

Love, Rehabilitation, and Professionalization: The Women's Correctional House in Santiago under the Good Shepherd Congregation (1962-1996)

Amor, rehabilitación, y profesionalización. La Casa
Correccional de Mujeres en Santiago de Chile bajo
la Congregación del Buen Pastor (1962-1996)

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Abstract: This article analyses rehabilitation in the Women's Correctional House in Santiago, Chile, under the administration of the Good Shepherd congregation. It first profiles the women –prisoners, guards, and nuns– who populated the prison between its move to a new site in 1962 and the handover of the prison to the state prison service in 1996. It then tracks the sisters' rehabilitation as an earthly, motherly love designed to lead prisoners to God's redemptive love. Finally, the paper reveals how the nuns adapted this insular nineteenth-century "mission of love" to a change in prisoner profile and the professionalization of prison service staff in the second half of the twentieth century by incorporating external and scientific expertise into the project to evangelize prisoners.

Keywords: Good Shepherd; Women's prison; Rehabilitation; Professionalization; Santiago de Chile.

Resumen: Este artículo analiza la rehabilitación en la Casa Correccional de Mujeres en Santiago de Chile, bajo la administración de la congregación del Buen Pastor. Describe a las mujeres –las prisioneras, las guardias y las monjas– que habitaron la cárcel entre el traslado

a un nuevo sitio en 1962 y la entrega del sitio al servicio estatal en 1996. Luego, rastrea la rehabilitación de las hermanas como un amor terrenal y maternal diseñado para guiar a las prisioneras al amor de Dios. Finalmente, el artículo revela cómo las monjas adaptaron esta “misión de amor” del siglo XIX al cambio en el perfil de las prisioneras y a la profesionalización del personal penitenciario en la segunda mitad del siglo XX, incorporando experiencia externa al proyecto de evangelización de las prisioneras.

Palabras claves: Buen Pastor; Cárcel de mujeres; Rehabilitación; Profesionalización; Santiago de Chile.

In 1986 Sister Matilde Calad of the Good Shepherd Congregation assumed the role of mother superior at the Santiago Female Counselling Center (*Centro de Orientación Femenino*, or COF), previously known as the Women’s Correctional House, and simply referred to as the “correctional” (*correccional*) by prisoners. Sister Matilde started in the *correccional* when it was in Lira Street, and she moved with it in 1962 to its new site in Vicuña Mackenna Avenue. In previewing her tenure in the 1980s, she looked back to the nineteenth century: “The French sisters who came to found the mission in Chile used to say: Oh Chile, my mission of love. Analyzing my own religious life and my preaching, I have said: the C.O.F. is the mission of my love”.¹ This traditional mission persisted during a period of upheaval in the Vicuña Mackenna *correccional* from 1962 until the sisters handed over the administration of the prison to *Gendarmería*, the state prison service, in 1996. Prison guards were trained by the prison service and their presence in the prison expanded. Prisoner demographics shifted, and the prison population grew significantly. This paper examines the evolution of the congregation’s thinking on rehabilitation and its application inside the Santiago *correccional*. It reveals how the sisters adapted to the shifting realities of Chilean female criminality and the professionalization of prison staff by incorporating external technical and scientific expertise into their “mission of love”.

The Good Shepherd Congregation was founded in France in 1835, and it administered the Santiago Women’s Correctional House from 1864. Charitable institutions directed by elite women had tended to the capital’s poor, but as the number of destitute women increased, the government invited religious groups to run the city’s hospitals, orphanages, and Correctional House (Zárate 1996, 86). The house found a stable home in Lira Street in the late nineteenth century. By the 1950s, however, the building had been enveloped by the expanding city center. The congregation’s own history described it as too urban and noisy for prisoners to distance themselves from the “echoes of their past” (Vergara 1994, 128). In 1962 the *correccional* moved to a more spacious site on Vicuña Mackenna Avenue on the semi-rural, southern outskirts of Santiago (Vergara 1994, 128-129), but by 1996 it was overcrowded and hemmed in by the sprawling city. The Vicuña Mackenna *correccional* under the Good Shepherd congregation is not part of prison history.

¹ “Chile es mi segunda patria” (1986, 7).

Prison historiography has linked the nineteenth-century invention of the penitentiary in Europe and the United States with the rise of rationalism, science, and positivist criminology. Prisons that moved away from physical punishment and public humiliation towards the humane treatment and reformation of prisoners were symbols of progress within broader modernizing projects. This model was imported into Latin America, but its adoption was slow, uneven, restrained by a lack of resources, and selective to accommodate local elites' priorities and prejudices. Chile adopted and adapted the Auburn model, and reformers championed a regime of isolation, silence, and work, as well as religious instruction. In the first half of the twentieth century, Chilean criminologists, legal experts, and legislators increasingly sought the cause of criminality in social and biological factors. At the same time, the state built and revised regulatory frameworks for the administration of prisons, and it shifted to the Irish model.² Chile's correctional houses for women were not part of these reforms.

Prison history did not, initially at least, address female incarceration (Rafter 1985). In recent decades, however, historians have revealed the gendered constructions of female crime, punishment, and rehabilitation. Parallel to modernizing penal projects of the nineteenth century, women prisoners in Europe and the United States were held in state institutions shaped by religious thinking or facilities run by religious groups (Black 2023). In Latin America, national governments—first in Chile and later throughout the region—handed control of women's prisons to the Good Shepherd Congregation in the second half of the nineteenth century.³ These prisons were excluded from penal reform because: female criminals were few in number and not seen as a threat; women were not a potential source of industrial labor; states lacked funds, and nuns were a cheap option; states lacked trained female prison personnel; female crimes were transgressions of female gender roles, and rehabilitation realigned female behavior with those roles; and, most fundamentally, female criminality was seen as a moral failing to be corrected via religion.⁴ Women in Good Shepherd houses followed a regime of prayer, religious instruction, basic education, and manual, domestic labor, such as sewing, embroidering, and washing clothes.⁵ Histories of these prisons identify a central and at times hostile contest between proponents of rational, positivist, modern penal theories and adherents to religious visions of rehabilitation. They highlight reformers' critiques of the congregation and the nuns' opposition to science and resistance to outside interference.⁶

² Salvatore and Aguirre (1996 and 2017); Cavieres (1995); León (1996); León (2019, 499-515).

³ The congregation ran prisons in Chile (1865-1996), Peru (1871-1952), Uruguay (1889-1989), Argentina (1890-1970s), and Colombia (1890-1975).

⁴ Aguirre (2003); Boutron and Constant (2013); Caimari (1997, 185-191 and 197; 2007); Guala (2016, 56); Guy (2011, 371); Salvatore and Aguirre (2017, 18-21); Sapriza (2016, 33-34; 2019); Zárate (1996, 86).

⁵ Aguirre (2003); Caimari (1997, 191-192; 2007); Garcia (2015, 30-33); Guala (2016, 56); Guy (2011, 371-373); Sapriza (2016, 44-45).

⁶ Aguirre (2003); Caimari (1997, 194 and 205; 2007, 192); Gibson (2009, 34); Guy (2011, 370); Sapriza (2016, 45-47).

