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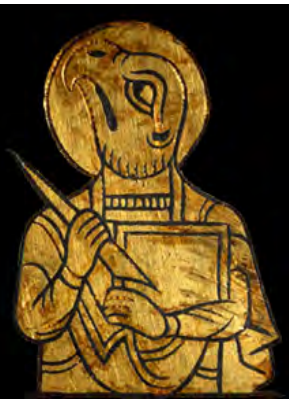

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ORGAN: FISH AND OTHER BODIES IN AN EARLY MODERN LUTHERAN CONVENT CHURCH

Margit Thøfner

Abstract

This essay focuses on a musical instrument, an organ purpose-built for the Lutheran convent church at Kloster Lüne near Lüneburg in present-day Germany. This instrument is used to explore what it might mean to write histories of bodies without privileging textual evidence. Particular attention is paid to the display pipes, which are decorated so that their openings appear to be fish mouths. In this way, the essay shows how the organ sat at the nexus of a whole range of embodied practices that served to constitute the monastic community as a corporation, a body combining a wide range of entities, some human, some not, and spanning conventional oppositions and temporalities, such as the terrestrial and the celestial and the past and the present. The broader purpose is to show how fruitful it can be to draw on the widest possible range of source materials when studying early modern bodies.

Keywords: Kloster Lüne, Benedictine, nuns, organ, pipes, fish
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Biographical note

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Banner image: Detail of niello-inlaid engraving of a haloed eagle-headed St. John the Evangelist upon gold plaque from Brandon, Suffolk. (©The Trustees of the British Museum. Shared under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0] licence)

ORGAN: FISH AND OTHER BODIES IN AN EARLY MODERN LUTHERAN CONVENT CHURCH

Margit Thøfner, The Open University

This essay is about an organ. But it is not a biological organ. Rather, it is a musical instrument from the seventeenth century that, in some ways, is typical of its kind: in addition to its musical functions, it is also a substantial piece of micro-architecture as well as a support for an elaborate display of sculptures, paintings, ornament and inscriptions (Bicknell, 1998, p.55) (Fig. 7.1).

This organ was made in 1645 for the church at Kloster Lüne near Lüneburg although the painted aspects were only completed in 1651 (Boeck, 1971, p.154). Strikingly, the visible organ pipes – normally called the display pipes – are decorated with golden, somewhat leonine or even monstrous fish. Their mouths are constituted by the actual pipe openings while the rest of their twisting bodies decorate the areas immediately above (Fig. 7.2).

On one level, these fish fall squarely within early modern European conventions for representing marine bodies, where artists positively revelled in their incredible diversity as well as their – at least to human eyes – anthropomorphic or sometimes mammalian features (see Egmond, 2024; Rijks, 2024). There is also a certain wit at play: these leonine fish are not in their element but rather creatures of the air since organ pipes work by setting a column of air into vibration. In this sense, the fish fit easily into the early modern category of the 'monstrous' and hence within the Foucauldian category 'de*monstra*tive' as discussed in detail by M.A. Katritzky in this issue. They are, quite literally, extraordinary because they combine qualities not normally seen together. To this should be added that, in early modern Europe, large marine creatures such as whales were almost always designated as 'monsters' (see, for example, Brito, 2024). Yet the location of these somewhat monstrous fish seems rather unusual. To date, I have failed to identify any similarly decorated display pipes from early modern Europe. While pipes from this period sometimes come with elaborate detailing, it is usually either ornamental, anthropomorphic or a combination of the two (for a more typical example, see Fig. 7.3).

This may be a matter of survival. Seventeenth-century display pipes were usually made from a lead-tin alloy and thus tend to deteriorate in response to atmospheric pollution (Chiavari et al., 2008). Some have survived to the present but many more have not, and it is therefore hard to generalise about decorative detailing. Nevertheless, the fish on the instrument at Kloster Lüne would appear to be rare, perhaps even unique. Whenever this organ is at work, the pipes seem to sing from fishes' mouths: music is here airy yet presented as enfleshed, as fishily embodied. How might a complex artefact like this organ enrich and enliven our understanding of early modern bodies? More broadly, what does it mean to approach the historical study of bodies through a musical instrument and its decorations rather than primarily through texts? And why does this particular organ come with ornamental if rather fierce-looking fish?

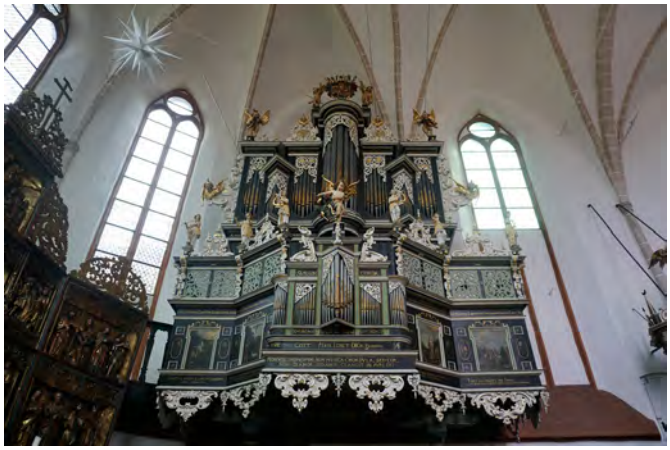

Figure 7.1: Unrecorded organ builder (possibly Jonas Weigel), painted parts by Adolph Block, *Organ*, 1645 and 1651. Church of Kloster Lüne, Lüneburg. (Photograph by kind courtesy of Maarten Rog (orgelfoto.nl: Kloster Lüne, Klosterkirche - Orgelfoto))

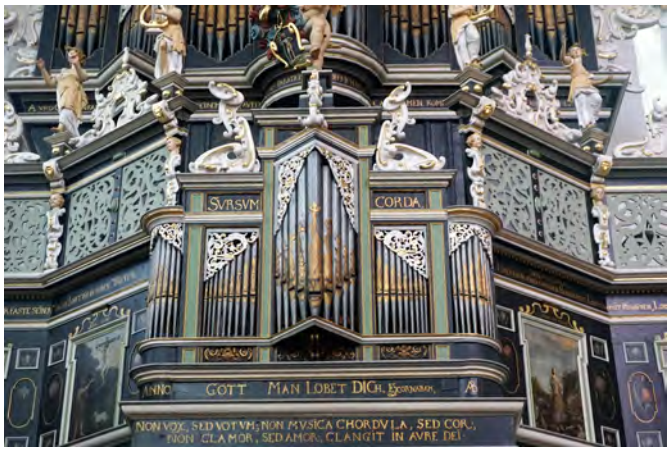

Figure 7.2: Detail of the rückpositiv from organ from Kloster Lüne: note the singing fish. (Photograph by kind courtesy of Maarten Rog (orgelfoto.nl: Kloster Lüne, Klosterkirche - Orgelfoto))

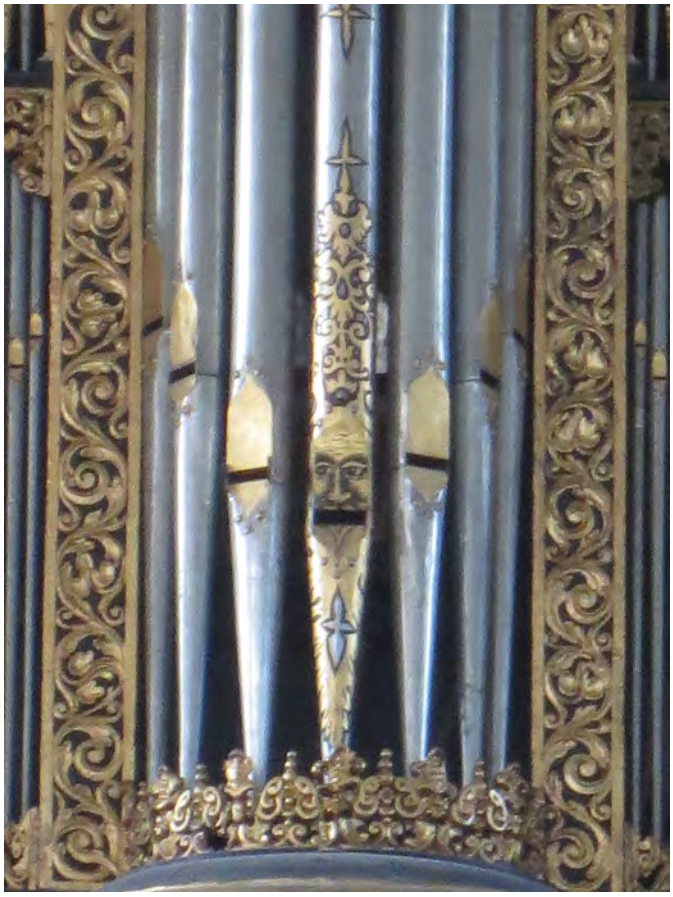

Figure 7.3: Johann Lorentz the Elder, display pipes, 1630, from the organ of Heliga Trefaldighetskyrkan, Kristianstad (present-day Sweden). (Photo: Margit Thøfner)

This essay explores these questions by using the organ at Kloster Lüne as a historical source in its own right, as a tool for probing the matter of bodies in medieval and early modern Europe. By 'the matter of bodies' I mean that which is enfleshed: how physicality is constituted in and through specific historical, cultural and spatial practices and circumstances. As will become apparent, this involves thinking in pluralities rather than in terms of a singular and bounded body; in this sense, my conclusions relate to those of Brad Marshall and others in this issue. As will also become apparent, in the context of Kloster Lüne this means taking seriously the concept of a corporation (from the Latin *corpus*, 'body') as an embodied entity that draws together many distinct elements, some human, some not. Finally, probing the matter of bodies in medieval and early modern Europe involves drawing on the widest possible range of evidence. In the present case, this includes but is not limited to liturgical texts, archaeological finds, contested devotional practices, textile traditions, musical performances, pictorial details and conventual memories. One aim of this essay, then, is to show how productive it is not to privilege textual evidence when studying medieval and early modern bodies. In my view, there is much to be gained from thinking experientially rather than discursively, by focusing on bodily practices and all the material evidence related to such practices rather than primarily on words. In many ways, my essay draws on recent work by Pamela H. Smith, including her point that 'writing and embodiment often find language an awkward collaborator in their efforts' (2022, p. 232). Crucially, such an approach involves radically expanding the category of what is normally considered authoritative historical evidence. Finally, and in keeping with other essays in this special issue, I also hope to show that there is much to be learnt from thinking about bodies across conventional divides such as the human and the animal, the animate and the inanimate, the quotidian and the monstrous and the living and the dead.

