

# “THE DAUGHTERS HAVE GROWN UP”

## Transnational Motherhood, Migration and Gender among Catholic Nuns

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This article explores transnational spiritual motherhood in women’s congregations from a historical and anthropological perspective, considering the question as to how ideas of motherhood have changed across geographic borders and over an extended period of time. Within a religious context, kinship terms (mother, sister, daughter) are based not on biological, but on ritual relationships. In the past, social contact to biological parents and to the family of origin was reduced to a minimum or cut off entirely when a young woman entered a religious congregation. In view of the *transnationalization of convent life* and the accompanying increased mobility of Catholic sisters, this presents new challenges for many religious orders.

*Keywords:* transnational motherhood, Catholic nuns, migration, mobility, Europe, United States

As early as the nineteenth century, especially due to the migration movements from Europe to the United States, thousands of Catholic nuns were separated from their mother houses, and thus also from their “mothers”, the founders of the respective women’s congregations. Despite the spatial separation, the sisters were pioneers of female migration, maintaining transnational connections to their places of origin on the other side of the Atlantic. As spiritual mothers, the founders of these communities worried about their “daughters” living so far away.

Transnational motherhood is by no means a phenomenon of the twenty-first century. Although a growing number of mothers presently live separated from their children (Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila 1997; Hoang & Yeoh 2011; Hüwelmeier 2013a), motherhood across geographic and cultural borders

existed in earlier centuries and in various different societies, including mobile Catholic sisters, whom I have referred to as pioneers of female migration (Hüwelmeier 2005a; Hüwelmeier 2005b). Based on ethnographic fieldwork with the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ (PHJC), a globally interconnected women’s congregation, I will illustrate how ideas of spiritual and social motherhood have changed over the course of a 150-year period and across continents.<sup>1</sup> In line with Carling, Menjivar and Schmalzbauer (2012: 192), I argue that physical absence is compatible with social and emotional presence and participation.

In the first part of this article I will sketch new approaches to transnational motherhood, a phenomenon that is gaining significance in view of recent migration movements and new communica-

tion technologies. This also involves re-evaluating the traveling activities of women who had already crossed geographic and territorial boundaries in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, long before anthropological research started speaking of globalization or global flows (Appadurai 1996; Hanerz 1996). I will then discuss the dynamic relationship between gender, migration and mobility. Further, I describe the bidding of farewell to “mothers” by focusing on traveling nuns, and depict tensions and conflicts between “mothers”, “co-mothers” and “daughters” beyond borders. Transatlantic communication is also a main aspect of the historical and anthropological perspective on transnational motherhood.

Based on multi-sited ethnography, in the next section I will discuss the processes of transformation and the new way of looking at social motherhood in women’s congregations since the 1960s. Hierarchy and power relations were increasingly questioned in Catholic religious orders as well as in other “total institutions” (Goffman 1961). The women’s movement, students’ movement and the young Indian and African women who joined women’s congregations with a “Western” orientation in the 1960s all contributed to cracking the image of dominant mother superiors.

### Co-parenthood and Transnational Motherhood

My understanding of transnational motherhood is not reduced to the relationship of mothers living in the diaspora to their minor-age children in the country of origin. Instead, I view the concept of transnational motherhood as an enduring relationship between people of different generations in different countries. Thus it is independent of age and can also exist among adults (see also Åkesson, Carling & Drotbohm 2012: 239). My analysis of transnational connections between Catholic nuns and their “mothers” focuses on social and spiritual motherhood as a kind of fictive or ritual kinship relation. Configurations of co-parenthood have long had great significance in anthropology, in particular with regard to the expansion of social and political networks, such as *kivrelik* in the Turkish context

(Kudat-Sertel 1971: 37) or *compadrazgo*, a relationship between parents and godparents that is maintained in Spain and in many Latin American countries (Mintz & Wolf 1950). In addition to biological parents, co-parents also assume responsibility for children or adolescents. It is not unusual for co-parents to live at different locations. Esther Goody (1982) has shown that many children in West Africa do not grow up in their families of origin, but are brought to relatives or friends living elsewhere, who then raise the children. Sometimes these “new” parents live in different countries or even continents. Older siblings can also assume responsibility. In some African countries, for example – as a consequence of AIDS/HIV – orphans grow up in households run by other children. In these child-headed households, older siblings or underage relatives take on the role of the mother (Wolf 2010).