They also focus on the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth, despite the congregation running prisons well into the second half of the twentieth century.⁷ This paper extends the historiography of female incarceration in the region into the late twentieth century, and it challenges the narrative of competition between science and religion in the administration of women's prisons.

The lack of interest in the Vicuña Mackenna *correccional* is due to the focus in recent Chilean history on the military dictatorship (1973-1990) and political repression, but it also reflects the lack of archival sources. In her history of the congregation in Chile Sister María Cristina Vergara noted that written records were missing, incomplete, or never made in the first place. She estimated that barely half of the congregation's work had left a written trace, and her history was instead based on oral traditions and second-hand memories (Vergara 1994, 14). In 2007 the congregation established an archive, but it had handed over its documentation relating to the *correccional* to *Gendarmería* in the 1990s.⁸ The documents held in the Women's Prison are not available for review, not stored correctly, or have been lost or destroyed.⁹ This paper draws on isolated sources in the Good Shepherd Archive, as well as prison service publications, undergraduate theses from the period, and interviews with former *Gendarmería* employees and a former warden of the COF. The analysis of these sources offers a counterpoint to the narrative of competition between science and religion.¹⁰

The first section of the paper describes the organization of spaces inside the *correccional*, the women who passed through them, the crimes they committed, the women who guarded them, and the nuns who managed the prison. It also identifies which prisoners were targets of the nuns' rehabilitation. The second section examines the congregation's timeless vision of rehabilitation as a maternal love that allowed "fallen women" to find their way to Christ's redemptive love. The third section identifies in the *correccional* a rehabilitative love that was open, collaborative, and rooted in its context. The article argues that this rehabilitation emerged as a response to a shift in prisoner profile and population as well as the increased presence and professionalism

⁷ For Chile: Zárate (1996); Correa (2005). For Peru: Aguirre (2003); Boutron and Constant (2013). For Argentina: Caimari (1997 and 2007). For Colombia: García (2015). Sapriza (2019) discusses the 1989 handover in Uruguay. Caimari (2007) explains the handover in 1970s Argentina as due to the influx of political prisoners, but her analysis focusses on earlier decades.

⁸ Conversation with head of the archive, Sister Eliana Letelier, in San Felipe, 13 May 2019.

⁹ Fuentes and Huenqueo (2011). A 2015 fire in the inventory section of the prison destroyed documentation (response to request for information AK006T0028873 via Chile's transparency laws, 3 March 2024).

¹⁰ The binary narrative has been challenged elsewhere. In the context of the modern Danish prison, Scharff Smith (2004) argues that from the late nineteenth century rationality and religion were in fact intertwined. Similarly, in her study on female incarceration in Ireland (1922-1964), Black (2023) offers a "counterpoint" to the narrative that religion gave way to "secularism, science, to technocrats, and eventually to 'evidence'," highlighting the role of religion in as both private faith and institutional coercion.

of *Gendarmería* staff in the prison.¹¹ While appearing contradictory, the two loves co-existed. The nuns defended their “mission of love”, not by rejecting outside thinking and expertise, but by incorporating them into their project of rehabilitation as evangelization.

THE *CORRECCIONAL*

The *correccional* was divided into three main sections: one for convicted women (*condenadas*), one for women on trial, and the daily patio. In 1964 the Prison Service—successor to the Prison Surveillance Service (1933-1960) and precursor to *Gendarmería* (from 1975)—described the prisoners in the daily patio as women arrested for drunkenness or vagrancy. In 1960 the *correccional* received 3,005 “vagrants”, including a high number of repeat offenders (1964, 306). In 1967 law student Berenice Santander noted that the patio housed vagrants, drunks, prostitutes, as well as women awaiting trial and those convicted of crimes. The prison had an underground solitary confinement cell, but dangerous and poorly behaved prisoners from other sections were also punished by being transferred to the patio, where the conditions, treatment, and food were “much worse” (Santander 1967, 25-29, 35, 64).¹² The patio was one large space with seventy beds, and a room to the side with another five. In the adjoining drunks’ patio, women shared beds that were exposed to the elements. Also listed in the “drunks’ ledger” were women arrested for “offending morality” (*ofensas*), usually sex workers (Santander 1967, 25-29, 37-40). Subsequent descriptions of the prison from the 1970s do not make a distinction between the daily patio and the drunks’ patio, and they instead refer to a single “detainees” or “offending morality” section that held women arrested for “suspicious behavior”, drunkenness, *ofensas*, or serving sentences of less than thirty days (Laplace 1973; Altimiras *et al.* 1978, 93). In 1970 nearly a third (902) of the women who entered the prison (3,191) were detained for *ofensas* and forty percent had their profession listed as “prostitute”. The next most represented crimes were drunkenness (507), theft (503), and vagrancy (489).¹³ In 2019 Sister María Paz Venegas—warden between 1978 and 1982 and again from 1991 to 1994—recalled a weekly rhythm to the patio. Most detainees were arrested for drunkenness or *ofensas* on Friday or Saturday. In the prison they were bathed and given coffee or milk, and

¹¹ The emerging historiography of professional women in Latin America does not address prison workers (Correa and Zárate 2017; Queirolo and Zárate 2020).

¹² Political prisoners in early 1974 described the prison as “filthy and full of flies and fleas” and the meals as “hot water with a piece of bread in the morning, boiled noodles at noon and hot water at tea time” (WILPF 1974, 6). For references to a punishment or solitary cell see: Geel (2000, 24); Laplace (1973); and WILPF (1974, 6).

¹³ “El hombre supera en el delito a la mujer” (1971, 22). Around the same time, journalists wrote that the majority of women in the prison were detained for prostitution, vagrancy, and begging (“Cárcel de mujeres” 1971, 25).

after a few days they appeared before a court, paid a fine, and were released. Many returned the following week.¹⁴ In 1986 Sister María Paz' successor, Sister María José Silva (1982-1986), described the patio as holding the overflow from other sections as well as a floating population detained in raids, or for drunkenness or other minor offenses. In the maximum five-day stay, María José noted, the nuns could not do much beyond enforcing basic sanitary measures.¹⁵ The work of rehabilitating prisoners was instead done in the trial and *condenadas* sections.

The trial section housed women awaiting trial or serving sentences of up to three years (Santander 1967, 25-29, 35 and 37). These women were typically charged with, or convicted of, "crimes against property". In 1984 Mother María José highlighted theft, robbery, forging official documents, and "abortive practices".¹⁶ The turnover in this section followed a roughly monthly cycle of arrest, release and –particularly among professional thieves– re-arrest.¹⁷ The women slept in a single seventy-bed dormitory, where the only available strategy to avoid "homosexuality" was moving prisoners from one bed to another. Homosexuality was, insisted Santander in 1967, a "problem" throughout the prison. She also noted that delinquent and at-risk girls were also held in the trial section to avoid contact with vagrants, suspicious women and prostitutes in the daily patio (1967, 25-29, 35-37, and 58).

