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Repeat Performances: Mary Ward's Girls on the International Stage

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By the time of her death in 1645, Mary Ward, a Yorkshire Catholic, had achieved international fame. In 1611, Ward claimed she had received a vision telling her to “Take the same of the Society.”¹ God, she believed, wanted her to found a female institute that faithfully emulated the Society of Jesus, one based on the rules, apostolic work, and educational curriculum at the heart of the Jesuit mission.² Over the next two decades, she founded over a dozen religious houses on the Continent, from Belgium and France to Italy and Bavaria, with day and boarding schools attached to each one. The women who joined her in her mission took vows but refused enclosure—a violation of Boniface VIII’s 1563 bull *Periculoso*, which mandated that female religious stay within convent walls. In a further contentious imitation of the Jesuits, Ward stipulated that the institute superior would answer only to the pope, thus bypassing the limits of local church authorities. Although Ward found few friends among the Jesuits (whose Society forbade female members), and many enemies within the Catholic establishment, she was able to keep the educational part of her mission alive, even after the Institute’s papal suppression in 1631 and her death—thanks in large part to an international cast of noble, secular supporters: among them, Infanta Isabella Clara Eugenia of the Netherlands; the Elector of Bavaria,

1. Mary Ward, letter to John Gerard SJ, April 1619, in *A Briefe Relation . . . with Autobiographical Fragments and a Selection of Letters*, ed. Christina Kenworthy-Browne (Suffolk: Boydell, 2008), 142.

2. This was one in a series of visions Ward claimed to have received. The first, in 1607, instructed her to leave the Flemish Poor Clares of St. Omer, where she had been in training, and open a separate branch for English women. The second vision, in 1609, told her to leave the branch she had opened in Gravelines and await further guidance. She returned to England, where she worked with Catholic recusants and eventually received this command from God to “Take the same of the Society.”

Maximilian I; Emperor Frederick II of Austria; and England's queens Henrietta Maria and Catherine of Braganza.³

Ward's goal was to educate England's recusant daughters in relative safety and to train an army of women to save her homeland from apostasy. Another central part of her mission was to teach local girls in the free schools that were attached to each of her foundations so that they, too, might grow into good, Christian women and enrich the spiritual life of their homes and homelands. As the Institute's positive reputation grew, local Catholic nobility also came to entrust their daughters to Ward's schools. The English girls sent overseas by their families to be trained by Ward, then, were mingling daily with their foreign counterparts, living and learning in cross-cultural environments.

From the establishment of her first foundation in Saint-Omer, Ward and her followers were constantly crossing geographical, linguistic, and cultural borders in order to advocate for their Institute's survival and growth and to do the educational work that was at the heart of their broader apostolic mission. Like the Jesuits, Ward and her followers were pursuing a religious path that depended upon their mobility and their ability to impact the local communities of each foundation. One had to be ready to go anywhere in the service of Christ and the conversion or return of all souls to the Catholic way.

This mission required that one be poised, articulate, and charismatic both inside and outside the home. Ward encouraged these abilities in her students through the teaching of classical rhetoric, which required knowledge of Latin, and of theatrical performance. My aim here is to bring this latter innovation in female education forward and to tease out its international implications as we consider how female actors were moving across borders and performing for more diverse audiences than has been previously thought. Productions put on within convent walls were especially limited in their reach, which is why Ward's work with the Catholic girls she trained is so groundbreaking. Elissa Weaver's work on convent theater shows that there was a tradition dating back to the fifteenth century of girls performing drama in Italy, Spain, and perhaps throughout Catholic Europe. These plays, however, were meant to be performed only for members of the convent community.⁴ Theater happened behind walls, not beyond them. But Ward and her followers repeatedly produced all-female theatricals that were designed to train girls via the stage to take an active apostolic role

3. Charles II's queen was an active supporter of the English Institute and left a property in Hammersmith to the followers of Ward who had established a house there in 1669. See Mary Catherine Elizabeth Chambers, *The Life of Mary Ward*, 2 vols. (London: Burns & Oates, 1882–85), 2:513.