Practices of co-parenthood are as well known in European countries. From the mountainous regions of Austria, for example, into the 1930s “illegitimate” children of servants and maids, working as farm laborers, were not allowed to remain living with their parents if the parents did not want to risk losing their place of employment. Thus parents sought other options and asked “foster” parents to take care of their children. In general, foster parents (*Zieheltern*) were couples, friends or relatives, who either had their own children but needed more workers or were without children and subsequently had no heir for the farm. Foster parents often lived nearby, either in the next valley or a few hours away on foot, but without means of transportation the walking distances were a difficult endeavor. Another kind of co-parenthood is known from the so-called Swabian children. With their parents’ consent children between five and fourteen were sent from the Tyrol and Vorarlberg areas of Austria to work as maids and servants for farmers they did not know in Upper Swabia (Lampert 1996).

Children who travel on their own, without parents or co-parents, are today looked after as unaccompanied minors by state institutions in European societies. The majority of minors not living with their parents, however, live with co-parents. In my current

research on transnational Vietnamese families in Berlin, some children and adolescents below eighteen live with relatives who have already resided in Germany for some time. Their parents in Vietnam want them to have a better life than their own and entrust them in the migration context to the care of their uncles, aunts, or older cousins. Young women from Vietnam who work as domestic workers or nannies in Germany make up another group. On the one hand these are situations in which minors are exploited, since many of these women are irregular migrants and totally dependent on their “employers”. On the other hand, this offers young women from Vietnam their only chance to leave their country of origin and live in Germany “without papers”, with the possibility of finding new, more long-term prospects.

### **Gender, Migration and Mobility**

In many societies, female migrants have ideas of “good motherhood” that are characterized by caring practices for their children. Due to the mobility of mothers, relatives such as the father, uncle and aunt or grandparents take care of the children (Erel 2002). Mothers who leave their families behind to work as nurses or domestic workers (Liebelt 2011) are able to stay in contact with their partners and children thanks to modern communication technologies. In the late 1980s these options were still very limited, in socialist societies in particular. For example, many female Vietnamese contract workers in East Germany (GDR) lived separated from their families in Vietnam (Hüwelmeier 2013a). Thousands of mothers and fathers had to leave their children behind in Vietnam. Due to bilateral agreements between the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and East Germany, contract workers were not permitted to bring their children with them. Whereas in the early 1980s state-owned Vietnamese companies started “delegating” primarily “singles”, that is, unmarried people, to Russia, East Germany and other socialist countries, in the late 1980s the Socialist Republic of Vietnam had to resort to sending married people (with children who had to be left in Vietnam) in order to cover the increased demand for labor in “socialist brother countries”. By sending just one spouse, there was a

high probability that this person would return to the home country and not stay in the GDR. Already at that time some parents tried to bring their children into East Germany from Vietnam (Hüwelmeier 2013a), but these efforts failed due to bureaucratic obstacles and the state control. Not only mothers, but also fathers suffered from spending years living away from their children and spouse. Furthermore, as Hoang and Yeoh mentioned, notions of masculinity change when fathers have sole responsibility for raising their children (Hoang & Yeoh 2011).

Migrants, both men and women, will continue to care for the emotional and physical well-being of their children. In particular, they try to provide money for them to receive good education and/or training (Åkesson, Carling & Drotbohm 2012: 239). In cases of female migration, financial responsibility for the children often lies with the mothers, who also send remittances for the rest of the family. Simultaneously, mothers are primary caretakers for their children. In many cases, mothers have daily contact with their children, talking on the phone or via Skype, discussing school problems, the latest fashion news or conflicts with friends.

### **Traveling Nuns**

Romanticizing and idealizing notions of motherhood in Western European societies can be traced back to the bourgeois milieu of the nineteenth century. Women in religious congregations are an excellent example of the fragility of such ideas. Female Catholic congregations in particular opened doors for many young women to live out their own ideas of professional work beyond the bourgeois perceptions of the family and without the protective hand of a father or husband. At the same time they could organize their daily lives as well as their religious lives in a community with other women. In women’s congregations that were founded around 1850, Catholic sisters who became active nuns (i.e., not contemplative), made a clear decision for professional work as a nurse, a midwife, a teacher, and against the ideal of the bourgeois housewife and mother (Hüwelmeier 2004; Meiwes 2000).

