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Rose-Marie Peake, *The Power of Religious Societies in Shaping Early Modern Society and Identity. Crossing Boundaries: Turku Medieval and Early Modern Studies*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2020. 245 pp. Sources, notes on vocabulary, and index. €99.00 (hb). ISBN 9789462986688; €98.99 (eb). ISBN 9789048537976.

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By crossing a rarely traversed disciplinary divide, Rose-Marie Peake's *The Power of Religious Societies in Shaping Early Modern Society and Identity* offers a new perspective from which to analyze the cultural contributions of early modern France's religious societies. Scholarship on the ancien regime has long recognized the first half of the seventeenth century as a period of remarkable religious creativity, marked by the foundation of new congregations, charitable organizations, seminaries, and secret societies aimed at reviving the Catholic faith and meeting the needs of the poor. Hagiographies and academic studies alike often acknowledge in passing the administrative skill that helped these early modern institutions flourish, without interrogating what that organizational prowess might reveal about early modern relationships. In a move that takes administration seriously as a social form, Peake examines the activities of the *Filles de la charité* (Daughters of Charity) as a form of moral management, a lens she borrows from business studies, without losing sight of phenomena brought to light by other new approaches, such as performance studies, with an emphasis on the construction of holiness.

Founded in 1633 by Louise de Marillac and Vincent de Paul, the Daughters of Charity was "the largest, most influential and famous of the new seventeenth-century active orders" (p. 45), with approximately seventy communities in France by 1660 (p. 33), when both de Marillac and de Paul died, and 536 communities in France and Poland by the end of the eighteenth century (p. 45). Unlike enclosed female orders, such as the Ursulines or, after 1615, the Visitation nuns, the Daughters of Charity did not take perpetual vows or live in a cloister. They were laywomen who led "a monastic-like communal life with devotional practices" (p. 39), while caring for orphans, the sick, and the poor.

Although other studies, on which Peake deftly builds,^[1] have focused on the Daughters of Charity, her account takes a novel approach by leveraging the idea of management to turn the reader's attention to "the way an organization or a person aims to influence morality and values to attain a certain end" (p. 17). For the Daughters of Charity, that end or aim, argues Peake, was the preservation of their Company as an unenclosed religious community. Whereas the Council of Trent required nuns to remain in their cloisters, the Daughters engaged in spiritual disciplines much like nuns but went out to serve the poor in the city's streets, homes, and hospitals. Their

“liminal status” as nun-like laywomen made authorities (and some Daughters) uncomfortable (p. 119). Moral management allowed the founders and directors to address this challenge, thereby preserving the Company’s active vocation.

After an introduction and first chapter that lay out the scholarly context and sketch the sociological characteristics of early seventeenth-century Paris, where the Company’s motherhouse was located, Peake structures the book as three profiles focused on the primary groups who composed or were served by the Daughters of Charity. Wherever possible, these profiles highlight specific individuals who were representative of the demographic segment to which they belonged, although the lower the social rank the more composite the profiles necessarily become as the archival sources shift from personal correspondence and hagiographies to rules and guidelines for interacting with the people the Daughters sought to help. The first of these profiles (chapter two) considers the way de Marillac crafted herself as a living saint to align the Company’s reputation with orthodox Catholic values and attract a network of elite patronesses, the *Dames de charité* (Ladies of Charity), to direct and finance the Company’s work. In the second profile (chapter three), Peake paints a picture of the Company’s members, that is, the women, mostly from lowly backgrounds, who carried out the menial tasks required to run orphanages, hospitals, and schools. The third profile (chapter four) provides information about the poor who received their charity, showing how the Daughters evaluated their moral fitness and prioritized their moral training and salvation.

Peake’s emphasis on moral management enables her to bring to light features of the Daughters of Charity’s operations that might not have otherwise come to the fore had she, for example, approached her material from a Foucauldian perspective focused on social control. One could perhaps criticize the book for not taking power seriously enough. Peake argues that because the Daughters believed they cared for Jesus when caring for the poor, their conviction that the poor constitute “holy substitutes of Christ proves that social order and eviction of undesirables off the streets were not the leading motives” in their activities (p. 212). The Daughters’ stated motivations, however, do not preclude the possibility that they participated in larger systems of surveillance of which they did not have full awareness. Nonetheless, Peake’s attention to the Daughters’ moral system demonstrates how an organization might simultaneously uphold the social order while creating new possibilities for action within that order. In fact, according to Peake, the Daughters succeeded in safeguarding their liminal position precisely by supporting key elements of the social system. This theme threads through all three profiles.