4. Elissa Weaver, *Convent Theatre in Early Modern Italy: Spiritual Fun and Learning for Women* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

in the larger world. Whether the pope wished to send them “among the Turks, or any other infidels, even to those who live in the region called the Indies,” Ward’s students would be ready to serve anywhere as soldiers of God.⁵

These theatrical skills were central components of the Jesuit curriculum for boys, and Ward made no apologies for following this all-male tradition. As the *Ratio atque Institutio Societatis Jesu* asserts, public performance helped strengthen the loyalties of its students and their families to the Jesuit mission: “Young boys . . . and their parents become marvelously excited and inflamed, and also very much attached to our Society, when the boys are able to display on stage our labors, some results of their study, their acting ability, and a sample of their powers of memory.”⁶

None of these principles and behaviors, of course, were officially allowed of a female religious community, nor did they fit conservative early modern visions of chaste, silent, obedient womanhood more generally.⁷ Ward’s missionary work violated the Catholic rules of enclosure. She and her followers had to go beyond convent walls to interact with the communities in which they lived—to help teach and save the citizens of each city in which they set up a house. When they were working in their native England, their ability to do so undetected was especially important to their survival—and required theatrical skills. Ward’s sister Barbara describes how Mary “went into Ingland under pretence of health, but

5. This line appears in Ward’s *Institutum*, the 1622 plan for her Institute that she submitted to the pope for approval. The full Latin text reads: “et prudens ipsius charitas expedire iudicabit sive nos ad Turcas, sive ad quoscunque alios Infideles etiam in partibus quas Indias vocant, sive ad quoscunque haereticos, schismaticos, sive etiam ad quosvis fideles mittendas censuerit exequi teneamur” (English translation mine; in *Mary Ward und ihre Grundzug: Die Quellentexte bis 1645*, ed. Ursula Dirmeier, CJ, 4 vols., Corpus Catholicorum 45–48 [Münster: Aschendorff, 2007], 1:628).

6. Quoted in Robert S. Miola, “Jesuit Drama in Early Modern England,” in *Theatre and Religion: Lancastrian Shakespeare*, ed. Richard Dutton, Alison Findlay, and Richard Wilson (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 71–86, at 72.

7. Ward knew that teaching Latin to girls was unorthodox and that it might even seem so to her followers. In 1627, she wrote to Winefrid Wigmore, Superior of the Naples house, telling her that “I would have Cicilia and Catherina to begin out of hand to learn the rudiments of lattin, feare not the loss of virtue by that means” (in Dirmeier, *Mary Ward*, 2:253). Phyllis Rackin is one of the newer feminist scholars to warn against letting one particular narrative about early modern women occlude all others. The injunction to be chaste, silent and obedient, for example, does not tell the complete story of women’s lives and men’s responses to female behavior (although it underwrote conservative early modern discourses, especially those promoting the official Catholic doctrine Ward was challenging). As Rackin writes, “We need to view the textual evidence for misogyny and oppression more critically, considering both the social locations of the original writers and those of the contemporary scholars who have put those texts back into circulation.” See her “Misogyny Is Everywhere,” in *A Feminist Companion to Shakespeare*, ed. Dymphna Callaghan (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), 42–56, at 48. See, as well, Lena Cowen Orlin’s cautionary remarks in “A Case for Anecdotalism in Women’s History: The Witness Who Spoke When the Cock Crowed,” *English Literary Renaissance* 31, no. 1 (2001): 52–77.

the true cause was zeale, and desire of gaining soules.”⁸ Such deceptive movements inflamed her English enemies, such as the Roman Catholic archpriest William Harrison, who complained in 1622 that Ward’s group “travels freely hither and thither, changes its ground and habit at will, [and] accommodates itself to the manners and condition of seculars.”⁹ Robert Sherwood, a Benedictine priest, explicitly connected these unbounded and immodest activities to the theatrical work Ward did with her students: “Under the pretext of perfecting their institute,” Ward and her followers have “duped many very devoted girls,” spending their dowries and luring them into their “spirited lifestyle. . . . They typically have the girls, who were sent to them by their parents to be educated, publically perform immodest comedies, so that they may later accompany seculars or preach in churches in this reckless manner.”¹⁰

These early modern performances by Ward’s female students are difficult to trace, as the Institute has very few surviving records from that time period, and no extant curricula. The few references that we have from Ward’s lifetime are all recorded in letters of complaint sent by enemies of Ward’s Institute and its supporters. In September 1619, the Jesuit father general, Muzio Vitelleschi, launched an investigation into Father John Faulkner’s work with the *puellae* of the Liège foundation. He had allegedly “instructed them to act on the stage [*in scena agere*],” Vitelleschi writes, “in a comedy.”¹¹ In 1628, Melchoir Klesl, bishop of Vienna, complained to Cardinal Bandini in Rome that Ward had opened a school in his district without his knowledge and that the students also had acted a comedy there.¹² When the secretary of Congregatio de Propaganda Fide, Francesco Ingoli, compiled his memorandum against the Institute later that same year, the performance of a comedy was one of the twenty catalogued abuses.¹³