What follows now is a wide-ranging and admittedly rather unruly argument that I have tried to tame into five sections. The first sets the stage by offering some general remarks on organs, music and song, especially but not exclusively as pertaining to early modern northern Europe. The next is an initial discussion of the instrument at Kloster Lüne, including its known history and its role in current scholarship. Then follows a third and a fourth section, which may at first seem like digressions since they range across medieval and early modern devotional practices at Kloster Lüne. In fact, these two sections are essential; without them, it is not possible to grasp the complex roles that the instrument at Kloster Lüne played in its conventual setting. The fifth section then explores these roles in detail by returning to the organ itself and by analysing certain spatial and pictorial details, including the singing fish. Together, these five sections show how the instrument helped to constitute the conventual corporation – the very body – of Kloster Lüne as a physical, spatial, sonic and temporal whole.

Organs, music and song

In seventeenth-century Europe pipe organs were often described in embodied terms (see, for example, Davidsson, 2002, pp.83–5). One piece of evidence for this comes from a letter written on 27 January 1648 by the organist Johannes Buxtehude, father of the renowned composer Dieterich Buxtehude, in which he pleads for funds to restore the organ of the church where he served: 'have mercy on this inwardly weak, very sick, indeed weeping organ and help to get it back on its feet' (here quoted after Snyder, 2007, p.12). In biblically resonant language, Buxtehude firmly asserts that the instrument is in need of 'a good renovation – in fact, it longs and sighs for it as the hart longs for flowing streams' (p.11; the reference is to Psalm 42:1). Buxtehude's organ came with feet, health issues and intense emotions. It wept and sighed, making sounds of distress that would usually involve eyes, lungs and larynx. For him it was, in effect, a living body even if some of the intensity of his language is rhetorical: he was trying to raise money to heal his sick organ so

that it might sing rather than sigh and weep so pitifully. However, there are many ways of intensifying language. It remains telling that Buxtehude should choose to do so by enfleshing his organ rather than, for example, by stressing the needs of the congregation, the actual human community, that he served. Yet his pleading for his sick instrument fits well with the humanised display pipe from Trefaldighetskyrkan in Kristianstad (Fig. 7.3). This pipe is very clearly a way of presenting an organ as singing. And this also fits neatly with one particular type of early modern organ stop – a way of inflecting the sound of the pipes – called the 'vox humana' or the 'human voice' (Williams & Owen, 2001; Howard, 2014). In itself, this is another piece of evidence that pipe organs were thought to have human or at least quasi-human qualities.

For any active musician, it should come as no surprise that Buxtehude understood his instrument as embodied. Musical instruments are responsive entities, sensitive to touch, temperature, humidity and ambient sounds. Perhaps the most striking example of this is sympathetic resonance, whereby an unplayed musical instrument responds to sounds from another instrument being played in its vicinity (Snow & Cottingham, 2024). This natural phenomenon is particularly clear when, on a string instrument, one untouched string vibrates by itself in response to a consonant note played on an adjacent string (for an example of how this works in practice, see *here*, where the open D-string on a cello visibly resonates to a D being played on the G-string next to it). When this happens, it is as if the whole instrument shudders in harmonic delight. Organ pipes, too, respond by vibrating when music of the right pitch is performed in their vicinity; for this reason, any space containing an organ has its own distinct acoustic even when the instrument is silent (Snow & Cottingham, 2024). Such an organ will make its presence felt. The phenomenon of sympathetic resonance is also why, in the early modern period, musical instruments were so often used to evoke love, whether sacred or erotic. That, for example, is the sonic logic underpinning paintings like Johannes Vermeer's evocative representation of a woman playing the virginals next to a silent viola da gamba, with a painting of a brothel scene involving lute-playing in the background (Fig. 7.4) (Sternbach, 2024; Zell, 2011).

Thinking about bodies in a musical manner draws attention to the importance of specifically situated, experiential and embodied knowledge as opposed to the kind acquired verbally or textually. It makes us attend more carefully to the fact that bodies are constituted in and through historically specific and highly variable practices and behaviours. While some of these practices and behaviours may involve words, they cannot be reduced to them, nor can they be fully evinced by them. This, then, is one of the benefits of studying early

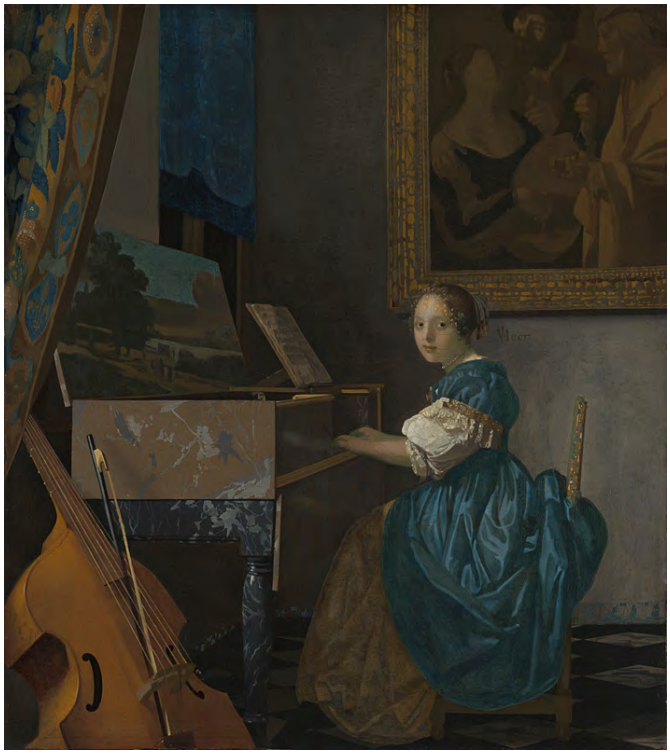

Figure 7.4: Johannes Vermeer, *Young Woman seated at a virginal, c.*1670–2. Oil on canvas, 51.5 × 45.5cm, National Gallery, London. (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0)

modern bodies through musical instruments and other resonant artefacts. Such an approach involves taking seriously the fact that bodies are, quite literally, flesh and blood, breath and sound.

The most enfleshed of musical instruments is the human voice, where singing involves air, lungs, larynx, tongue, mouth, ears and mind. Song is produced within the body and yet, to be heard, it must be projected into the air and space around the singing body or bodies in question. Song usually involves words, but they are precisely bodied forth in music and, in the process, poetically intensified (see, e.g., Jorgens, 1982, pp.11–17; Lindley, 2013; Roelens, 2019). In this way, song transcends conventional boundaries like those between the textual and the physical, between self and other, and between inside and outside. (In this latter sense, song comes with intriguing parallels to the orifices so ably interrogated by de Renzi in relation to early modern anatomical imagery in this issue.) Song reminds us that the linguistic itself is rooted in an organ: the tongue. Against this background, it is not so strange that a seventeenth-century professional musician should think of his organ as embodied, as sighing and weeping because it cannot sing. As this shows, thinking with and through musical instruments means always working with a fluid and open definition of bodies. Such an approach is a helpful reminder that the linguistic itself is an enfleshed category.

It is also worth noting that, across the majority of European languages, the organ, as a musical instrument,

shares its etymological roots with bodily organs. Both ultimately derive from the Greek *ὄργανον*, 'that with which one works' (OED, n.d., s.v. *organ* n.1). In other words, both bodily organs and musical instruments may be conceptualised as tools, as something involved in a certain set of physical activities, ranging from breathing and digesting to music-making. For this reason, it is helpful to approach pipe organs as prosthetic: they allow for music-making of a range that goes well beyond the normal capacities of human vocal chords, beyond the 'vox humana'. That an organ exceeds the human is evident simply in some of the other names of organ stops circulating in the early modern period, for example 'vogelgesang' ('birdsong'), 'unda maris' ('wave of the sea') and 'vox angelica' ('angelic voice') (Williams & Owen, 2001). In many ways, in the early modern period organs served to expand the human body into realms where it might not otherwise go, be that the highest heavens or the deep sea. In this context, it is simultaneously witty and logical to endow the display pipes with quasi-monstrous fish-mouths.

It is also helpful to keep in mind that it is not only humans who sing; it is also the case for, for example, birds, whales and fish like the plainfin midshipman (Sisneros, 2009). Indeed, in early modern Europe, the musicality of sea creatures came with full biblical authority. For example, there is a telling passage from Psalms 98:5–8:

> Sing unto the Lord with the harp; with the harp, and the voice of a psalm.
>
> With trumpets and sound of cornet make a joyful noise before the Lord, the King.
>
> Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.
>
> Let the floods clap their hands: let the hills be joyful together.

Singing fish are not so very peculiar in a world where floods can clap hands and hills be joyful. In itself, this is a reminder of the enchanted nature of medieval and early modern European devotional culture: the world, as God's creation, was replete with evidence of his spirit and wisdom (see, e.g., Cohen, 2008, pp.42–3; Mason, 2009, p.166). All creatures – including humans, their voices and their musical instruments but also fish, floods and hills – owed him due praise as the ultimate creator. Here, what may at first seem extraordinary or monstrous is in fact a sign of the unfathomable diversity of God's handiwork. In this context, the singing fish fit with the great maritime creature Leviathan as described in Job 41:1–34. In this passage, God proclaims his own generative powers by dwelling on the insuperable strength of the great monster: 'whatsoever is under the whole heaven is mine' (Job 41:11). In the Book of Job, is in the very nature of Leviathan to be 'de*monstra*tive' of divine prowess.