One of the most pressing responsibilities of the

“good mothers” who founded women’s congregations was to provide for their “daughters” to receive qualified training once they had bid a final farewell to their families of origin. Qualified specialists were urgently needed as home nurses and later as nurses in newly established hospitals (Meiwes 2008). As teachers and carers in nursery schools, women religious assumed the task of partly replacing biological mothers: Women working as industrial workers could thus earn a living because the sisters cared for and raised their children. This is why the Poor Handmaids of Jesus Christ (PHJC) had already migrated in the last three decades of the nineteenth century from Germany to the working-class districts of London. They followed German migrants who had found work in London, and taught their children. Other PHJC sisters lived and worked in villages in the Westerwald region, north of Frankfurt am Main, caring for children who were left alone at home during the day because their mothers had to work in the fields. The fathers left the villages to work as seasonal labor migrants (Hüwelmeier 2000) and did not return to their homes until late autumn. A considerable number of sisters became co-mothers, which thus enabled many women to contribute to the family’s livelihood as factory workers or smallholders. Still, some Catholic sisters left Europe and traveled to the United States as early as the nineteenth century.

Among the many women who migrated from Europe to the United States in the second half of the nineteenth century were thousands of Catholic nuns. I cannot go into detail here about their motivation for emigrating, how they experienced their departure or their impressions upon arriving and becoming incorporated into the host society (Hüwelmeier 2005b), as the subject of this article is constructions of motherhood in transnational settings. The theoretical question, however, is not directed at the process of migration as a unidirectional movement; instead, I would like to concentrate on recent concepts of transnational migration and maintaining contact between two or more countries (Hüwelmeier 2010, 2009a, 2009b, 2008a, 2008b; Gabaccia 2000).

Since most of the women’s congregations that

were founded in Europe in the nineteenth century still exist today, it is relevant to ask how cross-border relations have been maintained over several generations. As early as 1850 Catholic sisters left their hometowns in Europe, finding their own way in American society, which was totally foreign to them, largely without any male support. Priests and bishops were often not present at all in very remote rural areas. Male representatives of the Catholic Church, however, played a prominent role in sending the first sisters on their journey. From a gender perspective, the concept of transnational motherhood poses the question whether women religious, frequently perceived as “daughters” by female founders of the congregations, enjoyed greater independence from their “mothers” in Europe while living abroad. Recent debate and empirical research on transnationalism have shown that theories on migration that focus on assimilation and adaptation to the host society must be criticized for not adequately taking into account the everyday experiences of migrants (Levitt & Glick Schiller 2004). It has instead turned out that individuals and groups who left their home countries for either voluntary or coerced migration still participate in activities in their society of origin, whether by participating in political issues, by trading, by founding and supporting religious networks (Levitt 2007; Hüwelmeier 2011) or by maintaining regular, long-term contact with their extended networks of relatives. In any case, farewells as rituals of separation are among the emotional experiences of migrants. In the following, I will first describe the departure of the “daughters” from the female founder of the PHJC. Then I will explore how motherhood is maintained beyond national borders and discuss the tensions that may emerge between spiritual mother (the female founder), spiritual co-mothers, and “new daughters”.

### *Separation from the Spiritual Mother*

As early as 1868 the first sisters of the PHJC crossed the Atlantic to the United States, as migration from Europe to North America brought a great demand for nurses and teachers among the Ger-

man population settled there. Katharina Kasper, founder of the PHJC and referred to as “Mother”, encouraged her “children”, as she called the sisters, to build new branches in the United States. She nevertheless had a close and at the same time very responsible relationship with them. The way she personally said goodbye to her “daughters” is evidence of her emotional attachment. She even traveled with them to the port in France, from where they set sail for the United States. Eight nuns from Germany were accompanied to Le Havre (France) by the Reverend Mother, which is how she was referred to in virtually all texts from that time. It was not planned that the “children” would return. Katharina Kasper reported to the sisters in the German mother house on the departure of the eight as follows:

When we said goodbye at the port, we promised to greet them one more time at the waterfront, where they again received priestly blessings from several priests, and the sisters had to sing: Guide us through the waves. And then it went into the open sea, and the poor children were allowed to cry. But, my beloved sisters, what a moving sight it was, the great sea, the terrible waves, the quick departure of the ship. The poor sisters were out of sight. Now I too could cry and watch the ship for a long time, until we could not see it anymore...<sup>2</sup>

This letter expresses her sadness that the “children” were no longer nearby, possibly also the idea that she would never see them again. In addition, the author reveals something to her readers about her emotions, which kept her standing there watching until she could no longer see her departing daughters (Hüwelmeier 2005a). Only then did she allow her tears to flow. It was presumably embarrassing for her to cry in the presence of her “children”. This text passage is exemplary of the significance of the emotional implications of life in a transnational setting, which, as Louise Ryan remarked (Ryan 2011), has not yet been thoroughly researched.