Taken together, these complaints tell a particular story about how female performers were received, and how girls on stage threatened an entrenched vision of the ideal female body and mouth as enclosed and obedient. If we are to ask what real-world effects these few examples of international schoolgirl performances had on female agency—on the political and cultural influence of women more broadly—we would likely answer: none, or, perhaps, only negative ones. Certainly, if we stop the story of Ward’s Institute in 1631, when it was suppressed

8. Dirmeier, *Mary Ward*, 4:2.

9. William Harrison, “A Copy of the Information concerning the Jesuitresses,” in Chambers, *Life of Mary Ward*, 2:185.

10. Dirmeier, *Mary Ward*, 1:665. Many thanks to Brendon Reay for his assistance with the Latin translation.

11. *Ibid.*, 1:461–62.

12. *Ibid.*, 2:283.

13. *Ibid.*, 2:326.

by Pope Urban VIII's bull *Pastoralis Romani Pontificis*, these would be reasonable conclusions. Her insistence that women should and could be active participants in the Catholic mission of conversion and her defiance of gender norms when it came to female movement beyond all kinds of borders—national, domestic, pedagogical—were unlikely to end in her favor given the many institutional and cultural barriers she faced.

But there is another story to be told—one that situates these female performances in a much larger international context and that grants them a unique kind of effectiveness within Europe's male-dominated power networks. Ward's house in Munich survived the 1631 Bull of Suppression because of the support that she and her followers had from the elector, Duke Maximilian. A number of new foundations, whose sole focus on education seemingly downplayed their connection to Ward and her apostolic mission, opened throughout the region over the next century. Ulrike Strasser analyzes the Institute's cross-cultural success in this area in terms of its English members' origins and reputation: "Catholic territories like Bavaria continued to reserve a space in the sociopolitical and cultural order of things for unwed women who were religious and chaste. Mary Ward and her English Ladies were able to claim this space. . . . Their upper-class background . . . enabled them to access the patronage networks of Europe's courts."¹⁴ With the support of these secular courts, Ward's community (which became increasingly international over the course of the seventeenth century) was able to continue the pedagogical part of her work long after her death in 1645.

The archives of these Bavarian houses provide the first-hand evidence of school productions that is missing from the Institute's earlier, presuppression foundations. These anecdotes from the later part of the seventeenth century and the first half of the eighteenth allow us a glimpse of how these performances may have been received by different members of the girls' non-English audiences. At the same time, they offer a way to consider how the specific political environments in which Ward's Institute operated—both pre- and postsuppression—affected the kinds of performances put on in the schools, and to what extent they were part of the recomposed Institute's larger strategy of survival. As the only house to escape the dissolution of the Institute in 1631, Strasser notes, "the community in the Bavarian capital turned into the single locus of institutional continuity between the days of Mary Ward and the revamped Institute of English Ladies that received confirmation from the papacy in the eighteenth century."¹⁵ As such, it provides us with an especially fruitful case study for ex-

14. Ulrike Strasser, *State of Virginity: Gender, Religion, and Politics in an Early Modern Catholic State* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004), 171–72.

15. *Ibid.*, 154–55.

amining the life and afterlife of the girls' performances that were such an important component of Ward's Jesuit-oriented vision.

In previous work, I have contended that records from the Bar Convent in York, where Ward's followers founded an English house in 1686, suggest that these schoolgirl theatricals worked to heal the damaged Catholic community by bringing England's disenfranchised faithful together.¹⁶ In some ways, the references to theater in the Bavarian Institutes that started to emerge around the time of the York house foundation indicate that they served a similar community function, although the Catholic audience members and players in this region were obviously far from disenfranchised. Given the institutional power of the papacy and of Catholic rulers in the region at this time, these girls' performances, I will argue, operated in a much more public and, at times, contentious international political space.

