworuen unde beholden, so wy der in vnsen stichten nergende hadn, noch op de negede nicht bekommen konden . . . eyne abdisse mit veer iunfferen van reformacien vnde observantien des ordens cistercien vnde in der regulen woll instituert, bewetten vnde beleert." Henry Schwarzenberg to Hamburg city council,

December 9, 1482 printed in Lappenberg, "Cistercienserinnen-Abtei," 537–38.

35. Wilhelm Kohl, *Die Bistümer der Kirchenprovinz Köln. Das Bistum Münster 7: Die Diözese*, Germania Sacra, N.F. 37:1 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1999), 191–96.

36. "Anno m.cccc.lxxii. des negesten dages vor de twolff apostels dage [July 14, 1472] do wordt datt kloster Rengeringe vorbrandt dorch einen rentemeister, de se reformeren solde von des bisschopes wegen. Doch so en folgede dar nichtz na, se bleven nha alss vor. Nochtans lange darna worden se besloten anno domini m.cccc.lxxx." "Münstersche Chronik von der Wahl Bischof Heinrichs von Mörs bis auf die Wahl Bischof Bernhards von Raesfeld. 1424–1557," in *Die Münsterschen Chroniken des Mittelalters*, hg. Julius Ficker, *Die Geschichtsquellen des Bisthums Münster*; Bd. 1 (Münster 1851), 304–45; 323.

37. Gert Halepage was a cousin of Herman Langebek, the chronicler, and was his and his sibling's legal guardian when their parents died. Gert Halepagen was one of the foremost promoters of the Bursfeld reform in the region and in the monastery in Buxtehude. Raape, "Hamburger Aufstand," 16.

38. Nicolaus Heutger, *Zisterziensisches Wirken in Niedersachsen* (Hildesheim: Druckerei Manfred Oppermann, 1993), 59–60.

39. Schmidt, "Widerstand," 148–49.

40. "Alse nun des rades deputeerden frunde to Hervestehude quemen, folgden vele fruwen unde mannen ut der stat, de een deel weldiglich mede int kloster drungenden, een deel auer de muren stegen und vor dem kapitelhuse grot ungestum dreuen mit worden und werken, lude ropende, dat men den verräderen nicht löven scholde. Alse denne des heren bisschoffes capellan en mit sachtzmödigem worden vorgaf, dat se sik sullen sadigen und tofreden geuen, wart he van velen und sundriges van Catharinen Arends ser unduchtigen mit höneliken, schändlichen worden afgerichtet und dorch lichtung der kleder int achterdeel gewiset." "Des Bürgermeisters Herman Langebek *Bericht*," 342.

41. Ibid.

42. "... darby seggende, dat men de sendebaden ungesumet vor der maltyt van dar scholde fordern." Ibid., 342–43.

43. Thorleif Olavsson, Bishop of Viborg 1448–50 and of Bergen 1450–55, was killed by Germans in the Munkelivs monastery's chapel. The threat against the deputies: "Des Bürgermeisters Herman Langebek *Bericht*," 343.

44. Johannes Busch was served a very small glass of beer in one of the monasteries he tried to reform, an episode he tells in order to illustrate the varying forms of resistance he had to endure. As a means of instilling obedience, he emptied it and asked for another, bigger one, which was given to him. Discussed in Schmidt, "Widerstand."

45. Hascher-Burger, "Zwischen Liturgie," 130–32; Signori, "Gehorsam," 301. Both discuss the examples from Johannes Busch's chronicles concerning the reformation attempts in the monasteries of Wennigsen and Mariensee.

46. ". . . ut eas, quas muri et repagula contra ducem et nos defendere non poterant, saltem sancti . . . protegere dignarentur." *Des Augustinerpropstes . . . Liber de reformatione*, 556–57.

47. *Ibid.*, 559.

48. Cited after Signori, "Gehorsam," 295.

49. *Mittelniederdeutsches Wörterbuch*, ed. Karl Schiller and August Lübben, Bd. 1 (Bremen 1875), 184.