### Cross-Border Relations

Arrival in the United States was not only characterized by new living and working conditions, but the sisters also had to learn the language of the country. Further, they had to understand a different political culture and develop a modified concept of hierarchy in their small communities. What kind of relationship did the “daughters” maintain to the “mother” in Germany? Who were their contact persons in the United States? Who made decisions? How did power relations function among women?

Maintaining the social and political order of any religious order is based on compliance with the constitutions and the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience taken (Hüwelmeier 2004). Superiors were and are appointed to monitor the upholding of the congregation, with a house superior for each local community, a regional superior for the respective region, a provincial superior for the province and at the highest level authority was exercised by the Spiritual Mother, founder of the religious congregation, and later by her successors, the General Superiors. Already in the nineteenth century, regional and provincial superiors frequently traveled back and forth in their respective “domains”, regularly visiting the scattered convents of the sisters. The chronicles show numerous references to these journeys, which sometimes lasted several days or even weeks (Hüwelmeier 2008b).

Due to the difficulty and expense of travel, transatlantic meetings were rather rare in the nineteenth century. Only on special occasions were delegations from the mother house in Germany sent to the United States. In 1872 a sister from Germany arrived as a visitor to Fort Wayne, Indiana, along with six other sisters who were to remain in the United States as “reinforcements”. As representative of the Reverend Mother the sister inspected all US branches and simultaneously assumed office as provincial superior in the United States. The incumbent provincial superior then returned to Germany. In subsequent years more and more branches were founded in the United States, thus increasing the travels of the provincial superior.

From 28th March until 10th April the Reverend Sisters Secunda accompanied by Sister Hyacintha visited the branches in Ashland and New Ulm. On 20th April the Rev. Sister Secunda traveled to Chicago .... From 1st to 12th May the Rev. Sister Secunda stayed in the branch houses of German-town, Carlyle and Trenton....<sup>3</sup>

Striking about this quote is the designation of the highest authority, the spiritual co-mother in the United States, as “Reverend Sister”. Reverend Sister is distinguished from Reverend Mother in that the former had assumed a position of power in the United States, whereas the Reverend Mother, as founder of the community in Europe, was in charge of all branches. To safeguard the power and authority of the Generalate in Europe, close contact between the US branches and the German mother house was indispensable. Transatlantic relations and the maintenance of the “German spirit” of the PHJC in the United States were guaranteed, first of all, through the “reinforcements” sent from Germany. But German sisters in the United States also paid visits to Germany. Although these trips were few and far between, they helped create and maintain a transnational consciousness, strengthening the community’s collective identity.

On 19th May the Reverend Sister Secunda, together with Sisters Hyacintha, Suitberta and Anastasia, took a trip to visit the beloved mother house in Dernbach. After a pleasant crossing the sisters were greeted upon their arrival at the mother house with heartfelt love and joy by the Reverend Mother and the reverend assistants and sisters and showered with all possible attention. They were most joyous to find the Reverend Mother even healthier and heartier than her age and previous strenuous efforts would have let them anticipate. After the spiritual exercises and the holding of the general chapter, the sisters returned to America. Sister Suitberta remained according to her wishes in Europe, and in turn three novices were sent with the others to America. On 2nd August the sisters arrived safe and sound back at the provin-

cial mother house in Fort Wayne, where they were most cordially received by the sisters.<sup>4</sup>

This passage illustrates that transnational connections were not unidirectional, but encompassed two or more countries. In the nineteenth century sisters in women’s congregations in Germany established not only transatlantic meetings and contact, but in addition also built up branches in the Netherlands and England.

#### *When “Daughters” Leave*

Not all “daughters” living in the United States wanted to uphold the “German spirit” of the community. Some strove to break off from the German mother house and found their own community. One German provincial superior was called back to Germany in the early 1880s because she had made some decisions independently, without the approval of the Mother (Hüwelmeier 2005a). In some cases the leadership took drastic measures and dismissed some sisters, although they had been members of the community for many years.