Ward focused much of her energy in her later years on this particular area of Europe. Within a year of the Munich house's foundation in 1627, she had established houses in Vienna and Pressburg and had attempted a foundation in Prague. Henriette Peters comments on Ward's strategy during this phase: "It is not only the suddenness of the Institute's development, but the very geographical situation of the new foundations which is significant. . . . A house of the Institute was to exist in each one of the capitals of the most important crownlands of Ferdinand II. It was a strategy for spreading the faith."¹⁷ Ward knew that her other European foundations were on shaky ground. Despite her attempts to gain papal approval for her Institute, which included trips to Rome, she never received the official, systemic support she needed to keep her various houses operational and solvent. Extreme debt, coupled with the persistent hostility of the English secular clergy, local episcopal authorities on the Continent, and much of the Jesuit community, had weakened many of her houses by the 1620s.¹⁸

16. Caroline Bicks, "Producing Girls in Mary Ward's Convent Schools," in *Gender and Early Modern Constructions of Childhood*, ed. Naomi Miller and Naomi Yavneh (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2012), 139–56.

17. Henriette Peters, *Mary Ward: A World in Contemplation*, trans. Helen Butterworth (Herefordshire: Gracewing, 1994), 442. David Wallace surmises that Ward was "especially passionate about the new work in Bratislava [then Pressburg], perhaps because the educational fight against Lutheranism may be analogized, in some respects, to conditions in England." See his *Strong Women: Life, Text, and Territory, 1347–1645* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 177.

18. Records show that the Infanta did help the Ladies of the Saint-Omer Institute stave off their debtors, but (perhaps giving in to pressure from her ambassador in Rome) she appears to have withdrawn her active support and protection some time in 1623, leaving it to the town to negotiate with the Englishwomen. See Peters, *Mary Ward*, 362–64. The Flanders houses were eventually suppressed in 1630. For an excellent account of Ward's enemies in the Catholic Church, and of the English secular clergy's opposition to Ward's involvement in the English mission espe-

The first set of official suppressions began in 1625, when the Congregation for Bishops and Regulars declared that the foundations in the Papal States must be closed. The complaints against Ward's work had been mounting, and her refusal of enclosure especially had sparked rumors of immodest activities among the Italian communities. The houses in Rome and Perugia, along with their schools, soon shut their doors. Ward left Italy in 1626, apparently to make her way back to her troubled foundations in Flanders.

She describes what happened next in a third-person petition she had composed for the pope: "Passing through Munich, the court of his Serene Highness the Duke Elector of Bavaria, she found there was a demand there for ladies to educate young girls." Ward then describes how the duke gave them a house and an endowment: "All this was done with great courtesy and in accordance with the generosity characteristic of their Highnesses when the service of God and the common good are concerned."¹⁹ The ease with which Ward moves here between countries gives her the appearance of a cross-cultural Catholic ambassador of sorts. She and her mission are received by the gracious duke; through his support of her education of young girls, his Serene Highness and the humble Englishwoman come together to serve God and the "common good."

There were, of course, very practical, political reasons for the elector's support of the Institute: as the founder of the Catholic League and active champion of the Roman Catholic cause in the Thirty Years' War, Maximilian undoubtedly saw the Munich house as a complement to his public image. While advancing his ambitious and expensive foreign policies, Bavaria's domestic affairs had deteriorated; part of his political strategy, then, was to figure himself as the God-appointed restorer of public order and Catholic morality throughout his lands.²⁰ The English Ladies' houses had not been welcome in the papal territories, but the foundation in Munich, capital of Counter-Reformation Bavaria, would be a monument to his role as the truest defender of the Catholic faith in Bavaria and beyond—and a reminder to the Holy See that secular rule could trump papal power when the interests of the state were at stake.²¹

Ward dictated this petition in 1629, when papal suppression of the Institute seemed imminent. She likely understood the competition between these secular and religious axes of power when she cast Maximilian as a gracious servant of God. That same year, Father Gerard, one of the rare, long-term Jesuit sup-

cially, see Laurence Lux-Sterritt, "An Analysis of the Controversy Caused by Mary Ward's Institute in the 1620s," *Recusant History* 25, no. 4 (2001): 636–47.

19. Mary Ward, petition to Pope Urban VIII and the Cardinals, March 25, 1629, in Kenworthy-Browne, *Briefe Relation*, 151.

20. See Strasser, *State of Virginity*, 99–106.

21. *Ibid.*, 159.

porters of Ward's mission, wrote to her follower, Mary Poyntz, the superior in Munich. From his description, it is clear that the Munich house played a key symbolic role in the Institute's struggles for legitimacy: "Since your College is the only one that prospers of those that up to this time were founded by your reverend Mother; this the progress of your Society greatly depends on its well-being, and this not alone as regards the great fruit which your whole Society derives from it by its useful and suitable members, but also by the lustre of edification which the whole world may hope to expect from it."²² Once again, the house serves as a site of international communion. The Society, comprised of girls and women from many nations, promises to edify no less than "the whole world."