As I hope is clear by now, there are many good reasons why focussing on an organ with fishy display pipes might be illuminating when studying bodies historically. In both medieval and early modern Europe, organs were almost always elaborately cased and otherwise decorated; they were simultaneously visual, spatial and sonic artefacts. Studying them therefore involves defining not only bodies but also the visual in an expansive manner: sight is never just itself, never separate from sensations such as those of space and sound. To all this should be added that, in medieval and early modern Europe, besides the human voice the organ was the preferred instrument for making sacred music (Higginbottom, 1998). This type of musical instrument also comes with its own history of embodying devotion, of straddling the physical and the spiritual.

The organ at Kloster Lüne

The organ that lies at the heart of this essay belongs to Kloster Lüne, a still-functioning Lutheran convent located to the north-east of the Hanseatic City of Lüneburg in present-day Germany. The organ's elaborate casing has already been discussed in a monograph by Johann Anselm Steiger, who approaches it as a complex Lutheran theological statement about art and music (2015, pp.25–48 and *passim*). He does so by interrogating the many inscriptions and the iconography of the paintings on the organ and by relating these to Lutheran publications from the early modern period. It is a beautifully researched, richly detailed and useful study but it comes with a problem. Steiger approaches the organ as if it is a text to be decoded, so in a radically logocentric manner.

For all the reasons set out above, this cannot do full justice to an instrument like the organ at Kloster Lüne. Tellingly, Steiger never addresses the singing fish on the organ pipes because, in his account, music remains a wholly abstract entity rather than a set of embodied practices. Nor does he give any consideration to the immediate historical context, that of the convent church at Kloster Lüne and of the bodies that it sheltered in the medieval and early modern period (of which more below). This means that Steiger fails to note important continuities with the period before the coming of Lutheranism. For example, the organ now at Kloster Lüne is a replacement of an earlier instrument, from 1496 (Boeck, 1971, p.153). It may even be that the motif of the singing fish came from this earlier instrument because pipes from it seem to have been reused when the new organ was commissioned.

At the same time, the present organ at Kloster Lüne firmly proclaims its own historical context because it carries two dates. The first is 'Anno 1645' set out in

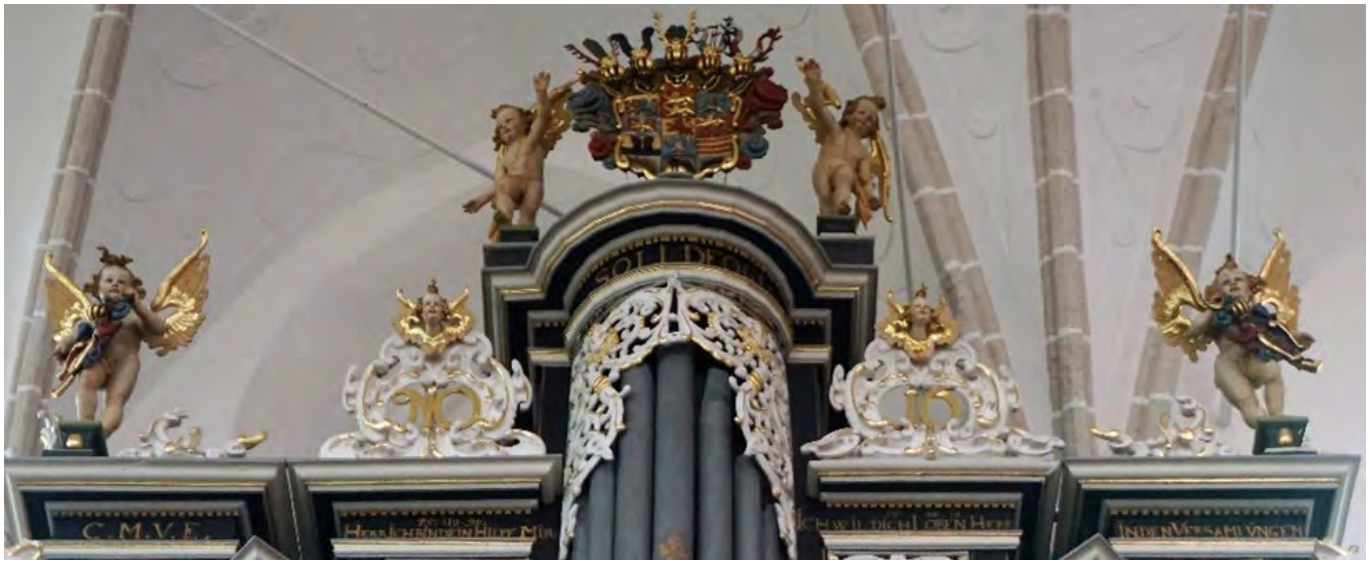

Figure 7.5: Detail of the top centre of the organ at Kloster Lüne. Note the gilded lettering inside the white cartouches topped with gilded cherubim, which form two parts of a four-part inscription '[AN-]NO 16[-45]. The number 45 can be seen at the top of the organ in Fig. 7.10 below. Additionally, in the lower left corner of the photograph, see the four golden initials on black: 'C.M.V.E.' (Photograph by kind courtesy of Maarten Rog (orgelfoto.nl: Kloster Lüne, Klosterkirche - Orgelfoto))

four decorative cartouches at the top, two on the two side walls and two on either side of the central tower (Fig. 7.5).

The second date is below the *rückpositiv*, the lower section with the smallest pipes at the front of the instrument. This is a so-called chronogram in German, 'ANNO GOTT **M**AN **L**OBET **DIC**H' ('In the year of the Lord, one praises you'). (This is the second inscription above the lower edge of the photograph in Fig. 7.2). When the four Roman numerals MLDIC are added together, this results in the date 1651 (Steiger, 2015, p.11). The chronogram is followed by the word 'Exornabam' ('I was decorating') and the initials 'AB'. These initials reference the otherwise unknown painter Adolph Block, who also signed himself on the large painting of King David that adorns the upper western side of the organ (visible in Fig. 7.10 below). It is therefore reasonable to assume that that the earlier date at the top stands for the completion of the organ, while the chronogram below refers to its painting or decoration (Steiger, 2015, p.25).

There are also two patronal inscriptions. The first of these consists of the initials 'C.M.V.E.' (see Fig. 7.5). This stands for Catharina Margaretha von Estorff, the 'Domina' or Abbess who led Kloster Lüne between 1634 and 1659 (Brinkmann, 2013, p.162). Evidently, the organ was built under her direction, and her coat of arms is carried by the angel immediately above her initials, while that of Kloster Lüne itself is held by the matching angel on the upper right (Steiger, 2015, p.17). The second patronal inscription is less obvious, the initials 'T.D.' can be found towards the top of the *rückpositiv* although these are almost completely hidden by the ornamental bracket that connects this with the plinth on which stands the angel at the very top of this section of the instrument (the beginning of the golden letter 'T' is just visible behind this bracket towards the top centre of the photograph in Fig. 7.2). These stand for Thomas Dammann, whose coat of arms is carried by the angel immediately above the inscription. Dammann was the *Amtmann* or bailiff of Kloster Lüne when the organ was built; there are archival materials documenting his responsibility for sourcing its timbers (Boeck, 1971, p.155). In other words, he oversaw the practical side the process, including disbursing the necessary funds; this was probably part of his broader duties to support the Domina in her worldly responsibilities for the monastic estate.

Most of the mechanical parts of the instrument are no longer in their original form although that is often the case; over time organs get worn and must be restored or else they fall silent. However, the pipes are original apart from those seemingly salvaged from the earlier instrument. And there is evidence to suggest that the organ builder was one Jonas Weigel (Boeck, 1971, p.156). As all of this shows, the organ was a substantial collaborative project – including an organ builder, a painter, a whole monastic community, their head and their secular administrator – although the prominent inscription of Domina von Estorff's initials certainly proclaims her as the most important participant, the ultimate leader of the project. Unfortunately, there are no surviving accounts from Kloster Lüne from the period when the organ was built. But, judging by evidence from other Lutheran churches with extant early modern accounts, it is likely that this instrument was and still is the single most expensive object belonging to the convent (for a good example of the expenses and complexities involved in building early modern organs, see Butler, 2004).

In addition to this, the two dates given on the organ together indicate that the instrument was constructed and decorated at a very particular moment in the long and slow process by which Kloster Lüne was transformed from a Benedictine nunnery into a Lutheran 'Damenstiftung' or 'Ladies' Foundation'. This means that it is important to attend to the complexities of this historical process and that is the purpose of the next two sections, which draw mainly but not exclusively on Jens-Uwe Brinkmann's thoughtful and well-informed 2013 survey of the convent's history. As these two sections will show, this slowly unfolding process runs contrary to standard assumptions about how devotional practices changed suddenly and drastically in sixteenth-century Germany, that is to say, during the upheavals usually but not particularly helpfully known as the Reformation. As the case of Kloster Lüne shows, this was a process as much about continuity as about change, about doughty resistance and hard-worn compromises rather than sudden alterations. There were many distinct parts to these gradual reforms, and not all can be covered here. Yet two strands stand out because they hinge on profoundly embodied practices: first, an enduring engagement with textiles, whether in terms of making fabrics or the wearing of monastic dress; second, the singing in Latin of the cycle of daily prayers usually known as the eight canonical hours or, for short, the offices. As will become apparent later in this essay, both of these practices provide important clues to why the organ at Kloster Lüne looks the way it does.

Dressing, singing and sewing

Kloster Lüne is an ancient foundation, formally constituted in 1172 under the direction of one Hildeswidis von Markboldestorp. Whether this institution was already under the Benedictine rule is not known; it definitely was a century later, by 1272 (Brinkmann, 2013, pp.13–4, 162). It is also noteworthy that the convent still possesses examples of fine whitework embroidery from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries (p.15); it seems that already at this date the nuns were engaged with textile work.