In 1889 we experienced a very regrettable incident, namely, the necessity to dismiss a sister who had already been a member of the congregation for eighteen years. After Sister Klara had already often caused disturbances of the peace, conducted herself improperly towards her Mother Superior and finally had tried to talk other sisters into leaving the congregation for the purpose of founding a new community, the Reverend Sister Secunda thought it would be best in avoiding any greater damage to present the case to the Most Reverend Bishop. He decided that Sister Klara had to be dismissed, which then happened on 6th March.<sup>5</sup>

The text passage indicates that in some cases the “Father”, represented in the figure of the bishop, was consulted. This was not always the case, as there were times when gender conflicts beyond borders, between spiritual mothers and fathers – that is, between women as founders of congregations and bishops – seemed insurmountable (Hüwelmeier



2005a). In addition to cross-border gender conflicts between “parents” there was also tension among German sisters in the United States. Some of them feared that the young American sisters who joined the congregation would deviate from the “German” course and, with support of the provincial superior, establish a separate community in the United States. This can ultimately be referred to as transnational “sibling conflicts” or generational conflicts.

### *Communication beyond Borders*

Communication between parents and their children living far apart from each other is “intimately linked with communication technologies” (Carling, Menjivar & Schmalzbauer 2012: 204). This also applies to transnational sisters and their “mothers”. In the nineteenth century relationships were kept up beyond borders especially by letter writing and later via telegrams. Although the “Mother”, General Superior of the PHJC, could not visit the branches in the United States for health reasons, she traveled to America several times per day in her prayers. These spiritual journeys strengthened the bonds between her and her “daughters”. In the letters that she sent to the United States, she expressed her regrets that she could not be there in person, but at the same time she assured her “children” that she was always thinking about them. She urged them to obey the rules, that is, the constitutions, and to remain good *Handmaids of Jesus Christ*.

Although we are physically separated, through our sacred profession and the spirit of the poor handmaids of Jesus Christ we are very closely united with one another, so that no one can speak of a separation due to the ocean.<sup>6</sup>

Through her letters she maintained not only continuous contact, but also attempted to create a united community by emphasizing the collectivity and a shared consciousness. Even if the founder of the women’s congregation was not able personally to get to know the United States, she, like her “children”, was part of a “transnational social field” (Levitt & Glick Schiller 2004), thus belonging to the large

group of people whose lives are influenced by the migration of people close to them and by the upholding of social relations and emotional ties to those living far away.

Tension arose time and again over decades between German general superiors and American provincial superiors. But the geographic distance between the United States and Europe was too great for the German Generalate to be able to exert any sustained influence on the “daughters” in the United States over several generations and an extended period of time. German-American sisters, especially since the First World War and the start of anti-German sentiments in the United States, led relatively independent lives on the other side of the ocean. Not until the 1960s did transatlantic relations experience a kind of revival.

### **“The Daughters Have Grown Up”**

After the Second Vatican Council (1962–65) introduced the reform process in the Catholic Church, cautious protest initially emerged in the American provinces with regard to the dominance of the German mother house. For decades, as I discovered during my ethnographic fieldwork with American sisters, attempts were made again and again to contain the German influence. After 1965 the major discussion on the issue of the habit and civilian dress was sparked in many religious congregations in the United States, whereas in Germany the debate was conducted on the quiet. American and also Dutch sisters told me that they have long since lived in their home countries wearing civilian clothing and without a habit, although this was not permitted by the German General Superior (who into the 1970s was still referred to as “Mother”). When they traveled to Germany, however, to visit the Reverend Mother and participate in conferences of the community, they brought their habit with them and changed clothes in the aeroplane. They would put on their headpiece as soon as they arrived at the mother house.

When in the course of my fieldwork in the 1990s I asked a superior in Germany why the term “Mother” was abandoned in the 1970s, she explained not without pride that “the daughters have grown up”. In her

view it was no longer appropriate for superiors to treat adult women in a patronizing manner. Many sisters had entered the congregation in the 1950s and around the period of Vatican II with great hopes for change in the Catholic Church and thus also in women's congregations. They wanted to articulate and discuss their own ideas of living together in a religious community. In this article I cannot go into the diversity of processes of democratization in many convents, but the debate on the habit was just a small part of it (Hüwelmeier 2004).