When Ward arrived in Munich, the Society of Jesus and its college had been there for fifty years. They had educated members of the noble and princely classes (including the elector himself) and, as their confessors, had significant influence over them. Letters suggest that the Jesuits welcomed Ward and her work to the dismay of the father general in Rome, who repeatedly had to remind them not to associate with the women or administer any spiritual services to them, as per the Society's rules against allowing female members.²³ Although the Jesuits themselves had to temper their support, the local nobility did not. Word spread of the school's popularity. It was such a success that Maximilian recommended Ward to his brother-in-law, Emperor Ferdinand II, who soon invited Ward to open a house in Vienna.

She did so solely with the emperor's approval and without consulting the diocesan curia there, represented at that time by Bishop Klesl. More layers to Klesl's complaint about the Viennese school's theatrical activity emerge when we situate it within this larger competition for authority between the Holy Roman Emperor's will and Rome's representative. Klesl's interest in reconciling the different religious factions in the empire via concessions to the Protestants during the Counter-Reformation had put him at odds with the Habsburg archduke Ferdinand II (who was elected emperor despite Klesl's attempts to prevent it). He was arrested by Ferdinand in 1618 and had just been reinstated as bishop of Vienna when he wrote to Bandini in 1628 about Ward and her Institute.²⁴

22. Chambers, *Life of Mary Ward*, 2:317. Father Gerard was the Jesuit rector in Liège from 1614 to 1622. He supported Ward's work from its early days and was transferred to Rome in 1622 over concerns from his superior that he was too actively involved with the Institute. While in Rome, he continued to be a key advisor and informant for Ward and her followers concerning the fate of the Institute.

23. Peters, *Mary Ward*, 439.

24. For more on this particular history with Klesl, see Margaret Mary Littlehales, *Mary Ward: Pilgrim and Mystic* (Kent: Burns & Oates, 1998), 162–63.

Klesl accuses the women of being “mera politica”—purely political: “They do not want to be subject to any Ordinary, but only to their own General, with dependence solely on the Emperor. A few days ago they put on a Comedy with the students of the School.”²⁵ The girls’ alleged performance on Ward’s Institute stage is symptomatic here of a larger breakdown in the Catholic Church’s international hierarchy. Ward’s refusal to subject herself to the episcopal court, while depending entirely on the secular power of Ferdinand, was a flagrant breach of the rules for female religious communities.

Ward’s charges, the female pupils who produce plays in her school, clearly had no concern for following the rules of gender and religious propriety either. The apples do not fall far from the tree, in Klesl’s view. And, in this case, the apples included Catholic girls from many nations. The “great fruit” that Father Gerard had envisioned being produced by the Munich Institute for the whole world’s edification was clearly in danger of rotting—and when Catholic daughters fall, the future growth of the Church and the international community of the faithful are at stake. Klesl’s complaints found a ready and willing audience when his letter arrived at the papal court.

A few months later, in early 1629, Ward set out for Rome in hopes of making one final, direct appeal to the pope for her Institute’s approval.²⁶ The journey, according to the biography that Poyntz wrote with Winefrid Wigmore, was excruciating for the ailing Ward, but a testament to her saintly status: “The Physicians affirmed most assuredly, that according to the humane [human] she cou’d not live to goe out of the gates of the Citty, neither cou’d they find by what naturall cause she lived.”²⁷ Never one to let borders (natural or man-made) stand in her way, Ward did leave the gates of Munich despite her illness and made her way to Rome. The long petition to Urban VIII and the cardinals that she then dictated outlines the support that she and her international company of ladies had found among local families and dignitaries across Europe. As the most successful of her current houses, the Munich Institute receives special attention. After describing her gracious reception by Duke Maximilian (as discussed above), she continues: “And so from the beginning of 1627 schools for day-pupils and boarders were established there [in Munich], with a noviciate in which are to be found girls from the best and noblest families of various countries and provinces. Up to now all this is going very happily and successfully. As

25. The Italian reads: “Non volendo essere sogette ad alcuno Ordinario, ma solamente alla loro Generale con solo dipendenza delle Maestà Cesaree. Dette Donne parimente li giorni passati rapresentarno una Comedia con le predette zitelle della Scuola” (English translation mine; Dirmeier, *Mary Ward*, 2:283).