In terms of religious reform, the first crucial date at Kloster Lüne was 1481 when the convent became part of what is normally known as the Bursfelde Congregation. This was a group of abbeys in central and northern Germany which, from 1445 onwards, vowed to follow the old Benedictine breviary in their daily devotions and, in general, to live strictly according to the original Benedictine rule (Burkhardt & Klymenko, 2023). These Benedictine reforms had two roots: in Italy, where the renewal was led by the monks of Sta Giustiana in Padua, culminating in papal approval in 1431; and in the movement known as the Sisters and Brethren of Common Life or *Devotio Moderna* radiating from the Augustinian abbey of Windesheim from the later fourteenth century onwards (van Engen, 2008, especially pp.1–10, 46–56). Both of these reforms were characterised by deep communal and personal devotion to Christ combined with a concerted attempt to imitate the simplicity and poverty of his life as well as those of the Apostles and the earliest Christian communities.

The Benedictine reforms reached Kloster Lüne on 19 October 1481 when, under the oversight of the Bishop of Verden, seven new nuns were installed. They came from the nearby Benedictine convent of Ebsdorf, which had joined the Bursfelde Congregation already in 1469. One of them, Sophia von Bodendike, became the new Domina, another the sub-prioress or assistant to the Domina and another two were tasked with organising the kitchen so all meals would be taken collectively and conform to true Benedictine simplicity. Crucially, the final nun from Ebsdorf took over as 'Cantrix' or chief singer, to ensure that the canonical hours were performed in keeping with Benedictine regulations (Brinkmann, 2013, pp.20–3). In general, the old rule was confirmed and reiterated. Amongst other things, this involved strict enclosure as well as mandatory attendance during meals, communal working hours, the canonical prayers and other church services. There were also stipulations around postulants, for example, that they should attend the convent school for five or six years, and that they should learn Latin and use it as their conversational language. Likewise, there were strict rules about garments. Everyone was to wear black Benedictine tunics. The postulants and novices wore white veils with a white headband, while the fully professed nuns had black ones, held in place over a white veil by a so-called nuns' crown, a strip of black fabric encircling the head with two bands crossing over the top (Brinkmann, 2013, pp.21–2; in Fig. 7.6 two nuns are shown wearing such headgear).

In the following decades, Kloster Lüne flourished. The level of education was high, with a marked emphasis on Latinity, both for conversation but also for singing (Brinkmann, 2013, pp.23–5). There was a sizeable library and books were produced, including some specifically geared towards musical devotions. Several survive and contain music to be performed as part of daily life, including, for example, a lengthy sequence to be sung at the crowning, or investiture, of a new nun (Volkhardt, 2015). Here, there is clear evidence that, at Kloster Lüne, song and textiles were profoundly entwined. A nun was made in and through her clothing, an intrinsic part of the elaborately staged and sung ritual that transformed her physically into a bride of Christ (Bynum, 2015).

The survival of manuscripts with musical notation specifically made for Kloster Lüne indicates that singing the offices and other devotional performances was taken seriously. Music-making was intrinsic to this particular Benedictine tradition and the organ ac-

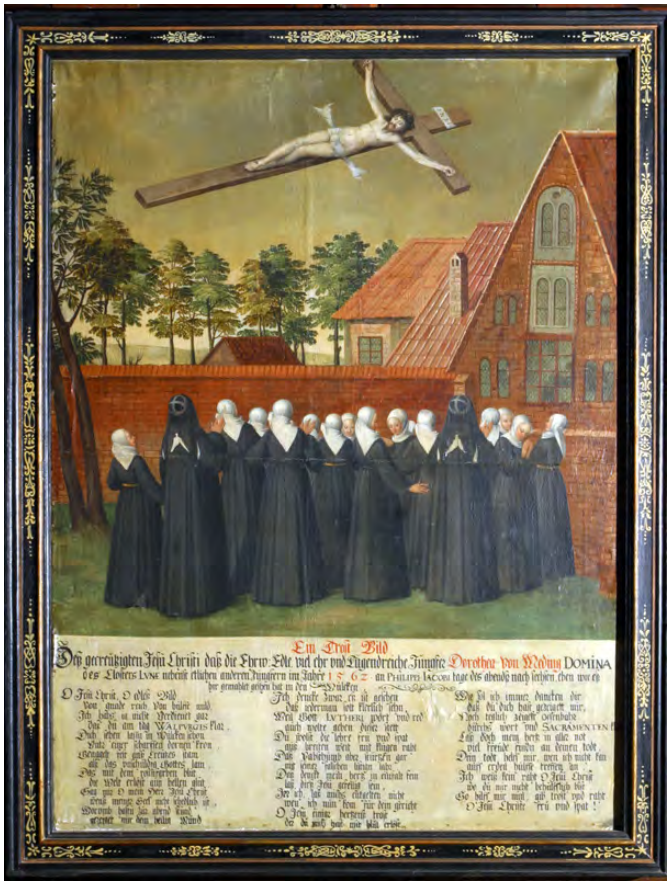

Figure 7.6: Unrecorded painter, The *Vision of Dorothea von Meding in 1562, c.*1623. Oil on panel, 128.5 × 94cm. Nuns' choir, Kloster Lüne. (Photo: Sabine Wehking ©Kloster Lüne)

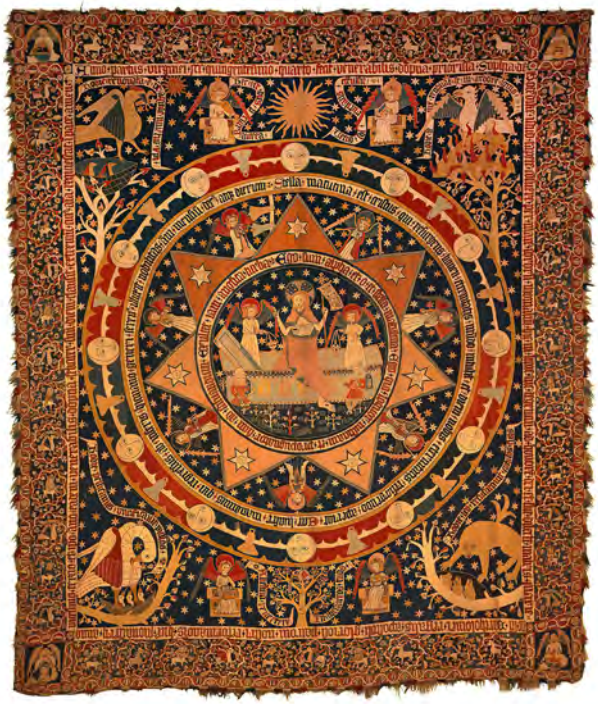

Figure 7.7: Unrecorded nuns at Kloster Lüne, *Banklaken with the Resurrection of Christ*, 1504. Woollen convent stitch embroidery on tabby weave linen, 475 × 420cm. Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe, Hamburg. (Photo: Penta Springs Limited / Alamy)

quired in 1496 further testifies to this. The instrument completed in 1645 and painted by 1651 clearly forms part of a much longer history of musical prayer and praise, dating to well before the Lutheran reforms. The nuns of Kloster Lüne must have been intimately aware of the somatic or enfleshed nature of singing and of music-making: this was a devotional duty that they were vowed to perform day in and day out.

Besides the nuns' profound engagement with the two embodied practices of clothing and singing, they were also textile-makers. Among other things, this involved embroidering large woollen tapestries known as 'banklaken', probably made to hang above their choir stools on feast days (Skovgaard, 2021, p.60). Seven of these survive to this day (for example Fig. 7.7) and some of these evince a close and intriguing relationship between conventual bodies, skin, textiles and textile work.

One of the seven 'banklaken' from Kloster Lüne visually narrates the martyrdom of St Bartholomew, the dedicatory saint of the convent church. St Bartholomew was martyred by being flayed, by being divested of his skin of mortality and, in the process, transformed into a sanctified being. The significance of this for the nuns whose fingers stitched the 'banklaken' has been carefully parsed out by Ane Preisler Skovgaard in relation to several of the late fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century tapestries from Kloster Lüne. As she notes, one of them, showing the flogging of St Catherine with her skin disintegrating under the torture, comes with a striking inscription: 'Pulchre syon filia pro mortali tunica – agni tecta vellere et corona glorie' ('Syon's daughter, [in exchange] for a mortal lamb's garment, shall be fairly clothed and crowned with glory') (2021, p.56). This exchanging of garments, from the terrestrial to the celestial, was in many ways akin to what the professed nuns of Kloster Lüne had already done at their investitures which, in turn, was a prefiguration of the moment when – at death – they would be fully united with Christ, their heavenly bridegroom. So, as evinced by the surviving 'banklaken' made at Kloster Lüne, there was a close relationship between the idea of skin – the clothing of terrestrial mortality, shed by martyrs like Saints Bartholomew and Catherine – and monastic garments, which prefigured the clothing of celestial immortality, the robes washed and paradoxically 'made white in the blood of the lamb' (Revelation 7:14). This suggests something important about how the nuns conceptualised their own bodies after their investiture. They were clothed in mortal skin beneath their monastic garments, yet these garments also prefigured celestial clothing, and by extension the resurrection of the flesh, when the nuns would come to body forth song in

the company of angels. In short, song, skin, textiles and textile work stood in a close yet dynamic relationship at Kloster Lüne.

Besides all this, the tapestries are in themselves evidence that making and displaying elaborate textiles were a vital and long-established aspect of devotional life at Kloster Lüne. Their survival within the monastic community, which can only be due to centuries of careful storage and regular airing, is also testimony to their continued importance. Again, there is a connection with singing the offices because, as already noted, the textiles were probably used on feast days to decorate the nuns' choir, from whence they performed their musical devotions. To this should be added important archaeological evidence from the nearby Cistercian nunnery of Wienhausen, in the form of drop spindles found underneath the nuns' choir. This suggests that, in this particular context, textile work was sometimes combined with singing the hours (Skovgaard, 2021, pp.50–1). If that were also the case at Kloster Lüne, the simultaneously singing and stitching nuns would have become the perfect embodiment of the Benedictine ideal: *ora et labora*. In this sense they, too, were 'de*monstra*tive', evidence of divine agency worked through humans. Crucially, they were so collectively. They were a corporate body, not an assembly of individuals, a monastic community united in observance and devotion. Here is a further type of expanded body: that of a community dressed in matching garments of black and white and performing carefully co-ordinated communal tasks such as singing and sewing so as to bear witness to faith.

