This innovative and well-illustrated book analyses convent culture in sixteenth-century Italy through the medium of three unpublished nuns’ chronicles.

The chronicle of Santa Maria delle Vergini (known as ‘Le Vergini’) in Venice was composed or compiled in 1523 of works by one or more anonymous Augustinian canonesses, the chronicle of the Benedictine Santa Maria Annunziata (known as ‘Le Murate’) in Florence was compiled by Suora Giustina Niccolini in 1598, and that of the Clarissan convent of Santi Cosma e Damiano (known as ‘San Cosimato’) in Rome was written by Suor Orsola Formicini in 1607. The book uses a comparative methodology of ‘connected differences’ to examine the intellectual and imaginative achievement of these nuns, and to investigate how they fashioned and preserved individual and convent identities by writing chronicles. The chronicles themselves reveal many examples of nuns’ agency, especially with regard to cultural creativity, and show that convent traditions determined cultural priorities and specialisms, and dictated the contours of convent ceremonial life.

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Nuns’ Chronicles and Convent Culture in Renaissance and Counter-Reformation Italy

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Every effort has been made to trace and acknowledge copyright for material used in this book. The author and publisher would be pleased to hear from those copyright holders they have been unable to contact.
Acknowledgements

I wrote my first article on nuns fourteen years ago. Casting around for a suitable topic on which to base a paper for the Ecclesiastical History Society’s summer meeting on ‘Women in the Church’ in 1989, I decided to follow leads on Argentina Malaspina, the sister-in-law of Cardinal Francesco Soderini, who had taken a set of rooms in the Benedictine convent of Le Murate in Florence, when life in the Palazzo Vecchio with her husband, Piero Soderini, the gonfaloniere a vita, became overwhelming. Giuseppe Mazzatinti, Inventari dei manoscritti delle biblioteche d’Italia (110 vols. so far, Forlì, 1893–Florence, 1997), IX, p. 140 alerted me to the existence of a sixteenth-century chronicle of the convent written by a nun from Le Murate in the Biblioteca Nazionale in Florence, and for four heady weeks over Easter 1989 I transcribed it. Nuns’ chronicles became my next project.

I should like to thank Brenda Bolton (for suggesting I write the paper in the first place), Amanda Lillie (for listening to my tales of the chronicle every night over Easter 1989), Anna Teicher (for allowing me to use her flat in S. Frediano) and Dorothy Serrin (for accompanying me to the newly opened bar inside the old complex of Le Murate and toasting all the inmates forced to live there five hundred years ago). All four have also provided support and friendship in various ways throughout the project. It also gives me pleasure to acknowledge the contribution of Eugene McLaughlin, who provided companionship and a contemporary perspective during the long years this book has taken to write.

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William Davies was the best editor imaginable, and I am grateful for his support (and that of Cambridge University Press) over many years.
Sections of this work have been presented at many seminars and lectures in Europe and the United States, and I should like to thank all those who attended, and particularly those who commented.

As ever, my greatest debt lies with archivists, librarians and fellow historians, but in this case, I include within that category the three sixteenth-century nun chroniclers who made it all possible. Because of them, this has been a marvellously rich and thought-provoking project.
Notes on the text

Please note that many well-known surnames have been standardised but some names have been maintained in their dialect form (in particular Venetian ones). First names of nuns have also sometimes been left in the form in which they appeared in the chronicles or other contemporary documents.

All dates in the text have been modernised, but obviously dates in documents etc. have been left in their original formulation. During this period, in general the Venetian calendar year started on 1 March, the Florentine calendar year started on 25 March, and the Roman calendar year on either 25 December or 1 January.

For ease of reading (although in reality nomenclature and forms of address were not consistent), all the inmates at Le Vergini have been called canonesses, and all canonesses from Le Vergini are referred to by the title ‘Madonna’, whereas inmates of the other two institutions are called nuns, and are referred to by the title ‘Suora’.

Please note in addition that on account of the large amount of unpublished material I have as a rule only discussed the chronicles and convents of Le Murate, Le Vergini and S. Cosimato in the text, and have put all other comparative material into the footnotes.
## Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AAF</td>
<td>Archivio arcivescovile, Florence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACRS</td>
<td>Archivio delle corporazioni religiose soppressa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AS</td>
<td>Archivio di stato</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASF</td>
<td>Archivio di stato, Florence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASPVe</td>
<td>Archivio storico del patriarcato, Venice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASR</td>
<td>Archivio di stato, Rome</td>
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<tr>
<td>ASVe</td>
<td>Archivio di stato, Venice</td>
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<tr>
<td>AV</td>
<td>Archivio segreto vaticano</td>
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<tr>
<td>b.</td>
<td>busta</td>
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<tr>
<td>BAV</td>
<td>Biblioteca apostolica vaticana</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BL</td>
<td>British Library, London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BMCV</td>
<td>Biblioteca del Museo Correr, Venice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BNCF</td>
<td>Biblioteca nazionale centrale, Florence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BNCR</td>
<td>Biblioteca nazionale centrale Vittorio Emanuele II, Rome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cass.</td>
<td>cassetta</td>
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<td>col.</td>
<td>column</td>
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<tr>
<td>CRS</td>
<td>Corporazioni religiose soppressa dal governo francese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DBI</td>
<td>Dizionario biografico degli italiani (58 vols. so far, Rome, 1960–)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>edn</td>
<td>edition</td>
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<tr>
<td>f.</td>
<td>folio</td>
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<tr>
<td>MAP</td>
<td>Medici avanti il principato</td>
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<td>NA</td>
<td>Notarile antecosimiano</td>
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<td>n.</td>
<td>note</td>
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<td>no.</td>
<td>number or numero</td>
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<td>perg.</td>
<td>pergamena</td>
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List of abbreviations

pt. parte
reg. registro
RIS *Rerum italicarum scriptores*, i.e. L. A. Muratori ed.,
*Raccolta degli storici italiani dal Cinquecento al Millecinquecento* (34 tomes in multiple volumes and parts, new edn, Città del Castello, 1900–Bologna, 1943), ed. Giosuè Carducci, Vittorio Fiorini and Pietro Fedele
SMdV Santa Maria delle Vergini
t. tomo
tav. tavola
Vat. lat. MSS Vaticani latini

Le Murate The chronicle of Le Murate composed by Suora Giustina Niccolini, in Florence, Biblioteca nazionale centrale, II II 509
Le Vergini The chronicle of Le Vergini, in Venice, Biblioteca del Museo Correr, cod. Correr 317
S. Cosimato The chronicle of S. Cosimato composed by Suor Orsola Formicini, in Rome, Biblioteca nazionale Vittorio Emanuele II, Fondi minori, MSS Varia 5