50. Johannes Meyer, *Buch der Reformacio*, cited after Signori, "Gehorsam," 297.

51. Dieter Mertens, "Klosterreform als Kommunikationsereignis," in *Formen und Funktionen öffentlicher Kommunikation im Mittelalter*, hg. Gerd Althoff (Stuttgart: Thorbecke, 2001), 397–420; 416.

52. Cited after Signori, "Gehorsam," 301.

53. Urbanski, *Geschichte*, 54. The sources do not indicate the existence of *conversae* in Harvestehude.

54. Lappenberg, "Cistercienserinnen-Abtei," 558–63.

55. The reconstruction of the social composition of the convent at Urbanski, "Begebenen kinder frunde," 424–28.

56. Urbanski, *Geschichte*, 251.

57. For example, Wommelke Spiegel, nun, 1475–1508, daughter of a *Flandernfabrer*; an unnamed daughter of *Flandernfabrer* Paul Stenveld, nun in 1451; Anneke von Oyten, nun in 1492, stepdaughter of *Flandernfabrer* Ropeke von Oyten. Lists of the nuns and their family relations drawn from wills and account books in Lappenberg, "Cistercienserinnen-Abtei," 558–63, and Urbanski, *Geschichte*, 224–53, and additional sources (Rentebuch St. Petri, Genealogische Sammlungen Kartei Rentenmarkt at Staatsarchiv Hamburg).

58. In 1485, right after the conflict concerning the monastery's reform, there were sixty-nine members in this fraternity. Twenty-one of them were members of the city council, twenty-three were members of the lower clergy, eight were sartorial and eligible for the council, nine had administrative

posts in the town, and nine were craftsmen from the middle class. The list of members of the confraternity in Brandes, "Geistlichen Brüderschaften," 92–94.

59. Brandes, "Geistlichen Brüderschaften," 93.

60. The genealogical connections between Catharina Arndes and Dietrich Mentze have been researched by Raape, "Hamburger Aufstand," 23. The names of the nuns are contained in Lappenberg, "Cistercienserinnen-Abtei," 558–63, and Urbanski, *Geschichte*, 224 et seq.

61. The two daughters of Dietrich Mentze and Katharina were nuns in Harvestehude until 1492. Urbanski, *Geschichte*, 241.

62. Katharina and Alheid. Katharina is entered into the records as a nun until 1488; Alheid until 1532, when she left the convent voluntarily, Urbanski, *Geschichte*, 232; "Des Bürgermeisters Herman Langebeke Bericht," 343.

63. Raape, "Hamburger Aufstand," 23; Urbanski, "Begevenen kinder frunde," 419.

64. Roberta Senechal de la Roche, "Why is Collective Violence Collective?" *Sociological Theory* 19:2 (2001): 126–144; 144. Her theory is developed from case studies and theories by, among others, Charles Tilly and Donald Black.

65. Mertens, "Klosterreform," 417.

66. "Des Bürgermeisters Herman Langebek Bericht," 343.

67. "Derhaluen dan wart twisschen dem rade und borgeren wort bespraken, dat men solkes scholde hindern unde vorbeden by deme höchsten." *Ibid.*, 340.

68. "[Daher] viel gemurmels unter ihnen gespuret worden, welchs die Auffrührer & den gemeinen mann vollend zu tumultieren angereitz & bewogen / weil sie sahen, das auch die Obersten den Rath gern in die Wolle gewesen weren." Krantz, *Wandalia deutsch*, lib. 13, cap. 29. "Cum etiam maiores cernerent indignatos intentandos rei in senatum. Henc erant semina mali, inde excrescentem audaciam intueamur." *Ibid.*

69. Lappenberg, "Cistercienserinnen-Abtei," 565.

70. Geseke vom Kroege. She left the monastery in 1532 and married. Urbanski, *Geschichte*, 240.

71. Jürgen Wätjer, *Das katholische Domkapitel zu Hamburg von den Anfängen bis zur Reformation und seine Wiedererrichtung 1996. Eine kanonistische Untersuchung*, Adnotationes in Ius Canonicum; 19 (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 2001), 187–90 and 193–96.