Because of the nuns' sustained engagement with textiles, it is pertinent here to draw on an insight from Dugal McKinnon, an active composer as well as an academic. He has persuasively argued that sound is best understood as a kind of fabric, as something woven out of many different elements, such as performers, instruments and resonant spaces working in concert (McKinnon, 2021). If this insight is brought to bear on the nuns' singing and textile-making at Kloster Lüne, it is plausible to assume that they felt close affinity between these two activities, both involving communal labour of the convent, the co-ordinated work of several bodies. Certainly, they were a group of seasoned performers, a well-integrated choir with voices trained by daily practice under the leadership of the Cantrix. As such, they must have had profound, because embodied, knowledge of what it meant to fabricate sound in their church, down to the level of muscular memory. Muscular or bodily memory is what allows trained musicians to perform intricate tasks, whether with their voices or their hands, without thinking consciously about them (Fuchs, 2012, p.13). And, in textile-makers, muscular memory is what gives speed and precision to tasks like hand-stitching, a skill that has to be learnt yet with training becomes second nature. Here, then, is another benefit of using a musical instrument to think historically: it helps us to understand how medieval devotional practices such as those performed at Kloster Lüne were profoundly enfleshed, embedded in the body.

Change and resistance

As is well known, in the early to mid-sixteenth century a new set of religious reforms began to spread across northern Germany: those inspired by Martin Luther. As will become apparent presently, these had a gradual yet significant impact on devotional life – and especially on conventual dress and singing – at Kloster Lüne. At the same time, this was as much a matter of continuity as it was of change.

In the Lüneburg area, the Lutheran reforms were enthusiastically embraced already in 1525 by the local feudal overlords and by 1527 they had the support of the local Estates (Brinkmann, 2013, p.28). The nuns of Kloster Lüne, however, resisted fiercely. A good example of this is a set of events that took place on Sunday, 26 April 1528. On ducal orders, as part of the Sunday service in the main section of the convent church, German Psalms were sung and a sermon was preached in the vernacular. In protest, the nuns left their choir (a balcony-like structure raised over the west end of the nave) and locked all doors leading from the convent into the church (pp.28–30). They gathered instead in the cloister to pray before an altar dedicated to the Virgin Mary, whose intercessory powers were vehemently denied by Luther and his followers (Heal, 2007, pp.53-63). The nuns only returned to their choir once the sermon was over to continue with their customary performance of the Latin sung Mass.

At this point in time, what was preached and sung in the church at Kloster Lüne was a matter of intense conflict. The fabrication of sound began to unravel. This was, in part, because the church also served those who lived and worked on the monastic estate yet were not in holy orders. Because it was also a parish church, and as a result of the Lutheran reforms, it now fell partially under secular jurisdiction. For the next decades, the ground floor of the convent church became an important centre for Lutheran preaching and singing (Brinkmann, 2013, pp.30–3). However, the nuns' choir and the convent itself remained under control of the Domina and the monastic community. They steadfastly pursued their own path. As the convent chronicle for those years indicate, they continued to sing the offices in Latin in their elevated choir and, pointedly, did so whenever Lutheran services were being performed in the church below (Steinzig, [1481–1530] 2019, p.182). Once the Lutheran service was over, to compensate

for what the nuns considered the inappropriate use of the vernacular in worship, they would silently say the Latin part of the mass normally reserved for the clergy (Lähnemann & Schlotheuber, 2024, pp.146–7). In effect, there was a regular sonic competition between those of the old and those of the new faith, fabrications of sound performed in Latin and the vernacular respectively. And this empowered the nuns to encroach on work normally reserved for male clergy.

One eighteenth-century source goes so far as to state that, to resist the Lutheran reforms, the nuns built fires from the felt soles of old shoes in the stove in their choir, in the hope that the smell would drive away the 'heretics' (Müller, 1793, p.625). While this sounds too good a story to be true, it certainly encapsulates the fact that for the best part of three decades the nuns of Kloster Lüne firmly and in the most physical manner resisted attempts to make them abandon their customary life. They seem to have taken particular pleasure in sensorially dominating the interior of their church, whether by singing or by the stink of burning felt. In this, they were part of a larger tendency across northern Germany during the first half of the sixteenth century, especially observable in the female houses of the Bursfelde congregation (Lähnemann & Schlotheuber, 2024, pp.147–9). In part, this must have been because the nuns' lives – intensely devotional and musical yet also productive and learned – and their particular embodied practices did not fit with standard Lutheran caricatures of lazy and debauched monastics (Scribner, [1981] 1994, pp.37–58).

Gradually, however, the nuns' resistance was worn down. From 1537 onwards, they would participate in the Lutheran Sunday service in the expected manner; there would be no more singing competitions or stink of burning felt. Yet they continued to pray the Rosary in secret and still sang the hours in Latin in their choir when no service was being performed in the church below (Brinkmann, 2013, p.34). Finally, by 1555 a compromise was reached, documented in a new set of monastic regulations for the Principality of Lüneburg. Kloster Lüne would not be abolished. Instead, it was placed under the ducal overlord's direct administration. The nuns continued to hold onto a great deal of their property and retained their ancient right to elect their abbess: Benedictine self-sufficiency was, by and large, retained. And the nuns were now legally compelled to sing the Benedictine hours in Latin, only any references to matters such as the intercession of the Virgin Mary and other saints had to be purged from the traditional texts (pp.35–41). Likewise, conventual gatherings in the chapter house should not take place during the Lutheran Sunday service (suggesting that this had been one avenue of resistance).

A particularly striking passage from the 1555 regulations refers to the Domina and the sub-prioress as those 'who govern the choir' ('de den chor regiren'; Brinkmann, 2013, p.37).[1] The context indicates that this refers to the singing of the monastic hours but it also suggests that the nuns' choir, the space where these hours were performed in the upper storey at the west end of the church, remained under the control of the convent itself. In other words, the nuns' singing competitions had born some fruit. At Kloster Lüne and across the Principality of Lüneburg a new type of monastic life began to emerge under Lutheran auspices but firmly rooted in existing traditions, including the singing of the Latin offices and the continued wearing of monastic dress.

In 1562, a Domina with Lutheran sympathies, Anna von Marenholtz, was finally installed. Then, in 1574, a new set of ducal regulations were issued, which set out in much detail which sections of the offices were to be sung in German and which in Latin (Brinkmann, 2013, pp.43–6). Strikingly, this set of regulations also outlawed the ceremony of investiture, which had played such a significant role in the nuns' lives until this date. Moreover, the nuns were now forbidden from wearing the crown and black veil (as shown in Fig. 7.6). They were no longer compelled to wear the Benedictine habit, just a black garment or tunic 'of any kind' and a white veil. They were, however, allowed to wear a monastic cowl over those garments if they wished and seems that many of them continued to do so (p.49).

From this emerged a new type of monastic habit, a Lutheran version of the Benedictine garments somewhat inflected by current fashions and allowing for the wearing of jewellery on hands and wrists. This is evident, for example, from a portrait of Domina Dorothea von Meding from 1590 (Fig. 7.8) and that of Domina Catharina Margaretha von Estorff, patroness of the new organ, from 1659 (Fig. 7.9). To this date, they hang in the chapter house of Kloster Lüne, one of the key sites of the nuns' resistance to Lutheran reforms.

Crucially, under the 1574 regulations, the nuns were no longer allowed to be buried in their habits; they had to be interred 'in shrouds like other Christians' (Brinkmann, 2013, p.34). However, there is archaeological evidence to show that this regulation was ignored, at least in the case of each Domina interred in the period between 1634 and 1838 in a specially constructed burial crypt beneath a chapel on the south-eastern side of the monastic church. As evident from careful examination of these graves, every head of the conventual community was laid to rest in her habit of office (Ströbl & Vick, 2007, p.53). As is often the case for female monastic communities of the early modern period, there was a gulf between what these women were told to do and

1 This and all following translations from Brinkmann are mine.

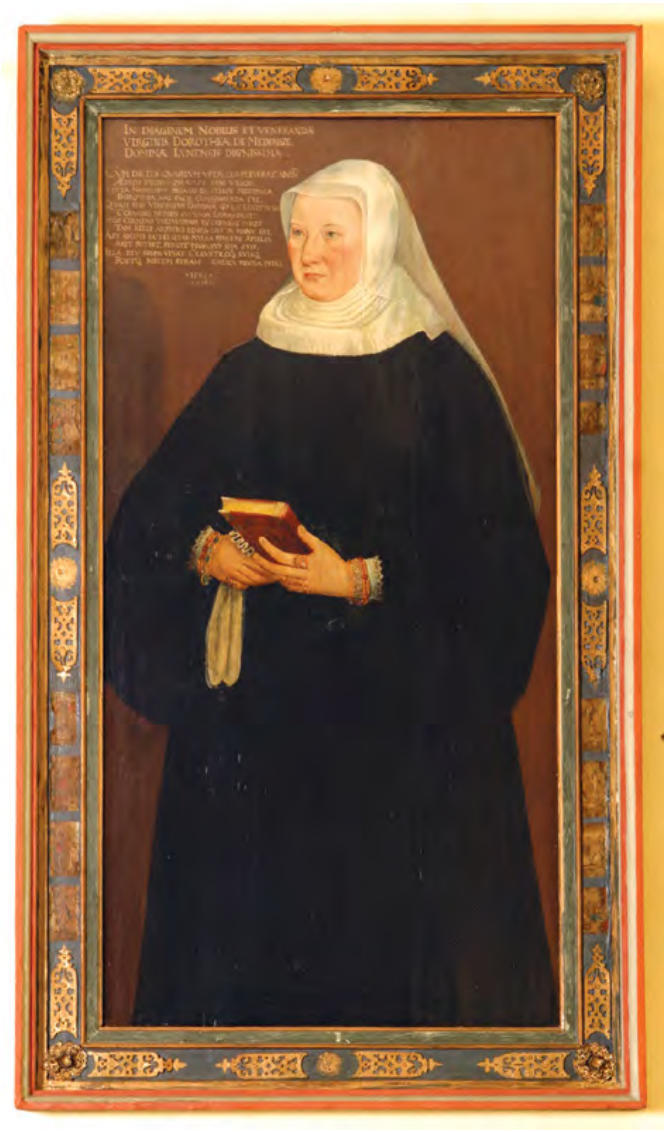

Figure 7.8: Unrecorded painter ('I.B'), *Dorothea von Meding, Domina of Kloster Lüne*, 1590. Oil on panel, 111 × 55.5cm. Chapter house, Kloster Lüne. Note the rare original framing.

what they actually did (for some instructive examples, see Evangelisti, 2008, pp.67–98). Here, then, is another benefit of focusing not primarily on textual evidence but instead on embodied practices: it becomes easier to grasp that written rules about bodily conduct are often aspirational and may have little bearing on actual behaviour.