In 1961 Mother María Clotilde de Jesús' insisted: "This penal establishment does not receive minors in a delinquent state, and accordingly only receives those [minors] who must serve a sentence. It is in no way a welfare institution".¹⁸ Nevertheless in the late 1960s, overflow from the Minors' House was sent to the *correccional* (Santander 1967, 36). The Minors' House received cases from the capital's courts of "criminal" girls but also, and mostly, girls in "irregular situations" and girls in need of protection (Bravo *et al.* 1970, 7-60). Santander wrote of a girl who entered the *correccional* at fourteen years of age after running away from home and was still there two years later, and girls detained in brothels and left in the prison after the madams charged with "corrupting" them had bought their own freedom (1967, 36-37). Statistics for 1970 included 103 minors.¹⁹

¹⁴ Interview with María Paz Venegas, 7 November 2019, in the Congregation Buen Pastor, Santiago. Cooper wrote of 965 women sent to the COF for "offending morality" or "prostitution" in 1981 and staying four or five days (1982, 255).

¹⁵ "El Buen Pastor y su rebaño" (1984, 20 and 22). See also Prison Service (1964, 306-307).

¹⁶ "El Buen Pastor y su rebaño" (1984, 20). Daniel Martorell, who was head of Legal Assistance in the COF from 1989 to 1996, gave a similar list of common crimes: theft, shoplifting, and, to a lesser extent, abortion (interview, 18 March 2022, via Zoom).

¹⁷ Interview with Camila Chaparro (social assistant at the *correccional* from 1962 to 1977), 21 April 2022, in the offices of the Círculo de Funcionarios de Gendarmería en Retiro (CIRGENCHI); interview with Selva Alcarraz (guard at the *correccional* from 1973 to perhaps 1977; Selva was unsure when she transferred to a male prison), 25 May 2022, in the offices of the CIRGENCHI; interview with Daniel Martorell, 18 March 2022, via Zoom.

¹⁸ The Archive of the Good Shepherd Congregation (AGSC), Folder 207-1, 'Ref: Da respuesta acerca de ingresos de menores a este establecimiento penal', 18 April 1961.

¹⁹ "El hombre supera" (1971, 22).

The congregation separated girls from the general population in 1979 with the creation of a Minors' Section for sixteen to eighteen-year-olds sentenced to five years or more. Sister María Paz recalled this separation as one of her proudest achievements, and she clarified that the COF only received minors convicted of a crime. In the mid 1980s, however, amid a deep economic crisis, the congregation had a contract with the National Minors' Service to house "minors in irregular situations" in the COF.²⁰

Prisoners with infant children and those who gave birth in prison were housed in the "children's pavilion" together with their children (Santander 1967, 37). The women remained there until their infants reached the fluctuating maximum age of one, two, four or six years.²¹ The children's pavilion housed fifteen women and nineteen children during Santander's 1967 visit. Most of the children were between two and five years of age, but the oldest were nine or ten. The older children attended classes with adult prisoners, exposing them, Santander lamented, to "habitual criminals, homosexuals, perverts, etc." (36 and 50). In 1976 the congregation set up a kindergarten inside the prison for both guards' and prisoners' children. In 1983 the kindergarten catered to sixty children, and in 1988 to twenty-eight, eleven of prisoners and seventeen of employees.²²

The *condenadas* were typically sentenced to lengthy terms for violent crimes. Sociologist Doris Cooper found that in 1981 the most common crime among the eighty-nine prisoners held in four provincial COFs and the Santiago COF was parricide (37.9%). Parricide, theft (9.2%), abortion (8%), and homicide (8%) accounted for nearly two thirds of all convictions among *condenadas* (1982, 153).²³ Seventy-five—nearly 90%—of the women were held in the Santiago COF, and around two thirds of these prisoners had been living outside the province of Santiago at the time of their arrest (Cooper 1982, 153). A 1928 law ensured that women from the provinces with long sentences served their time in Santiago. Reflecting on her tenure as warden in 1986, María José Silva spoke of her concerns about the "many inmates from the provinces sentenced to very long prison terms, separated from their family, some of them without having had access to a defense and sometimes even without a fixed sentence, leaving behind small children they would not see again". She described these women as "mild-mannered", "uncomplaining", and "resigned",²⁴ and she felt that they were over-represented due to a lack of legal representation and punitive judges in the regions, especially in the south.²⁵ In 2022 former social assistant Camila Chaparro (1962-1977) similarly re-

²⁰ AGSC, Document 200-8-1, 'Res. Extenta No. 0121', 17 February 1984.

²¹ Interview with Camila Chaparro, 21 April 2022, in the offices of the CIRGENCHI; interview with Selva Alcarraz, 25 May 2022, in the offices of the CIRGENCHI; interview with María Paz Venegas, 7 November 2019, in the Congregation Buen Pastor, Santiago; Geel 2000, 32; "En el C.O.F. de Santiago" (1983, 20); Altimiras *et al.* (1978, 3).

²² "En el C.O.F. de Santiago" (1983, 19-20); "Donación de juguetes" (1988, 5).

²³ In Soto's 1982 sample of sixty-eight prisoners in the Santiago COF thirty were convicted of parricide or infanticide (1986, 3 and 15).

²⁴ "Positivo balance" (1986, 34).

²⁵ "El Buen Pastor y su rebaño" (1984, 20-21).

called the perception at the time that the harsh sentences in the south were the result of prisoners' inability to bribe the court clerk, either in cash or livestock. She described the *condenadas* as "humble", "disciplined", "simple", "normal people", and she said that many had similar stories: they had an alcoholic, abusive or unemployed husband, they worked inside and outside the home to make ends meet, they fell in love with a seasonal worker, and they conspired with their lovers to kill their husbands.²⁶ From the mid 1980s, however, the "traditional" demographics of the COF shifted.

Descriptions from 1950, 1964 and 1967 list the prison population as 270 prisoners.²⁷ During 1970 more than three thousand women entered the *correccional* but at any one moment the prison held an average of 233 women.²⁸ In 1977 the population was 242 prisoners across all sections (Altimiras *et al.* 1978, 93).²⁹ In 1984 Sister María José Silva spoke of a rising average population of 280 prisoners plus up to one hundred that spent only days in the prison. This transitory population meant the divisions between sections routinely broke down, and detainees were housed with women awaiting trial and *condenadas*.³⁰ *Gendarmería* figures for all of Chile in 1986 list 247 *condenadas* and 427 women on trial. These numbers were presented in a 1997 article that established a significant growth in the female prison population, which it dated from 1986. In the subsequent decade, the male prison population remained stable, but the female prison population more than doubled. This increase was driven by crimes related to drugs, particularly in the capital and the northern regions. By the time the congregation handed over the now overpopulated prison, the typical prisoner was not a "mild" and "uncomplaining" murderer from the south, but a poorly educated, young mother from Santiago or the far north convicted of drug trafficking (UNICRIM 1997).

The guards inside the *correccional* were female.³¹ Writer María Carolina Geel, who served a sentence at Lira Street for killing her lover, described how a prison abortion in the mid 1950s after a prisoner had become pregnant to a guard ushered in a ban on men from entering the prison, except if needed to break up fights (2000, 57-58). This incident may or may not have been the catalyst for the policy, but at Vicuña Mackenna male guards were restricted to patrolling the perimeter and women guarded the prisoners. The Prison Service began to train women guards from around the time the *correccional* moved to Vicuña Mackenna Avenue, and over subsequent decades the number of female staff grew significantly. By 1996 *Gendarmería* personnel vastly outnumbered the nuns.