One of the first ways de Marillac and de Paul simultaneously reinforced norms for social rank while creating new forms of agency for all members was by establishing two separate tiers within the Company after realizing that noble women were “send[ing] their maids to perform menial chores that they deemed unsuitable to their rank” (p. 39). By designating noble members as Ladies of Charity and lowlier members as Daughters, the Company created a platform that allowed elite women to dedicate their time, money, and influence to charitable endeavors without jeopardizing their social standing. For women from less illustrious backgrounds, the division between Daughters and Ladies created opportunities for non-elite women to cooperate closely with their noble patronesses to perform work they all considered meaningful while gaining respect as administrators and saintly figures. Rather than segregating noble and non-noble women within the Company, it seems the division facilitated interaction between these two groups. Similarly, the Company’s discourses highlighted de Marillac’s submission to de Paul as her spiritual director, while in practice, as Peake shows, she exerted significant leadership over

the Company's affairs. "Thus," argues Peake, "submissiveness was a rhetorical strategy by which allegations of surpassing the suitable role of a woman could be discarded" (p. 115). The Company's "conservative anthropology" (p. 207), as Peake calls it, thus did double duty, maintaining the social order while creating space for female agency within it.

Analyzed through the lens of moral management, the tension between active and contemplative religious vocations also receives an especially nuanced treatment. In her analysis of the way the Company managed the morality of the Daughters so as to construct an orthodox image of their unenclosed activities, Peake shows how they strategically drew on aspects of the stories of Martha and Mary, two of the organizing models for religious life in the Christian tradition, to differentiate themselves from cloistered nuns, on the one hand, and laywomen, on the other. Whereas one might expect the Daughters to focus on Martha, the model for active service, Peake explains how their communal life instead corresponded in many ways to that of enclosed nuns by following a rule and practicing austerities. In the absence of physical enclosure, obedience to their superiors and to the rule provided what Peake calls "mental enclosure" (p. 132). Peake's disruption of the dichotomy between cloister and street offers a more diverse spectrum for reconsidering both male and female religious communities.

Peake's study opens the way for more research in early modern French studies that builds on methods and questions from business fields, such as business ethics, organizational behavior, and entrepreneurship. In doing so, scholars must emulate the care Peake has taken to avoid anachronism, since religious communities of the ancien regime did not operate in a capitalist context. Tools developed in business schools, however, do not all focus on profit. These tools, like organization theory, also help explain how groups coordinate their activities, an inquiry of value to the humanities and to which humanistic tools, such as archival methods and close reading, can make valuable contributions. Here, I think Peake's study could have pushed harder to go beyond adopting the frame of moral management so as to refine it as a critical tool. How, for example, did the Daughters of Charity address what scholars in business call the "disconnect between knowledge and practice," which management literature identifies as a source of moral failure in corporations where people's talk does not match their walk?^[2] Perhaps by accommodating elements of the contemplative life to their active vocation, the Daughters fostered a "reflexive practice" that helped them incorporate the Company's values? How, then, would this reflexive practice differ from a Foucauldian form of social control or from Bourdieu's *habitus*?^[3] Given that so many of the figures involved in the Daughters of Charity occupied marginalized or minority positions—de Marillac was born out of wedlock, de Paul was the son of a ploughman, the Ladies of Charity were mostly widows, the Daughters were mostly of low birth—what could Peake's historical study teach business studies about strategies for leading when not fully invested with the authority to do so? Peake thoroughly unfolds the moral system embedded in her primary sources but devotes less attention to the way her primary sources represent the actions we would now classify under the category of "management." Discourse analysis of terms such as *diriger*, *ménager*, and *régler* would surely produce insights about the Company's organizational structure and strategies of survival.

The wide array of questions Peake's book makes it possible to ask testifies to the fruitfulness of the direction she has opened. Hopefully, her book invites further investigations at this disciplinary intersection.

NOTES

[1] Peake's book is especially in conversation with Susan E. Dinan, *Women and Poor Relief in Seventeenth-Century France: The Early History of the Daughters of Charity* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), Matthieu Brejon de Lavergnée, *Histoire des Filles de la charité, XVIIe-XVIIIe siècle: La Rue pour cloître* (Paris: Fayard, 2011), Elizabeth Rapley, *The Dévotes: Women and Church in Seventeenth-Century France* (Montreal/Kingston/London/Buffalo: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990), and Barbara Diefendorf, *From Penitence to Charity: Pious Women and the Catholic Reformation in Paris* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

[2] Paul Hibbert and Ann Cunliffe, "Responsible Management: Engaging Moral Reflexive Practice Through Concepts," *Journal of Business Ethics* 127(2015): 177-188.

[3] Business scholarship on moral management often treats mechanisms such as *habitus* or surveillance as strategies for developing moral firms or as concepts useful for understanding why firms meet with ethical failure. See, for example, Crawford Spence and Chris Carter, "An Exploration of the Professional Habitus in the Big 4 Accounting Firms," *Work, Employment and Society* 28(2014): 946-962, and Jana Nadoh Bergoč and Dana Mesner Andolšek's overview of scholarship on ethical infrastructures in *Ethical Infrastructure: The Road to Moral Management* (Newcastle, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2019), 234-274.

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