A further important point about the crypt of the Dominae is that it is located below a chapel that can only be accessed from a door located beneath the present organ. In other words, the instrument is part of a specifically memorialising section of the convent church (an issue which will be addressed later in this essay). The construction of the crypt began in 1586 on the orders of Dorothea von Meding, who governed Kloster Lüne for 54 years as its second-ever Lutheran abbess (Fig. 7.8). This marks another departure from previous customs, where abbesses were interred with their sisters in the monastic churchyard (Ströbl &

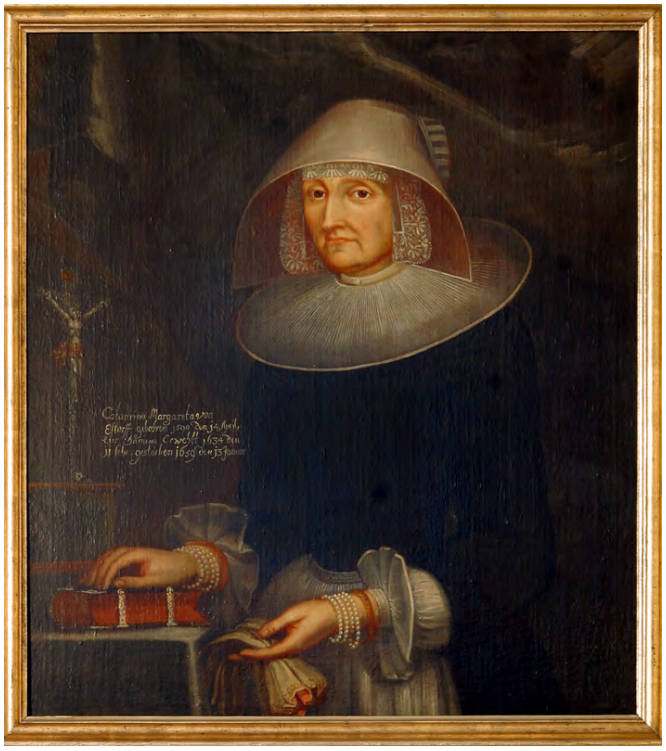

Figure 7.9: Unrecorded painter, *Domina Catharina Margaretha von Estorff of Kloster Lüne*, 1659. Oil on canvas, 81 × 71cm. Chapter house, Kloster Lüne

Vick, 2007, pp.45–7; Brinkmann, 2013, p.47). It seems that the office of Domina at Kloster Lüne came to carry increased religious and social prestige after the abbey became Lutheran. Certainly, there is evidence to suggest that these women were usually buried with great pomp and, as was only appropriate, this involved musical performances by the conventual community (Wehking, 2010). In other ways, however, the new crypt simply underscored an important point also evident from the list of abbesses, from Hildeswidis von Markboldestorp onwards. This is that Kloster Lüne was for centuries governed by abbesses and populated by nuns who were also members of influential Lüneburg patrician families (Lähnemann & Schlotheuber, 2024, p.147). That, in itself, begins to explain why the convent has endured, in some form or other, for so long: the sisters (or, from 1711, when Kloster Lüne was finally legally defined as Lutheran 'Damenstiftung', 'the ladies') were uncommonly well-connected in relation to local society and could therefore defend themselves by drawing on support from beyond the monastic walls.

In sum, under Lutheran auspices, Kloster Lüne gradually became a bastion of what is perhaps best described as conventual Protestantism. Across the sixteenth and first half of the seventeenth century, life continued in many ways within the traditional Benedictine framework, albeit with some important modifications. Monastic habits and communal sung worship remained essential even if intercessory prayers were no longer allowed. Yet nuns were still constituted by what

they wore on their skin, by their productive work with textiles, and by their communal singing: all practices worked in and through their bodies that both shaped the nuns into and maintained them as monastic community. Their practices fabricated not just sound but corporation, in the proper sense of the word.

It was only with a new set of ducal regulations issued in 1643 that the overall pattern of life rooted in the singing of the canonical hours was finally modified into something slightly different. The eight daily Benedictine offices were amalgamated into two hour-long performances, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. In addition, the new regulations stated that: 'Although in the monastic establishments until the present date, for one and mostly the greater part, Latin Psalms and invocations have been sung, read and prayed: yet we have nevertheless […] completely abolished these, and [we] decree: that they shall from now onwards take place in the German language' (Brinkmann, 2013, p.52). The extent to which the nuns obeyed is not known. Ready submission should certainly not be taken for granted, as evinced by the burials of the Dominae in their monastic garments.

Given all this, it is striking that, only two years after the decree was issued, a new organ was completed at Kloster Lüne. Six years after that, this instrument was fully decorated in a manner that included Latin as well as German inscriptions (see, for example, Figs. 7.1 and 7.2). One of the most explicit of these (Fig. 7.5) celebrates the reigning Domina of the convent (Fig. 7.9) as the chief patroness of the organ. In addition, and as already noted, the organ is located immediately above and thus frames the doorway into the chapel that gives access to the crypt of the Dominae. These factors raise a number of questions which are, in effect, refined versions of those posed at the beginning of this essay. First, how does the organ fit within the long history of resistance to and compromises with Lutheran customs that characterised Kloster Lüne at this moment in time? Second, how does the organ relate to the corporate identity of the sisters, as articulated in their habits and their communal singing, two profoundly enfleshed practices? Third, what light does this cast on the visual conceptualisation of the display pipes as a school of singing fish? And, finally, how might this help to expand and refine scholarly approaches to the study of early modern bodies?

Singing fish, sanctified bodies

To begin to answer these questions: Steiger is certainly correct in his general conclusion that the organ at Kloster Lüne affirms the theological importance of both art and music within early modern Lutheranism (Steiger, 2013, pp.97–8). However, on a more local level, certain inscriptions on the organ should also be understood as loudly asserting the sisters' long-standing habit of singing in Latin, and this only eight years after having been told not to do so. It is particularly striking in this context that one of the largest and most legible inscriptions is in Latin, the phrase 'Sursum Corda' ('lift up your hearts') towards the top of the *rückpositiv* (Fig. 7.2). This is part of the liturgy that prefaces the Eucharist and, significantly, Luther had edited it out of his German Mass (Leaver, 2007, p.231). It was, however, retained in many Lutheran communities and that evidently included Kloster Lüne. At the same time, 'Sursum Corda' is a spatial statement. To see the inscription from the floor of the convent church, one must lift up one's head. That, however, would not have been the case for the nuns already elevated to the same height as the organ by virtue of their raised choir in the west end of the church. Or, put differently, their hearts were already uplifted. Moreover, from their choir, they had a particular view of the organ itself, very different to that from the

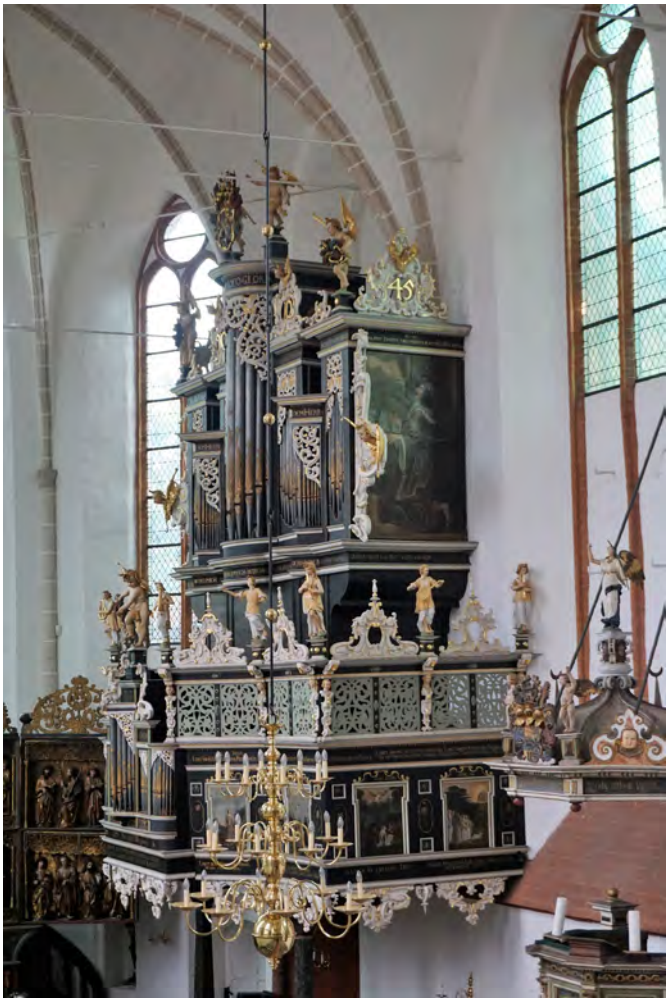

Figure 7.10: View of the organ from the nuns' choir inside the convent church of Kloster Lüne: note the large painting of King David singing on the side of the organ case and the two smaller paintings on the gallery below, showing the Nativity and the saved at the end of time. (Photograph by kind courtesy of Maarten Rog (orgelfoto.nl: Kloster Lüne, Klosterkirche - Orgelfoto))

church below (Fig. 7.10).