26. She had traveled to Rome in 1621 to seek an audience with then pope Gregory XV.

27. Mary Poyntz, *The English Vita*, in Kenworthy-Browne, *Briefe Relation*, 36.

far as can be judged, the affection and esteem of those princes increases day by day.”²⁸ There is nothing provincial or modest about Ward’s argument here. She uses the Institute’s multinational reputation and make-up to argue for its effectiveness and its popularity among powerful European leaders. She makes a similar claim for her Institute’s cross-cultural appeal when she criticizes the most recent closure of one of her houses—this time, the foundation in Naples. Of particular interest here, she attributes the closing in part to the “adverse statements made a few months earlier by the Illustrious Lord Cardinal Klesl.” This action, she explains, had disastrous consequences, both at the local and international level: “Cardinal Boncompagni was ordered (it was said) by His Holiness to close their college in Naples, take away the schools, and command all the members of the community, both the professed and the novices of whatever nation, to return to their own country and parents. This command was obeyed at once in Naples, to the great sorrow of the parents and children.”²⁹ Parents and children everywhere suffer in Ward’s version of the wrongs done to the Naples house: the local families whom they can no longer serve amplify the sorrows of the broken families to which the novitiates and professed from around Europe are ordered to return. Ward bemoans the fact that they are being unfairly punished,

all members being sent to their own countries, many of them not finding any living relatives to receive them, or anyone to provide them with a new dowry for their support. Besides, those journeys alone would be expensive, since the aforesaid Company has members from many countries and nations: there are Italians, Spaniards, Germans, Flemings, Bohemians, Hungarians, French, Irish, and English. It will be most difficult of all for the English women, because they are the largest number and they come from a native country infected with heresy, to which they cannot return without great danger to their souls.³⁰

In Ward’s narrative, the very cosmopolitanism that was at the heart of her Institute’s success becomes a traumatic burden. All will suffer financial ruin; many will find themselves alone, and, for the English members especially, spiritual apostasy awaits.

The petition did help Ward gain an audience with the pope in May, and within the year she returned to Munich to await word of the Institute’s fate. In

28. Mary Ward, petition to Pope Urban VIII and the Cardinals, in Kenworthy-Browne, *Briefe Relation*, 151.

29. *Ibid.*, 153.

30. *Ibid.*, 154.

January 1631, the Bull of Suppression, declaring the unilateral elimination of Ward's Institute, was finalized. A month later, she was arrested for heresy and imprisoned in Munich. With no hope of realizing her original vision of a confirmed, unenclosed religious order, Ward devoted herself upon her release to the secular mission of educating girls in Rome and then in England, where she would spend her final years.³¹

Although the elector's court suspended its annual payments to the Institute immediately following its suppression, the Ladies still received financial aid in the form of personal donations. Maximilian, under pressure from his Jesuit confessor, did not actively petition Rome on Ward's behalf, but he did eventually obtain an exemption for the Munich community.³² The members of the closed Vienna Institute joined them, and they reopened the Munich school four years later. With the backing of the social and political elite, the day and boarding schools grew and thrived. In 1691, with financial support from their noble benefactors, the Paradeiserhaus (where the Institute had been housed since its foundation) was remodeled to accommodate the growing community, which at that time included 40 teachers, 12 novices, 50 boarders, and 300 day students.³³ Elector Max Emanuel (Maximilian I's son and successor) gave them the Paradeiserhaus as a permanent gift. In 1703, he presented the Holy See with a document written by then chief superior Anna Barbara Babthorpe: it was a new set of rules for the Institute that left out Ward's original emphasis on an apostolate mission. Pope Clement IX approved them, thus allowing the community to exist as a pious institute with simple vows. By 1748, the Institute and its schools had expanded into a dozen other Bavarian towns and cities.

With these national and international contexts in place, we now can turn to the archival evidence of theatrical activities in the Bavarian schools with a more informed set of questions. Given what was at stake for the Institute as it reinvented itself postsuppression, and given the role it played in promoting the electors' public images at home and on a larger international political stage, how did their student productions participate in these often contentious, real-world negotiations? What effects might these girls' performances have had on their influential audiences?

Although the Ladies continued to teach Latin in their schools well into the early eighteenth century, they shifted their emphasis to French. Strasser argues that this increased focus on the courtly language of choice at the eventual ex-

31. For more on the afterlife of the Institute in England, see Mary Wright, *Mary Ward's Institute: The Struggle for Identity* (Sydney: Crossing Press, 1997), 44–48. Although Pope Urban VIII suppressed the Institute, he did allow Ward and her followers to open a school in Rome.