The nuns lived in the prison. Guards escorted prisoners to courthouses, often on public transport,³² social assistants ran errands outside the prison, and guards and

²⁶ Interview with Camila Chaparro, 21 April 2022, in the offices of the CIRGENCHI.

²⁷ Correa (2005, 26); Servicio de Prisiones (1964, 298); and Santander (1967, 61).

²⁸ "El hombre supera en el delito a la mujer" (1971, 22); "Cárcel de mujeres" (1971, 30).

²⁹ Cooper wrote of 75 *condenadas* (1982, 255). Soto wrote of 90 in 1982 (1986, 3 and 15).

³⁰ "El Buen Pastor y su rebaño" (1984, 20-22).

³¹ Santander (1967, 25-26); "Cárcel de mujeres" (1971, 24); Laplace (1973).

³² Interview with Selva Alcarraz, 25 May 2022, in the offices of the CIRGENCHI; "Gendarmería me ayudó a ser mujer" (2001, 58).

social assistants took prisoners on daytrips, but the sisters rarely left the *correccional*.³³ Their days began before sunrise and ended in the late hours of the night.³⁴ The nuns in charge of the different sections slept in those sections, while others had accommodation near the entrance.³⁵ Among Camila's strongest impressions of her time at the *correccional* were the "many Colombian nuns".³⁶ Biographical details are scarce, but at least two wardens at Vicuña MacKenna –Sisters Matilde Calad and María Paz Venegas– were Colombian. Both women were recruited as teenagers in the 1950s to fill the shortfall of nuns in Chile.³⁷ By the mid-1980s, however, the local congregation again faced a shortfall. The thirteen nuns in the prison in 1978 were fewer than the eighteen in 1967 and the mid 1940s.³⁸ In 1981 the congregation consolidated its three provinces in Chile into one, because "there [was] increasingly not enough personnel" to maintain three separate administrative units (Vergara 1994, 225). The transfer of the Santiago COF would take another decade, but in 1984 warden María José Silva explained that all eleven COFs would slowly be handed over, because "there was a period in which we had few women joining the congregation and... a job poorly done, is better left for someone else".³⁹ Between 1962 and 1996, however, and parallel to significant changes taking place in the prison, the congregation maintained its mission of love.

MATERNAL, EARTHLY LOVE, AND REDEMPTION

In a 1985 manual that codified its approach to rehabilitation in the COF, the congregation gave a singular diagnosis of the women it served: "Women in irregular situations are always victims of a lack of love." "Being the Good News" for these women meant:

showing them that there are people who love them [...], and that that love comes from the one who is capable of curing all hurt and healing all wounds.
And it means leading them, through love, to Him, so that they can find the measure of their unmet desires in the immeasurable love of CHRIST.

³³ Interview with Camila Chaparro, 21 April 2022, in the offices of CIRGENCHI.

³⁴ Interview with Daniel Martorell, 18 March 2022, via Zoom; Geel (2000, 63).

³⁵ Interview with Camila Chaparro, 21 April 2022, in the offices of CIRGENCHI; Santander (1967, 25-26).

³⁶ Interview with Camila Chaparro, 21 April 2022, in the offices of CIRGENCHI.

³⁷ "Perfil de un funcionario" (1981b); "Chile es mi segunda patria" (1986). Vergara also profiles Colombian Ana María Quiroz who arrived in 1952 as a teenager (Vergara 1994, 241-244). In the twenty-first century, this 1950s generation was prominent among the congregation's elders, see the magazine *Encuentro*: "Festejando y dialogando" (2018); "Celebración del día de Colombia en Talca" (2021); "Momentos navideños" (2009); "Una visita del país cafetero" (2016); "Estos dos acontecimientos" (2019); "El domingo 13 de marzo se celebró" (2022).

³⁸ Acción Católica Chilena (1946, 277); Santander (1967, 26); Altimiras *et al.* (1978, 93).

³⁹ "El Buen Pastor y su rebaño" (1984, 21).

Simply giving them our love and ‘maternal’ compassion, would be to minimize the grandeur of the mystery of Salvation (Congregación del Buen Pastor 1985, 22).

The reference to women in “irregular situations” is part of a lengthy description of the congregation’s tradition of tending to society’s “lost sheep”, “bitter” women, “the most unfortunate, the most abandoned, the most despised people”. The document eventually links this image of the “fallen woman” and “the mission for which the Congregation was founded” in the nineteenth century to its “work and presence [...] in penal institutions” in Chile (23-27). The nuns’ mission in the *correccional* was to rehabilitate prisoners by bringing them to Christ’s mysterious, merciful, and redemptive love via their own earthly, maternal love (8).

The manual includes a list of “criteria” for rehabilitation developed by the congregation’s founder Mary Euphrasia Pelletier. The sisters are instructed to win hearts with kindness, to “welcome with open arms the neediest, the most abandoned people” and to love them. The nuns’ “simple and accepting manners [...] must reveal the serenity of their hearts”, and the women in their care should be able to “read peace and meekness in [their] countenance”. The sisters’ lips should be “quick to smile and speak words of charity and understanding that bring peace to those who hear them”. Before speaking to the prisoners about spiritual matters, however, the nuns should ensure their material needs are met. They must not give the “young women cold or poorly prepared food”, nor divide “into three the bread of one”, and they must make sure the women are clean and well dressed and that the house is in “perfect order”. If they were to overemphasize preaching, the women would “get fed up, then it’s over”. More important than words was being a good and constant example and spending time among the women (8-11).

Geel’s description of her incarceration in the mid 1950s recalls the love outlined by Pelletier a century earlier. Geel served her time in the boarding house of the Lira Street prison, where prisoners of means could pay for better conditions.⁴⁰ Amid the shock of finding herself in prison, Geel became aware of the “easy closeness” of Mother Anunciación:

I began to sense her like a white being; after that moment, the tumultuous roar that had made my soul cower disappeared. Knowing someone had never felt so quiet, so calm, so simple. And one day after an endless night, in which unhappiness grew over time and death, she leaned down to talk to me.

And for the first time I saw her smile.

Nothing can come as close to the incalculable feeling of light. And so it was that the rigidity that was left behind by that horrible night, that was in me, from my limbs to the root of my thinking, and the watchfulness of my heart that defended itself, alone, like a small animal, gave way to the mysterious consolation of one of the most perfect smiles that I had seen in all my life (2000, 40).

⁴⁰ Santander writes that the boarding house was eliminated in 1963, but she also refers to cells for “boarders” in 1967 (27, 35, and 40). Laplace (1973) describes rooms for prisoners who could pay for privacy, better food, and daily visits.

Day after day, the nun prayed for Geel, until one night, Geel kneeled and joined her: “she was praying and thinking about God; I quietly followed her lead and thought about how grateful I was to her” (2000, 40-41). Geel then prayed with her every night and searched for God. She did not find Him, but she found a sense of peace (2000, 41-42 and 53).