72. The central source on the Domfehde has been edited: *Van der*

Rostocker Veide. *Rostocker Chronik von 1487–1491*, hg. Karl Ernst Hermann Krause (Rostock, 1880). See also R. Lange, “Hans Runge und die inneren Kämpfe in Rostock zur Zeit der Domfehde,” *Hansische Geschichtsblätter* 17 (1888): 101–132.

73. On conflicts between city council and cathedral chapter during the fifteenth century in Osnabrück and Minden, see Wilfried Ehbrecht, *Konsens und Konflikt: Skizzen und Überlegungen zur älteren Verfassungsgeschichte deutscher Städte*, hg. Peter Johanek, Städteforschung. Reihe A, Darstellungen; Bd. 56 (Cologne: Böhlau, 2001), 114–15; 333.

74. Bernd-Ulrich Hergemöller, “Krisenerscheinungen kirchlicher Machtpositionen in hansischen Städten des 15. Jahrhunderts (Braunschweig, Lüneburg, Rostock, Osnabrück),” in *Städtische Führungsgruppen und Gemeinde in der werdenden Neuzeit*, hg. Wilfried Ehbrecht, Städteforschung. Reihe A, Darstellungen; Bd. 9 (Cologne: Böhlau, 1980), 313–48.

75. Bernd-Ulrich Hergemöller, “*Pfaffenkriege*” im spätmittelalterlichen Hanseraum. *Quellen und Studien zu Braunschweig, Osnabrück, Lüneburg und Rostock*, Städteforschung. Reihe C, Quellen; Bd. 2, 2 Teile. (Cologne: Böhlau, 1980), 1:349–52.

76. Ibid., 346–49.

77. Krantz, *Wandalia*, lib. 14, cap. 9.

78. A popular collection of folk tales from different cultures where women raise their skirts is contained in Mithu M. Sanyal, *Vulva: die Enthüllung des unsichtbaren Geschlechts* (Berlin: Wagenbach, 2009). She mentions the myth of Demeter and Iambe/Baubo, where the latter shows Demeter her vulva in order to free her from a depression, and variations of this myth in Egyptian and Mesopotamian sources. She even mentions the stories of Godiva, who made her husband reconsider his tax policy by riding naked through town, and several sayings and myths from Spain and Greece which cannot be relayed chronologically (34–35).

79. In medieval law material, the forced raising of a woman’s skirts with the exposure of her genitals is often explicitly fined, along with other crimes regarding the sense of shame. For example, in the Old Frisian laws of Hunsingö, see *Das Hunsingoer Recht*, hg. Wybren Jan Buma und Wilhelm Ebel, *Altfriesische Rechtsquellen*; Bd. 4 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1969), 60.

80. Ezek. 16:36–37; Isa. 47: 2–3; Jer. 13:26.

81. Gerlinde Baumann, *Liebe und Gewalt. Die Ehe als Metapher für das Verhältnis JHWH, Israel in den Prophetenbüchern* (Stuttgart: Verlag

Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2000), 18–32. Especially in Hos 2:4–25; Jer 13:20–27. A complete list of prophetic marriage metaphors in Baumann, *Liebe*, 51.

82. “A tumultu insanientium foeminarum res inchoatur: Acclamavere tumultuantes quoque viri: Incertum quid quisque loqueret. . . . Foemines convitiis et contumeliis, in turpitudinem prolabentes, insanierunt: Praetenderant consulares populo, se esse missos ad audiendum & referendum senatui.” Krantz, *Wandalia*, lib. 13, cap. 29.

83. Monika Gsell, *Die Bedeutung der Baubo: kulturgeschichtliche Studien zur Repräsentation des weiblichen Genitales* (Frankfurt am Main: Stroemfeld, 2001), 352.