The arrival of Indian sisters in Germany between 1963 and 1970, traveling in several cohorts, had a far more sustained influence. Most of their German peers referred to them as "children" who needed protection, as young women who should not be overburdened or given any responsibility whatsoever. After the Indian sisters had lived and worked in Germany for more than ten years, they returned to India to found new branches. They did not travel alone, however, but were accompanied by a German "mother" who took care of all the arrangements, especially maintaining contact with the German mother house. In the 1970s that was not an easy matter. Sister Maria, as I call her here, was appointed a Superior by the Generalate; she was not elected by the Indian sisters. In Bangalore, India, she purchased real estate with the financial backing of the German mother house, collected donations and had a large building built that accommodated all the sisters in India. As "mother" she felt responsible for the well-being of the Indian sisters as well as for the growth of the community in India. Many new convents were opened between 1970 and 2000 throughout India. Indian sisters built schools, orphanages, boarding schools and specialized tuberculosis hospitals. In particular they actively supported women's and children's rights.

Since the 1990s the Indian sisters have become increasingly self-confident, but even many years after returning to India they did not become independent. They still relied on financial support from the German mother house and Sister Maria still held a leadership position, watching over the hygiene regulations in the main convent, and disapproving

of the Indian sisters' eating with their hands. German meals were always cooked especially for her. Even though she was very outspoken regarding the affairs of the PHJC in India, Indian sisters imagined themselves not as "daughters", but as independent women who were treated patronizingly now and then. After prolonged debate over many years within the entire community of the congregation, Indian sisters were ultimately granted greater independence from the mother house in Germany. In 2000 they founded their own "province". In other words, since that time they elect their own leadership teams, but like all the other provinces they continue to be under the auspices of the Generalate, which has meanwhile become international, with its headquarters in Germany. After all, the Indian daughters, too, have grown up.

### **Conclusion: Transnationalization of Convent Life**

The call of Vatican II to renew or "modernize" the Catholic Church contributed in many women's congregations to a new focus in their social work, namely to a greater involvement in so-called developing countries. Many of the communities established in Europe in the nineteenth century had not perceived themselves as a missionary order. However, this changed after Vatican II, when a number of women's congregations invited women from Asia, Africa and Latin America to join their communities.

In the following decades the multi-ethnic presence contributed to a transformation of everyday life in the convents, to a new orientation in the work of the sisters and generally to a process that I have referred to as the *transnationalization of convent life* (Hüwelmeier 2013b). With that I mean the creation and maintenance of social and religious networks beyond geographic and cultural borders. Crossing cultural spaces generates new mobilities and greatly influences the traveling activities of sisters, many of whom had previously never been to Asia or Africa. Finally, the transnationalization of convent life has contributed to the abandonment of the concept of the mother. Processes of breaking down hierarchies can be observed in many convents and processes



of democratization in women's congregations, in which particularly women from non-European societies are granted an equal voice, making the concept of the mother superfluous and at the same time strengthening the idea of sisterhood.

Presently, more and more convents are made up of women from diverse ethnic, national and linguistic backgrounds. In India, small communities are consciously mixed with sisters of different ages, languages, and countries of origin. These ways of living together, according to sisters, contribute to better mutual understanding. Ultimately the sisters create what they refer to as "lived internationalism". For these reasons they no longer need spiritual mothers, since they have all grown up.

The biological parents of Catholic sisters have recently received increased attention. If a mother or father is sick or dying, the sisters are encouraged by the leadership team to travel to their hometowns, also for extended periods of time. Whereas a hundred and fifty years ago nuns either broke off contact with their parents entirely or reduced it to a minimum, sisters now assume that the emotional contact to biological parents and siblings is generally beneficial and positive for convent life. Sisters from India working in Germany regularly spend their holidays in India in order to visit their mother, father, and other relatives. In this way they do not differ at all from many women in transnational families who, depending on their financial options, take trips to their places of origin to care for their sick or aging parents.

## Notes

- 1 This article is based on multi-sited fieldwork in a transnational women's congregation. Empirical research for the Transnational Religion project was conducted between 2000 and 2005, financed by the German Research Foundation (DFG, Transnational Religious Networks, HU 1019/2-1 and HU 1019/2-2). Based on historical documents from various archives and anthropological fieldwork in convents in Germany, the Netherlands, England, the United States and India, I examined the creation and maintenance of cross-border relations in the past and present.
- 2 Letter by Katharina Kasper of 15 August 1868. Archives of the PHJC mother house in Dernbach, Westerwald. In: Gottfriedis Amend, ADJC 2001, 73.

- 3 Chronicle of the American province. Archives of the ADJC (PHJC), Dernbach mother house, entry: 1889.
- 4 Chronicle of the American province. Archives of the ADJC (PHJC), Dernbach mother house, entry: 1889.
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- 6 Letter by Katharina Kasper of 17 December 1887. In: Gottfriedis Amend, ADJC 2001, 389.

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