In 1981 Mother María Paz told the *Gendarmería* magazine that her primary concern was rehabilitation, which should be “like a mother’s love”, a mother who was “always alert, watches over her children, even when they do not notice”. She also echoed Pelletier when she cited John Paul II’s assertion that words can move people, but examples stay with people.⁴¹ Geel wrote of the nuns’ mere presence as being able to inspire respect in the prisoners (2000, 63-64), and decades later Daniel Martorell –head of the COF legal service from 1989 to 1996– described the nuns as “extremely [...] firm” and “loving”. He suggested the prisoners followed the rules not because of the threat of discipline, but because they recognized in the nuns imposing the rules a psychological and moral capacity, a “humane care”.⁴² The 1981 article that cited María Paz insisted that every prisoner was welcomed with love, and María Paz explained that “first we provide them with affection, food, and a wash; later we talk with them”.⁴³ In 2019 she described such simple gestures as “humanization” and as one of the pillars of her work. She felt it important to provide proper beds, bedside tables, and vases with a flower in them.⁴⁴ Gestures of humanity or dignity extended to language: the nuns referred to the women as “residents”, and under María Paz the Correctional House was renamed the COF.⁴⁵ The residents ate well,⁴⁶ and the COF “glistened”.⁴⁷ Being an example, seeing to residents’ material needs, and gestures of dignity were preconditions for the second pillar of María Paz’ rehabilitation: evangelization.

The practice of listening was central to evangelization. María Paz would listen to prisoners into the small hours of the morning, and she likened it to learning to play the guitar. She had to find the “string” that resonated with each woman, and that string was normally motherhood. Looking through photos decades after leaving her

⁴¹ “Perfil de un funcionario” (1981b, 5).

⁴² Interview with Daniel Martorell, 18 March 2022, via Zoom.

⁴³ “Perfil de un funcionario” (1981b, 5).

⁴⁴ Interview María Paz Venegas, 7 November 2019, in the Congregation Buen Pastor, Santiago.

⁴⁵ Interview María Paz Venegas, 7 November 2019, in the Congregation Buen Pastor, Santiago. See also Vergara (1994, 129).

⁴⁶ Former guard Selva Alcarraz insisted the prisoners ate well (interview, 25 May 2022, in the offices of the CIRGENCHI). The discrepancy between her comments and descriptions by Santander (1967) and political prisoners (above) is perhaps due, in part, to differing baselines. Selva emphasized quantity, and her comparison was likely with the diet of poor women outside the prison at a time when malnutrition was rife. Santander noted the low nutritional value of the food and compared it with international best practices (37 and 39-40).

⁴⁷ Camila Chaparro (interview, 21 April 2022, in the offices of CIRGENCHI), Selva Alcarraz (interview, 25 May 2022, in the offices of the CIRGENCHI), Daniel Martorell (interview, 18 March 2022, via Zoom), and Santander (1967, 38) all noted the cleanliness of the prison.

role as director, María Paz pointed out how neatly the women in the pictures were dressed and how nice their hair looked, and she recounted details about their lives: a drug trafficker who tried to escape, a “dangerous” woman from Talca, a Bolivian woman on drugs charges, an HIV-positive woman, a domestic servant who killed the disabled woman she worked for, and a woman who left her husband’s head in a flower pot.⁴⁸ The point of listening was not to mine these details for the cause of an individual’s criminality. María Paz’ successor, for example, insisted in 1986 that she made an effort to learn the prisoners’ names but she “never broached the reasons for their incarceration”, as she “felt so helpless when confronted with such difficult cases in which their personal history outweighed the crime committed”.⁴⁹ In her 1955 study on adolescent girls in the Correctional House, Paula Hurtado wrote that the sisters could not rehabilitate prisoners because they did not study the girls’ backgrounds, and they ignored their personalities, motives, environment, and education level. “Reeducation” and “readaptation” were “reduce[d] to reading religious books, lives of saints, removed from the daily struggle in the world outside” (cited in Correa 2005, 26-27). In 1967 Santander similarly noted that some newspapers were allowed, and available books were principally biographies of saints. There was no radio, and magazines were considered morally damaging. She also lamented that there was no consideration of the “peculiarities” of each prisoner’s readaptation (1967, 31, 33, and 58-59). The study of criminals’ biological and social characteristics that dominated Chilean criminology had not gained ground in the *correccional*. For the nuns, the outside world was irrelevant. As María Paz explained: “only God can rehabilitate”. There was only one path, and it led to knowing God’s love. Listening helped establish a connection that allowed the nuns to reveal that path.

The outside world breached the walls of the *correccional* with the arrival of political prisoners in the months after Chile’s 1973 military coup.⁵⁰ Women political prisoners typically arrived at the prison having been interrogated and tortured elsewhere.⁵¹ The women –38 in mid 1974 (Inter-American Commission on Human Rights 1974)– were housed, at least initially, in the daily patio.⁵² Sister Vergara’s history of the congregation, however, makes only brief mention of the women: “Incidentally, in this period [the 1970s], large numbers of woman known as ‘political prisoners’ entered the prison” (1994, 129). In 2019 Sister María Paz explained the women’s political problem was with the government, not the congregation, and they were treated like any other prisoner.⁵³ It is possible that both Vergara and María Paz chose –consciously or not– to minimize in their accounts the congregation’s role in political imprisonment, but their

⁴⁸ Interview with María Paz Venegas, 7 November 2019, in the Congregation Buen Pastor, Santiago.

⁴⁹ “Positivo balance” (1986).

⁵⁰ Nineteen Good Shepherd prisons received political prisoners (Comisión Nacional sobre Prisión Política y Tortura 2005).

⁵¹ WILPF (1974); Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (1974).

⁵² Interview with Selva Alcarraz, 25 May 2022, in the offices of the CIRGENCHI.

⁵³ Interview with María Paz Venegas, 7 November 2019, in the Congregation Buen Pastor, Santiago.

disinterest is in line with Camila's recollection that "the nuns did not get involved in politics."⁵⁴

Pelletier's criteria described mostly how nuns should act and how they should treat the women in their care, but a subsequent discussion in the 1985 manual of her vision of spirituality affirmed that

the best way to work towards the salvation of souls, the conversion of sinners, is to instruct them in the truths of the FAITH and to instill them strongly in their hearts; teach them the Catechism, explaining to them the Word of God, the maxims of the Holy Gospel, since this is the only path that leads to Christian holiness (Congregación del Buen Pastor 1985, 38).

Referring to "girls" in the nuns' care, the congregation insisted it was "indispensable, above all else, that the Directors make [them] learn the Catechism, so that they may be well versed in the truths of our Holy Religion; so that, when reintegrating into society, they can maintain themselves in goodness and in the practice of Christian virtues" (38). This section was followed by a description of the "role of a Good Shepherd Sister in the COFs", which emphasized the evangelization of prisoners (40-42). María Paz later explained that the sisters "listened" to the prisoners, and fellow prisoners often provided religious instruction. María Paz and another sister, who was also a psychologist, trained "various" prisoners to preach in their respective sections. The trainees received a certificate, and they were charged with "showing [the women] the Lord, imparting basic Christian principles". But there was little point "just talking to them about God, how God is good, that God loves me, God this, God that", María Paz said, if they left prison only to steal again. She had to put them to work: "I humanize[d] [them] by giving the women work" and "I [had] to evangelize the work."⁵⁵

In the late nineteenth century, the congregation had sought to "correct" prisoners' loss of "virtue" via religious instruction, literacy, and work. Sewing, embroidering, or laundry were intended to instill a work ethic and eliminate the dangers of idleness, but they were also an important source of income for the prisoners and the prison (Zárate 1996, 79-89). By the 1960s work included knitting and embroidery but was typically piecework: sewing pre-cut fabric for external clients (Servicio de Prisiones 1964, 305). It did not "prepare [the prisoners] to honorably earn a living after their release, as they were not given any vocational training" (Santander 1967, 43). By the early 1980s COF work was partly industrialized, but it still involved labor that was "typically assigned to women, such as making clothes, cleaning, washing laundry, and knitting" (Cooper 1982, 212-213),⁵⁶ and the rationale was similar. Work allowed prisoners to earn money and often provide for their families from

⁵⁴ Interview with Camila Chaparro, 21 April 2022, in the offices of CIRGENCHI.