32. See Strasser, *State of Virginity*, 161.

33. *Ibid.*, 163.

pense of scholarly Latin, a language that unified powerful men of many countries, reflects the growing influence of the Institute's local patrons on its schools.³⁴ Some of the plays referenced in the Bavarian Institutes' archives are described as being French. On February 4, 1694, for instance, "the female boarding students [of Augsburg] performed a small French comedy, which was attended by all of the nobles and those belonging to the family of the count and went off to the pleasure of everyone and the honor of the institution."³⁵ The fact that this production was reported to have been met with pleasure, and that it honored the Institute, does suggest that the plays served to flatter the sensibilities of its spectators and display the Institute's educational strengths and successes (the latter being a stated goal of Jesuit theatricals in the boys' schools). And the additional detail that "all the nobles" and the family of the Count were there tells us something about the audiences for whom the plays were intended. These are the most important people in Augsburg; their opinion and support of the Institute are critical.

A document from the Altötting Institute's archives registers a similar concern with pleasing the notables in the audience: on May 8, 1732, "the boarding students performed a comedy in honor of the election of our headmistress. . . . Count von Wardenberg was present together with the local choristers and other distinguished persons, who took great pleasure in seeing the performance." A record from the same archives suggests that the girls also performed plays to celebrate special days in their wealthy patrons' lives. In 1734, the boarding students performed "a nice comedy with ample and beautiful music in honor of the name-day of Her Excellency the Countess of Distling (Tüßling)."³⁶

There is nothing obviously radical about these girls' productions: they do not seem to be training students for an immodestly apostolic life, as Ward's early detractors claimed. These are "nice" comedies staged for like-minded upper-class audiences. Of course, the members who are documenting the performances

34. Strasser argues that "the upper course of studies in essence became tailored to girls from the nobility and the rising bourgeoisie; it aimed at preparing the young women of the ruling classes for their social role" (ibid., 164).

35. Institutsarchiv Augsburg. All references to the Bavarian archival material are to Maria Theodolinde Winkler, *Maria Ward und as Institut der Englischen Fraulein in Bayern* (Munich: Druck und Kommissionsverlag Carl Aug. Seyfrid und Comp., 1924), 74–75. In the Burghausen archives, another French play is recorded: "the boarding students presented on September 12, 1762 an *ansemblé* from the *Magasin de la jeunesse* in French" (Institutsarchiv Burghausen). I am grateful to George Williams, Jim Morgan, and Annette Pein for their assistance with Winkler's German text.

36. Institutsarchiv Altötting. After citing directly from the sources, Winkler notes that "once again there followed a list of the guests who were present and a description of their satisfaction" (*Maria Ward*, 74–75).

are biased in the Institute's favor. If we had a record from the Viennese house's archives of the 1628 comedy that incensed Bishop Klesl, for example, it may very well have sounded similar to these positive descriptions. That said, there are some important differences to note: the postsuppression Bavarian houses were operating largely without the financial support of English Catholics who had sent their daughters and their dowries overseas to Ward's Institutes. Although some English girls continued to be educated on the Continent (especially in France in the immediate wake of the English Civil War, when the English foundations evacuated to Paris), and although some of them continued to enter the Institute as novices, the student populations of the Institute houses were becoming increasingly provincial. By the late seventeenth century, English Catholics would have been sending their children to the houses that had been established in Hammersmith and York. The wealthy students that the English Ladies now served on the Continent were primarily local; the plays they had them put on are best understood, then, as careful negotiations of the local ruling class's tastes and traditions.

This does not mean that the performances were entirely apolitical, however, nor that the Institute had abandoned Ward's initial vision of Jesuit-style theatricals that aimed to strengthen, perform, and publicly extol Catholic values and virtues. Consider the following anecdote from the Benedictine Chronicles in Munich (as described by Maria Theodolinde Winkler):

The description of the performance with which the students of the institution in Munich welcomed Elector Max Emanuel in 1716 in celebration of his return to Bavaria offers more than these bare reports [a short list of the other plays mentioned in the Bavarian archives precedes this description]. The Benedictine Chronicle speaks of the performance: the headmistress, M. Agnes Bapthorpe asked two Benedictine monks to compose a celebratory play with musical accompaniment. As was the taste at the time, the two wrote and composed an allegory, *Ludus divinae Providentiae*. The date was set for the performance. Max Emanuel had promised to appear. Then the intrigues began; courtiers attempted at the last minute to prevent the Elector from attending the performance under the pretense that the play constituted a grave insult to His Excellency. Max Emanuel nevertheless arrived at the appointed time and found the play of such high quality that he insisted on a repeat performance.³⁷

37. Carolus Meichelbeck, *Chron. Benediktoburani*. I. p. 377 and Appendix II, p. 175, as cited by Winkler, *Maria Ward*, 75.