As already suggested, 'choir' (or 'chor' as the regulations of 1555 had it) is simultaneously a musical and a spatial entity, a fabrication of sound if ever there was one. In fact, after the new organ was built at Kloster Lüne, there would have been a close visual, spatial and sonic relationship between it and the nuns' choir. Both were large and elevated structures for making music. Moreover, in the early seventeenth century, a now-lost wooden gallery had been built in front of the nuns' choir, abutting quite far into the nave of the church but remaining at the same level as the organ. This gallery was connected by stairs to the pulpit and ensured that the Lutheran nuns could see the service, listen to the sermon and take communion without ever breaking their enclosure. In the gallery there was seating, with a specially marked chair for the Domina (Brinkmann, 2013, pp.47–9). When the sisters in their matching habits were in this gallery, as a corporation they were arranged rather like the fish on the organ pipes. The largest fish, on the deepest pipe, could be understood as the Domina while the collective singing of all the fish – with their range of higher and lower voices – was like the collective singing of the nuns (in part, this point draws on Davidsson, 2002, pp.90–1).

Here, conventional historians may object that there is no firm textual evidence to prove this parallel between the nuns and the singing, fierce-looking and quasi-monstrous fish. But the sisters' stubborn commitment to the Benedictine offices sung in Latin was still well within their collective living memories when the new organ was built. And, in effect, the fish on the organ are shown as singing at least in part in Latin through the various inscriptions. Moreover, the way that the nuns' bodies were presented through their dress and organised by the various structures in their church surely constitutes important corporeal evidence. For those in need of further textual evidence, there are the Biblical passages from Psalm 98 and Job 41 cited at the beginning of this essay as well as the parable of the net in Matthew 13:47–50, where the righteous who shall be saved are likened to a catch of good fish. In other words, several of the meanings assigned to fish in the Bible constituted one way that those attending church at Kloster Lüne in the seventeenth century could make sense of the distinct spatial arrangements.

Here it is noteworthy that, on the organ at Kloster Lüne, the Book of Psalms is referenced in several places, for example: 'Ps: 95. Singet dem Herrn, Spielet dem Herrn' ('Psalm 95: Sing unto the Lord, Play unto the Lord'). As already noted, King David appears in a large painting on the western or right side of the organ case, so the side facing directly towards the nuns' choir (Fig. 7.10). In the Bible, David is explicitly presented as the author of many of the Psalms, especially those earliest in the cycle. On the organ case, he is portrayed playing the harp and singing Psalm 103:1–14 (Steiger, 2015, p.82). On the much less visible left or east side of the organ there is a matching painting of Asaph, to whom the Bible attributes Psalms 50 and 73 to 83 (p.81). This is all entirely logical because the book of Psalms was the backbone of the Benedictine Liturgy. The rule of St Benedict explicitly specifies that: 'the Psalter with its full number of 150 Psalms be chanted every week and begun again every Sunday at the Night Office' (St Benedict, 1950, p.40). It is fair, therefore, to assume that those accustomed to singing every week of floods clapping their hands could also imagine themselves as the roaring sea and 'the fulness thereof', as Psalm 98 has it. Or they could even think of themselves as Leviathan, a great and monstrous marine body that nevertheless bears witness to God's power and wisdom. Thinking about bodies with the organ at Kloster Lüne involves moving well beyond the human and, quite literally, into waves of sound. Of course, in Europe there is a long history of conceptualising sound as waves dating back to the late Roman writer Boethius's *De Institutione Musica* (Baumann, 1990, p.199). This, then, is yet another way of linking the fish on the display pipes at Kloster Lüne with the singing nuns. Their devotions came, quite literally, in waves.

The peculiar view that the sisters had of the organ from their choir encompassed not just the large painting of the Psalmist King but two smaller paintings on the gallery below. The image on the left (Fig. 7.11) is a fairly conventional scene of the *Nativity* yet it is also a celebration of singing in Latin: the angel in white with a red sash in the clouds above holds a scroll with the text 'Gloria in excelsis Deo' (Fig. 7.12).

As is well known, the 'Gloria' is a passage intrinsic to the Sunday liturgy apart from during Advent and Lent and it was retained, either in the vernacular or more rarely in Latin, in most forms of Lutheran worship (Herl, 2004, pp.28–9, 57). In the painting, the angel holding this inscription is surrounded by cherubim, conventionally depicted as only heads with wings, so with a bodily logic combining the human and the avian (in this respect, they are analogous to the linking of the human and the avian discussed by Wallis in this issue). These winged heads also reprise those painted in the small white frames adjacent to all the larger paintings on the organ gallery (examples are visible on either side of Fig.7.2, above and below the ovals with single flowers). Because of their relationship to the scene of the *Nativity*, these cherubim constitute a Latin choir of their own.

It is also striking that, in this *Nativity* the Virgin Mary is veiled in white, not her customary blue. This connects her visually to the Infant Jesus, who seems to be resting on her veil and whom she is about to swaddle in white; at the same time, this would also have been a visual link to the white veils worn by the Lutheran

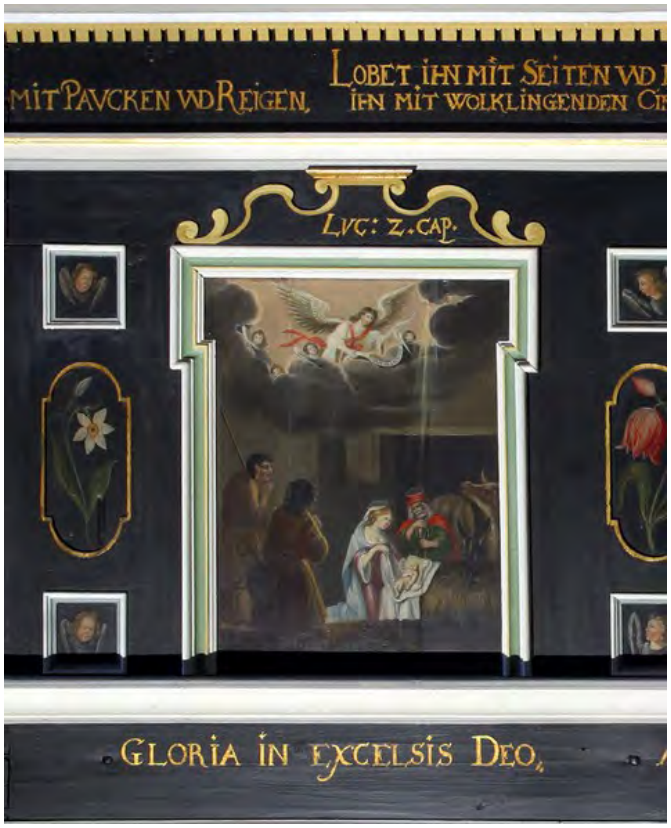

Figure 7.11: Adolph Block, *Nativity*, 1651, oil on panel. West-facing part of organ gallery, convent church, Kloster Lüne.

Fig. 7.12: Detail of the painting in Fig. 7.11.

sisters (Figs. 7.8 and 7.9). In the scene of the *Nativity*, this large white area also connects Mary and Jesus to the white garments of the angel above them as well as to the flock of women dressed in white in the painting further to the right on the organ gallery (Fig. 7.13).

Like the fish on the organ pipes, this painting is unusual, a scene only very rarely depicted in the Christian tradition. It references this biblical passage (Revelation, 14:1–5):

> And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps: And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth. These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.

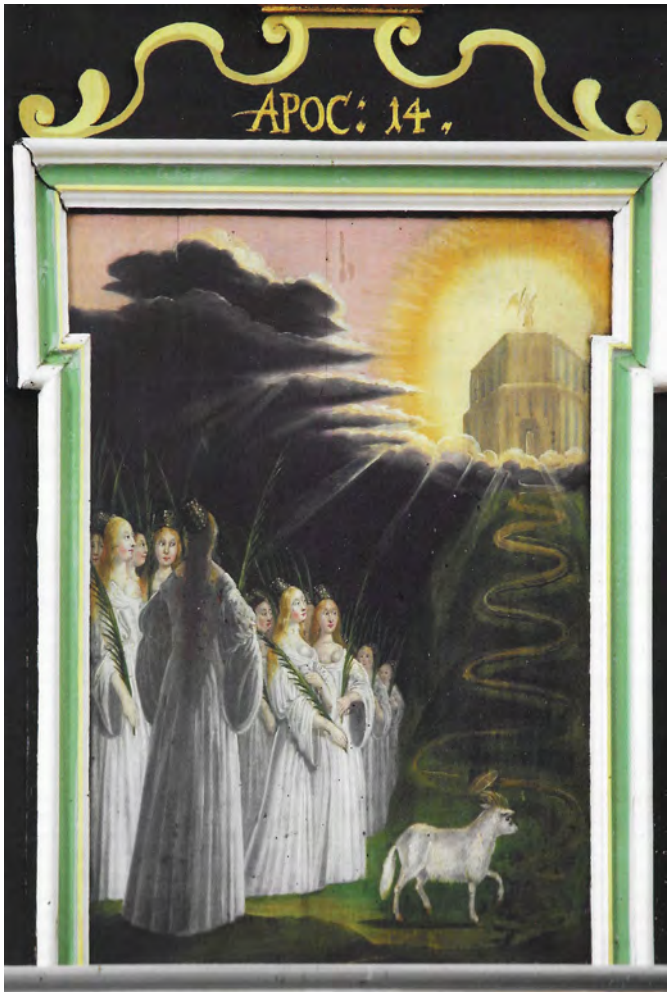

Figure 7.13: Adolph Block, *The first fruits of the redeemed*, 1651. Oil on panel. West-facing part of organ gallery, convent church, Kloster Lüne. (Photo: Johann Anselm Steiger)

The 'voice of many waters' yet again fit with the extraordinary singing fish on the organ pipes and therefore, by extension, with the nuns' voices. Yet the implication of this biblical passage is that the 'hundred and forty and four thousand' are male. However, in the painting showing this scene on the organ at Kloster Lüne, the figures are most emphatically women, identifiable by their prominent cleavages very like that of the Virgin Mary in the painting to the left. Pictorially, this is certainly a matter of redeemed virgins yet in the form

of victorious maidens undefiled by men. The nuns at Kloster Lüne may have struggled against the authorities to retain their Latin singing but this painting proclaims that 'in their mouth was found no guile'. Finally, in this context, the singing monastic body is, yet again, a prefiguration of the celestial, of the rewards for the undefiled followers of the lamb. This body both exists in and yet transcends two distinct temporalities, of heaven and of earth.