⁵⁵ Interview with María Paz Venegas, 7 November 2019, in the Congregation Buen Pastor, Santiago.

⁵⁶ In the late 1970s Mother María Paz established an industrial laundry that provided work for five or six prisoners (Vergara 1994, 131).

inside (Santander 1967, 46 and 56).⁵⁷ It prevented idleness.⁵⁸ Work was also Godly, an end unto itself. It instilled a Christian work ethic that the nuns embodied. When talking of the evangelization of work, María Paz explained that “the Lord put us in Eden to work”.⁵⁹

The nuns’ mission of maternal and earthly rehabilitative love seems to have been timeless and insular. Observers in the first half of the twentieth century noted that the regime of prayer, basic literacy, and manual labor remained largely unchanged from the nineteenth century, unaffected by updated prison regulations or modern criminology. They blamed the state’s inability or reluctance to adequately fund the prison, but also the nuns’ lack of professionalism and their unwillingness to adjust to new rules and realities (Correa 2005, 17-30). In 1955 Hurtado criticized the lack of personnel –nuns and guards– with “the intellectual and scientific capacity” necessary to “re-educate” the prisoners (cited in Correa 2005, 27). By the mid 1970s the *correccional* offered sporadic, short-term vocational workshops taught by teachers paid by the congregation or run by external organizations using donated machines and supplies (Altimiras *et al.* 1978, 66, 94, and 159). Teachers who delivered training workshops via the Catholic University’s Peasant Worker University Department (DUOC) identified two main obstacles to their work: a lack of resources and a lack of cooperation from the nuns (Altimiras *et al.* 1978, 67, 154). The Good Shepherd sisters, however, were not incurious. The “mission of love” expanded at the Vicuña Mackenna site, but instead of ceding ground to outside influences, the congregation incorporated them.

PROFESSIONALIZATION AND COMPREHENSIVE, OPERATIVE LOVE

At the point in the 1985 rehabilitation manual where the congregation’s traditions are directly linked to the nuns’ work in the COF, the vision of the Good News as maternal love is expanded into an “operative”, “efficient” and “comprehensive” program to “lead [women] to friendship with the Lord, the only one capable of transforming their lives.” This program tended to the psychological, emotional, cultural, social, moral, and spiritual needs of the prisoners, the “vast majority” of whom suffered “from disorders and deficiencies in each of these aspects and [...] each of them requires the specialized attention of professionals in the field”. COF prisoners now represented a societal failure: “Selfishness, injustice, economic poverty, a lack of culture, psychological vices and deficiencies, and so many other situations are, permanently, producing

⁵⁷ See also comments by *Gendarmería* National Director at the 1981 opening of the COF’s industrial laundry (“Adelantos en el C.O.F.”, 1981).

⁵⁸ According to the Prison Service, the congregation accepted low pay to keep contracts and prevent idleness (Servicio de Prisiones 1964, 305).

⁵⁹ Interview with María Paz Venegas, 7 November 2019, in the Congregation Buen Pastor, Santiago.

social disorders that lead people to crime and attitudes outside of the law.” The nuns knew that addressing this failure was “a task that far exceed[ed] [their] possibilities”, and they were guided by the “conviction that it is necessary to organize and coordinate the different specialties called on to reconstruct the personality of the residents to return them to a dignified life and to society.” This coordinated effort was “the most appropriate way to express the Father’s merciful love towards the most abandoned” (Congregación del Buen Pastor 1985, 25-26; emphasis in the source). An advisory committee that included professionals from different fields had existed when Sister María José Silva became warden, but, she said, it had not performed well. In 1986 she described building the COF into a “true unit”, where everyone felt important and that they had a role in decisions that were taken, as her most important achievement.⁶⁰ This updated “mission of love” responded to the shifting demographic of the “fallen women”, the congregation’s dwindling numbers, and the professionalization of prison staff.

A 1946 internal resolution had explicitly banned women from the Prison Surveillance Service. The ban was revoked in 1949, but women do not appear in the service’s registers until 1953, and only in significant numbers from 1959 (Obreque 2010, 80-83). Women employees had nevertheless been in the *correccional* for two decades. To address “the lack of suitable female [Prison Surveillance Service] personnel, trained to take on a serious and rehabilitative role as guards” in the late 1930s, Mother María Margarita Martínez-Conde proposed the “first three ‘assistants’ to the nuns in their daily work”. Vergara noted that the service accepted the proposal in 1939 or 1940, but she did not make clear who the “assistants” were (1994, 126). In 1955 Hurtado described the guards (*celadoras*) in the *correccional* as having no more qualification than “their good behavior during their stay in the institution as prisoners” (cited in Correa 2005, 27). A report on female guards in the prison from around the same time listed 21 women, along with their Prison Surveillance Service ranks: one intern, two corporals, and eighteen guards.⁶¹ These women received no training.⁶²

An October 1957 report by the mother superior named, graded, and commented on sixteen women guards at Lira Street. Thirteen received at least partially negative comments and were described as: uninterested or unable to perform their duties (8 women); disobedient, dishonest, insolent, or quick to talkback or make excuses (7); irresponsible or imprudent (7); quick to complain or gossipy (6); lacking character or sense of authority, or unable to command the respect of the prisoners (4); selfish (3); arrogant, authoritarian, or impatient with prisoners (3); disorganized or unpunctual (2); difficult or conflictive with peers (2); having prisoners escape on her watch (1); or

⁶⁰ “Positivo balance” (1986).

⁶¹ AGSC, Folder 207-2, “Comunica calificación. No 0501,” 17 January 1957. The report covered November 1955 to November 1956.