This anecdote provides us with a wealth of information about the Munich Institute's relationship to its local community and suggests some ways in which its theatrical activities were negotiating the political needs and controversies of the Bavarian elector and his court.

The Institute appears to have a good relationship with the local Benedictine Monastery. Agnes (Alice's sister, who took over from her as chief superior in 1711) asks two of its monks to script a play and compose music for it. The fact that she did not ask the Jesuits for a script may suggest lingering tensions between the groups in Munich. It is particularly interesting that the girls are performing a Latin allegory, a very different animal from the nice, pleasurable comedies and other French plays mentioned in other archival references. Jesuit theater did allow comedies from its early days, but the *Ludus* referenced here epitomizes the Jesuit's interest in promoting serious moral principles through serious subject matter and classical learning:³⁸ "Divine Providence" was a frequent allegorical figure in Jesuit theatricals,³⁹ and although their plays were increasingly performed in the vernacular, Latin was the original language in which male students were expected to show their skills and inspire their audiences to virtuous thought and action. Ward's mission to teach Latin to her students was evidently still being put into practice and displayed.

The theme of Divine Providence apparently suited the occasion—at least, it suited how Max Emanuel wanted the occasion to be seen. His return to Bavaria in 1715 was neither victorious nor providential. He brought with him a long list of humiliating political and military defeats. Having sided with the French against the Habsburgs in the War of the Spanish Succession, he failed to gain the Spanish throne, and he had also failed to win the mantle of the Holy Roman Emperor for the Wittelsbachs. He had spent the last ten years exiled first in the Spanish Netherlands and then in Paris. While at the French court, he had maintained a large staff of Italian and French musicians. When he returned to Bavaria, he brought these musicians with him, and they helped develop a court culture that came to feature elaborate theater productions.⁴⁰ This love of the arts may account for some of his interest in seeing the girls' play, but it does not account for the political "intrigues" that the production allegedly provoked.

It is difficult to assess why members of his court would have tried to stop the elector from seeing the girls' allegorical play, but—given his less-than-lustrous

38. Hilaire Kallendorf, *Conscience on Stage: The Comedia as Casuistry in Early Modern Spain* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), 11–12.

39. Ann Dyer, "The Emergence of the Independent Prologue and Chorus in Jesuit School Theatre c.1550–c.1700" (Ph.D. diss., University of York, 2010), 64.

40. Julie Anne Sadie, *Companion to Baroque Music* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 244.

public image—their concerns are indeed intriguing. Even if their claim that the performance insulted his noble self was a “pretense,” their desire to prevent Max Emanuel from attending it does suggest that the girls’ play was seen as more than just light entertainment. In their view, the students’ performance must have resonated somehow with current events, and the court takes its potentially damaging effects seriously enough to attempt its sabotage.

If we can believe the Benedictine chronicler who left us this anecdote, the elector liked what he saw so much that he asked for a repeat performance. Mary Ward’s original vision of an active, cosmopolitan female apostolate may have been officially suppressed, but this case of female performance by the English Ladies and their charges in the Munich school suggests that it did not disappear. It emerges here like an act of divine providence—or, more likely, as one of many productions on the international stage that we have yet to uncover.⁴¹

41. A reconfigured set of the Institute’s Rules was approved by Pope Clement IX in 1703, and the revamped community’s structure of governance was formally confirmed by Benedict XIV in 1748, with the caveat that its members disavow any connection to Mary Ward. In 1877, the Institute received full papal confirmation, and, in 1909, Pius X finally allowed Ward to be recognized as its founder. She was declared venerable by Benedict XVI in 2009, a possible first step toward sainthood. Branches of the Institute currently exist on five continents, operating as the Institute of the Blessed Virgin and the Sisters of Loreto. In 2002, the Roman branch realized Ward’s divine vision that she should “Take the same as the Society,” when they received papal permission to go by the name *Congregatio Jesu*, or the Congregation of Jesus.