It is important that the women in the painting are wearing white, in an allusion to Revelation 7:14: 'These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.' The link is made visually by the white robe and red sash worn by the angel in the *Nativity* (Fig. 7.13). At the same time, there is also a connection between the scene from the Revelation and the painting in Fig. 7.6 above. In the scene from the Revelation, this connection is constituted by the woman in the left foreground with her back to the viewer, seemingly absorbed in her vision of the heavenly Jerusalem. She is like most of the figures shown in Fig. 7.6, who are also receiving a vision albeit here of the crucified Christ. There is a particularly close link with the veiled and crowned nun (so fully professed under the old ritual, before monastic investiture was abolished) also in the left foreground. This painting currently hangs in the nuns' choir at Kloster Lüne; it has been in the ownership of the convent ever since it was made.

It does not matter where exactly in the convent the picture in Fig. 7.6 hung when the organ was first painted. What matters is that the picture both constitutes and reinforces a particular kind of monastic temporality, a perpetually shared memory of one moment in the complex history of Kloster Lüne. The scene depicted is described as a 'Trost Bild' or image of comfort in the text below. The event it shows took place in 1562, when the future Domina Dorothea von Meding – at that point a pupil in the convent school – called her monastic sisters into the garden to share her vision of the crucified Christ up in the clouds (Lähnemann & Schlotheuber, 2024, pp.151–3). That is to say, the event took place in the same year that Kloster Lüne finally received its first Lutheran abbess; the nuns, in their complex struggle with the authorities, were comforted by the Crucified himself. It is particularly striking that the painting dates to around 1623, so towards the end of Dorothea von Meding's reign as Domina. It is therefore extremely likely that she commissioned it herself, instructing the unrecorded painter in how to depict the memory of her childhood vision. Crucially, that memory involved two fully crowned nuns, who would have been formally invested according to the now defunct rules when they took their original vows. Domina von Meding therefore presided over the making of an image that explicitly bridged pre- and post-Lutheran temporalities in relation to monastic dress, to how the nuns were physically framed and presented.

This attentiveness to conventual history chimes with a personal experience gained when visiting the Benedictine nuns of Stanbrook Abbey in Yorkshire while I was serving as the senior researcher for a television documentary (*Julian of Norwich: The Search for the Lost Manuscript*, 2016). The abbess was showing her visitors a precious reliquary painted with scenes from the martyrdom of a group of Carmelite nuns in the French Revolution. In the windows of a house shown in one of these scenes, the English Benedictine nuns of Cambrai (from whence Stanbrook was founded) are portrayed witnessing their Carmelite sisters from Compiègne walking, in song, to the guillotine. Pointing towards this scene, the abbess proudly exclaimed 'that's us!'

That is to say, monastic communities often treasure specific images linked with particular moments in their history. And their sense of time is quite different from what might be termed secular time: it encompasses the entire history of their specific monastic family, where distant moments may seem intensely present. It is therefore not far-fetched to imagine that the early modern nuns at Kloster Lüne saw the painting of Domina von Meding's childhood vision as showing 'us'. On one level, the painting helped to bolster the community's sense of its own sanctity because it was a reminder of a vision vouchsafed to its future head and members at a crucial historical moment. Moreover, the painting kept memories of the old and intensely bodily rituals of investiture – of crowning – alive and present in their minds. And so did the corresponding painting on the west end of the organ gallery: the women in white wear bejewelled crowns on the physical crowns of their heads, instead of the name of God on their foreheads, as the biblical text would have it. Since there is precious little iconographic precedent for this image, it is a striking departure from the biblical source. But it fits with an enduring collective commitment to the very idea of a nun's headgear as essential to her identity (Bynum, 2015). As late as 1842, the reigning Domina of Kloster Lüne, Wilhelmine Sophie von Meding, stated in an entry in the monastic chronicle: 'We who are always in the convent […] have our veils and we acknowledge with gratitude their value and amenity' (Brinkmann, 2013, p.69). Veiling, as also explored by Murray in the present set of essays, is evidently a powerful marker of distinct and often extraordinary identities and temporalities. At Kloster Lüne, the bodily practices of convent life endured across centuries precisely because memories of them were kept alive: the monastic body, conceptualised as a corporation fabricated through dress, singing

and sewing, was never allowed to die. In this sense, at least, it was akin to the eternal life promised to 'they which follow the Lamb'.

There was a wide range of pictorial, spatial and sonic relationships between the organ and the nuns at Kloster Lüne. It is also likely that the organ was understood as a kind of body in its own right, along the lines articulated by Johannes Buxtehude, as discussed at the beginning of this essay. Besides all this, in early modern Lutheranism, a new organ was usually inaugurated with a special ceremony that, amongst other things, involved a lengthy sermon on the importance of music in worship (Braun, 2014). No such sermon survives from Kloster Lüne but it is eminently possible that inaugural events were held in 1645 and, again, in 1651, when the paintwork was finally completed. In effect, the organ entered the community unclothed, served a period of probation and was finally invested in 1651, a Leviathan of an instrument suitably equipped and dressed to perform 'the voice of many waters'.

This helps to highlight a final connection between the organ and the conventual community. Each of the paintings on the lower gallery are framed not just by square images of cherubim but also by oblong pictures of flowers set against black backgrounds (clearly visible in Fig. 7.2). They include tulips, narcissi and roses and these chime with further archaeological evidence from the crypt of the Dominae, with its entrance below the organ. This evidence comes from a burial from 1659, which must be that of Domina von Estorff, chief patroness of the organ, who died that year. In her coffin, there was a black silk ribbon with remnants of what appears to be a bouquet either of flowers or herbs. A similar ribbon was also found in the oldest burial in the crypt, from 1634, which must be that of Dorothea von Meding (Ströbl & Vick, 2007, p.53). In the seventeenth century, it seems that evergreen sprigs and branches rather than flowers were commonly used during funerary rites, apart from those for children and Roman Catholic nuns (Córdova, 2011, p.450; Drury, 1994). Yet it may be that the Lutheran Dominae of Kloster Lüne were put to rest with a gathering of flowers, probably as a sign of their undefiled state and, at the same time, as bridal, appropriate for their final union with the heavenly bridegroom. The organ, with flowers in a black setting and straddling the entrance to the crypt of the Dominae, is in this sense profoundly connected with the deceased abbesses. The school of singing fish therefore stand not only for the living members of the monastic family but also for those now singing in heaven, for 'us' across 'our' full history. The fish are de*monstra*tive in the fullest sense of the word. For the organ is both part of and embodies conventual memories: it helps to constitute the monastic corporation as a physical, spatial, sonic and temporal whole.

Conclusion

To return, now, to my original questions: how might a complex artefact like the organ at Kloster Lüne enrich and enliven, expand and refine, our understanding of early modern bodies? And what are the benefits of approaching the historical study of bodies through a musical instrument rather than from the starting point of something textual?

This approach presses hard on the category 'body'. At Kloster Lüne, bodies are best understood as pluralities, as constituted in and through a specific set of embodied and interactive practices that, together, both established and maintained the monastic corporation. This corporation encompassed the totality of nuns, living and deceased, and it was fabricated in and through song, music, textiles, burials, paintings and a myriad of other practices. Crucially, the corporation both existed within and transcended the three distinct temporalities of past, present and future. At the same time, the corporation was embedded in a much wider physical environment: singing (in Latin) with the angels, roaring with the fish of the sea and rejoicing with the floods and the hills, all entities that are other-than-human. This helps to explain why the fish on the organ are somewhat monstrous: it is a way of pointing to something that lies beyond merely ordinary fishiness. In turn, this fits with my broader point that the organ represents the monastic corporation as having its own distinct ontology that spans conventional oppositions such as the celestial and the terrestrial, the extraordinary and the quotidian, and the animate and the inanimate. In short, at Kloster Lüne, bodies are not bounded. Rather, like the fish on the organ, they are plural, open and productive; they come into being through waves of sound. That is the first lesson to learn from the instrument at Kloster Lüne.

At the same time, the approach set out in this essay also presses hard on what constitutes acceptable evidence for the histories of bodies. Beyond textual evidence, I have drawn on archaeological material, on imagery, on the architectural and sculptural organisation of space, on singing and music-making, on dress, textiles and textile-making, on ritual behaviour, and on past and present monastic lives. At least for me, one marked benefit of this was to illuminate the limits of certain types of textual evidence: obedience to ducal decrees was not a given at Kloster Lüne. In general, written rules cannot be assumed to evince actual behaviour. That is why it is crucial to cast the net widely: material, physical, visual and instrumental evidence is of paramount importance when writing histories of bodies.

Finally, there is McKinnon's useful concept of musical

sound as something fabricated, as a weaving or stitching of spaces, sounds, bodies, textiles and instruments into a greater whole in performance. This offers a way of approaching specific historical bodies precisely as fabricated, as constituted in many different ways: visually, spatially, sonically and artefactually rather than just textually. I hope I have managed to show that there are considerable benefits to be drawn from thinking about bodies in terms of fabrication. This approach means focusing properly on the experiential, on what it means to be a body. Without such a focus, our histories of early modern bodies will remain fleshless, bloodless and silent.

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