⁶² Obreque (2010, 80-83); “Gendarmería me ayudó a ser mujer” (2001, 58).

a combination.⁶³ The report included disparaging comments about a guard who left to try another job, while keeping open the option to return. Another otherwise competent guard was marked down because “family issues” prevented her from doing night or hospital shifts. In May 1961 Elsa Figueroa and Leonor Fernández were written up for disobedience and insolence,⁶⁴ and in March 1962 the Mother Superior requested the “poorly disciplined” and “irresponsible” Fernández’ removal.⁶⁵

Reports on guards at Vicuña Mackenna are not available, but sisters gave their thoughts on DUOC teachers when interviewed in the late 1970s by students evaluating the program. Sister María Adriana felt the teaching should be more systematic and said she had “detected a lack of interest on behalf of the teachers.” Sister María Paz Gregas suggested that despite the “pomp”, with which they were inaugurated, the courses were poorly organized. Teachers nevertheless handed out certificates. It was, she said, a “disgrace”: “It is pure propaganda, the rehabilitation is done by the nuns” (Altimiras *et al.* 1978, 159 and 162). It seems that what observers previously interpreted as the nuns’ resistance to modern ideas, or a lack of cooperation was by now, at least at times and at least in part, an intolerance for incompetence and a lack of commitment. In their report, the students recalled the image of the “fallen woman” when they described the congregation’s rehabilitation as being based in moral teachings, discipline, and the “asepsis” of “women in irregular situations”. They also wrote that the sisters used methods that “adhered as closely as possible to the evolution of the contemporary world” to provide “moral support, responsible habits, and personal, familial and social discipline” to avoid re-arrest (Altimiras *et al.* 1978, 92-93). The students did not describe these methods, but the sisters were proactive in the incipient professionalization of the *correcional*.

In 1964 the Prison Service noted the criticisms levelled at the congregation about the poor pay prisoners received for their work and the non-educational nature of the work, but it suggested these deficiencies were due principally to a lack of funding. The government had “traditionally” not given the prison much importance and only contributed to the food budget. Existing work programs were solely the result of the nuns’ efforts. This defense of the nuns was part of a reflection on the first years of a new effort to modernize Chile’s prisons. The Prison Surveillance Service had been defined by disparate decrees and resolutions, but in 1960 a dedicated legal framework defined the functions and responsibilities of the new Prison Service. “On many occasions,” the

⁶³ AGSC, Folder 207-2, “Informe sobre las vigilantes de la Casa Correccional de Mujeres de Santiago (Confidencial),” October 1957. This report, the earlier 1957 report (see above), and two subsequent reports from 1960 (AGSC, Folder 207-2, “Confidencial. Informe sobre las vigilantes de la Casa Correccional de Mujeres,” 29 March) and 1962 (AGSC, Folder 207-1, “Informe sobre vigilantes de la Casa Correccional de Mujeres,” 2 January 1962) graded the women. However, a lack of coherence between comments and grades in the October 1957 report make it difficult to interpret the grades in reports without comments.

⁶⁴ AGSC, Folder 207-1, “Da cuenta de faltas cometidas por funcionarios que indica,” 23 May 1961.

⁶⁵ AGSC, Folder 207-1, “Solicita llamada a ‘retiro’ a Vigilante indisciplinada,” 19 March 1962.

service reflected, the congregation “took the first step towards renovating old structures and giving more substance to actions taken”. The example given was that the first trained social assistant to be a consistent presence in the *correccional* was a member of the congregation who obtained her professional qualification. The service hired its own full-time social assistant for the Santiago prison in 1962 partly in response to the nuns’ actions. “Various” other nuns were studying psychology or pedagogy at the time, and the Superior was studying law alongside her regular duties (Servicio de Prisiones 1964, 24-25, 28-29, 300-302, 305). Sister María Paz studied social sciences and completed a postgraduate course in counselling, and in 1975 Sister Matilde Calad, who was later warden, took the *Gendarmería* course for female prison guards.⁶⁶

The Prison Service created a Women’s Department in 1960, and it ran its first training course for female guards the following year.⁶⁷ In 2001 María Flores recalled the 1966 exam she sat to secure a place in the three-month course as covering knowledge of US President John Kennedy, arithmetic, and history, and including a written reflection on the meaning of the “relationship between man, horse, and the countryside”.⁶⁸ During the 1961 course, ten women took classes on criminal law, constitutional law, administrative law, Prison Service regulations, criminal psychology, professional ethics, and self-defense. The practical element of the training was completed at the Santiago *correccional* (Servicio de Prisiones 1964, 64-65, 303). Over subsequent decades the curriculum remained similar, the course lengthened to a year, and hundreds of women trained as guards.⁶⁹

Silvia Ortiz completed her training in 1962. “Unlike other people who say they joined to do good or lift up the fallen,” she explained in 1990, “I can honestly say that I was old enough to start working and become independent. So, when this opportunity was presented to me, I accepted immediately, without knowing anything about what the job entailed”.⁷⁰ Despite her assumption about others’ motivations, the women profiled alongside Silvia tended to describe joining the service in similar terms: they were young, needed or wanted a job, and knew nothing about the work.⁷¹ This initial pragmatism often serves as a framing device for a sense of vocation that emerged later. Violeta Mundaca was offered a place on the inaugural course after her husband—a Prison Service employee—died, leaving her widowed, pregnant, and with five children.⁷²

⁶⁶ “Perfil de un funcionario” (1981b); “Chile es mi segunda patria” (1986).

⁶⁷ Servicio de Prisiones (1964, 24-25, 28-29, 300-301); “Perfil de un funcionario” (1981a; “Oficiales femeninas” (1987, 4); “La mujer en Gendarmería” (1990, 4).

⁶⁸ “Gendarmería me ayudó a ser mujer” (2001, 57).

⁶⁹ Ten women participated in the first course in 1961. By 1964 four courses for female guards had been run (Servicio de Prisiones 1964, 303, 69). The 1981 *Gendarmería* teaching plan did not include a female guards’ course (Gendarmería de Chile 1981, 2, 6-8). In 1993 eighty women trained as guards and 107 in 1991 and 1992 combined. These numbers were unusual; in “normal” years, twenty women took the course (“Escuela cumple metas de Instrucción extraordinaria” 1993, 46-48).

⁷⁰ “La mujer en Gendarmería” (1990, 4).

⁷¹ “La mujer en Gendarmería” (1990, 5); “La mujer en Gendarmería” (1991, 16-18).

⁷² “Perfil de un funcionario” (1981a).

Selva Alcarraz also entered the service as a young mother. In November 1973 she mentioned to her neighbor that she needed work. Several days later a Prison Service van arrived at her home to take her to an interview, and she started in the *correccional* the following morning. She worked nights in the infirmary because she had trained as a nurse, and later she oversaw a group in the Minors' Section.⁷³ The training of women guards evolved at a time when the Prison Service in general struggled to attract people because of the low pay and the poor working conditions.⁷⁴ The service accumulated a net personnel deficit across its network of prisons, but Lira Street veterans,⁷⁵ young women coming through the training course, and more ad hoc recruitments like Violeta and Selva underpinned a significant expansion of the Prison Service presence in the *correccional*.

In the decade leading up to the move to Vicuña Mackenna, a stable number of around twenty female guards worked alongside a similar number of nuns.⁷⁶ By 1967 the number of female guards grew to thirty-one (Santander, 25-26). Alongside the social assistant from 1962, the prison had the sporadic services of a psychologist from 1964. The psychologist position was formalized in the late 1970s and made full-time in the mid 1980s. The medical service also expanded to include full-time nurses as well as a roster of specialists who worked within the prison system and rotated through the *correccional*.⁷⁷ By 1977 120 *Gendarmería* personnel worked in the Santiago *correccional*, and 94 of them were women: one first-class sergeant; two second-class sergeants; thirteen corporals; 62 guards; three social assistants; five nursery teachers; three nurses; five women working with minors (Altimiras *et al.* 1978, 93-94). In 1984 the COF had eight professionals across its health, psychological, social, and educational services, and 118 guards (men and women).⁷⁸ The sisters were not only outnumbered, *Gendarmería* personnel now had outside training, an increasing sense of professionalism, and a professional identity linked to the service more than the *correccional* or the congregation. Female officers were not part of the *Gendarmería* presence in the prison. The service ran its first training course for women officers in 1981 in preparation for the eventual handover of the COFs,⁷⁹ but graduates performed largely administrative duties or

⁷³ Interview with Selva Alcarraz, 25 May 2022, in the offices of the CIRGENCHI. Guard María Soledad Olivares joined the service in 1974 but not via the training course ("Bienvenidos" 1984, 13).

⁷⁴ Servicio de Prisiones (1964, 25-26); "La realidad del servicio" (1993).

⁷⁵ At least five of the 38 women named in the reports on guards between 1955 and 1962 (cited above) seem to have continued their careers with the Prison Service, as they appear in the institutional magazine: Susana Bravo Pereira ("Día del suboficial Gendarme Mayor" 1990); Alicia Valencia Guerra ("Condecoraciones para funcionarios" 1991, 7); María Eugenia Carvajal Díaz ("Bienvenidos" 1981); Yolanda Pizarro Sotelo was editor on the first 1976 issue; Julia Méndez appears as the public relations officer for a retired Prison Service personnel organization ("Se constituye: Club de suboficiales" 1985, 25).

⁷⁶ See reports from 1957, 1960, and 1962 cited above.

⁷⁷ Santander (1967, 45-48); Congregación del Buen Pastor (1985, 63-74).

⁷⁸ "El Buen Pastor y su rebaño" (1984, 22).

⁷⁹ "Aspirantes femeninas a Oficiales" (1982); "Oficiales femeninas" (1987, 3); Obreque (2010, 83-84).

worked in men's prisons while waiting to take charge of women's prisons.⁸⁰ There was not a second female officers' course until 1994.⁸¹ The nuns retained their autonomy inside the *correccional*, and the congregation's mid-1980s rehabilitation manual, its definition of services' roles, and its systematization of its relationship with *Gendarmería* employees was a practical response to the need to manage staff. The congregation's mission did not, however, cede ground to outside influences. It incorporated them into its evangelization.

In 1984 Mother María José Silva explained that it was not enough for guards to be just guards. They needed to be professionals with a true sense of vocation who saw themselves as "agents of rehabilitation".⁸² The advisory committee she headed began running supplementary training courses for *Gendarmería* employees in the *correccional* that covered similar material to the *Gendarmería*'s guards' course.⁸³ Every participant received a certificate.⁸⁴ The kindergarten that the congregation established, and almost entirely financed, furthered rehabilitation by allowing prisoner-mothers to attend classes and work, and employee-mothers to work their shift.⁸⁵ It had the additional benefit of creating a peer relationship between prisoners and guards.⁸⁶ The congregation also evangelized guards. Mother María Paz in 1981 insisted it was fundamental that *Gendarmería* personnel were a "good rehabilitative element". "We need good employees," she told the *Gendarmería* magazine, "who understand the mysticism, who understand that they are not just guards. That is not enough".⁸⁷ Vergara's history summarizes María Paz' first tenure in three achievements: the separation of minors from the general population, the establishment of an industrial laundry, and the continued extension of evangelization. The highlights of her second term were setting up training workshops, extending schooling to secondary education, and an emphasis on the New Evangelization. The "systematic" evangelizing push was not only directed at the prisoners, but also at *Gendarmería* staff, both men and women (1994, 131-132). Lawyer Daniel Martorell recalled that the nuns ran the prison in the "context of harmony between the services", but the services ultimately answered to the sisters. The congregation "imposed" its vision of rehabilitation but included the services' "technical perspective". It was, Daniel recalled, an "environment of much love, [...] but with a foundation [in technical knowledge]".⁸⁸ This rehabilitation, however, eventually became untenable, recalled Sister María Paz in 2019:

⁸⁰ "Oficiales femeninas" (1987, 4).

⁸¹ "Exigente formación de vigilantes y oficiales" (1997, 25).

⁸² "El Buen Pastor y su rebaño" (1984, 22).

⁸³ "Positivo balance" (1986).

⁸⁴ "En el C.O.F. de Santiago" (1986).

⁸⁵ "En el C.O.F. de Santiago" (1983, 19-20).

⁸⁶ Interview with Daniel Martorell, 18 March 2022, via Zoom.

⁸⁷ "Perfil de un funcionario" (1981b, 5).

⁸⁸ Interview with Daniel Martorell, 18 March 2022, via Zoom.

We [were] there to make a prison to evangelize [the prisoners], to rehabilitate them. So when we did not have that support [from *Gendarmería*] because of all the things that arrived related to drugs, [...] and we did not have enough [*Gendarmería*] staff, we protected ourselves and we said no more for us.⁸⁹

Although the handover had been decided years earlier, no timetable had been laid out for it to occur. María Paz recalled the moment when it came as a defense of the group as well as the integrity of the mission.

CONCLUSION

The sisters felt that their rehabilitation worked. Mother María José estimated that around eighty percent of COF prisoners left rehabilitated,⁹⁰ and Mother Matilde recalled that thousands had passed through Lira Street, but “very few” reoffended.⁹¹ Statistics from 1982 suggested that most women were first time offenders, and that women reoffended at a much lower rate than men (Cooper, 162 and 307). It is difficult, however, to isolate the impact of the congregation’s rehabilitation from the differing profiles of male and female prisoners. Male prisoners were convicted at higher rates of crimes against property (Cooper 1982, 159-169), the crimes committed by most reoffenders. “Thieves”, “robbers”, and “shoplifters” were prevalent in the daily patio and the trial section of the COF, but the *condenadas*—who were the basis for Cooper’s statistics and appear to be the basis for the nuns’ statements—were, until the last decade of the nuns’ administration, more often convicted of murdering their husbands, partners, parents or children, crimes which do not lend themselves to repeat offenses. Regardless of its effectiveness, the Good Shepherd rehabilitative project evolved in the Vicuña Mackenna prison.

When the *correcional* moved to its new site, prison routines and work, prisoner profile, and the sisters’ “mission of love” were largely unchanged from the nineteenth century. The congregation saw its role as providing women in “irregular situations” with a maternal love, expressed in simple and dignified gestures—cleanliness; good, hot, and sufficient food—and a Godly example. This love would lead the “fallen women” to the love of God, the only one who could rehabilitate them. The mission was independent of context, biographical details, and lived experience outside the prison, and it persisted parallel to important, albeit uneven, transitions inside the prison. Prisoners were more clearly separated into categories, minors were separated from the general population, and children under sixteen were excluded. The prison population grew, and the prisoner profile changed with the increase in drug-related

⁸⁹ Interview with María Paz Venegas, 7 November 2019, in the Congregation Buen Pastor, Santiago.

⁹⁰ “El Buen Pastor y su rebaño” (1984, 20-21).

⁹¹ “Chile es mi segunda patria” (1986).

crime. The number of guards in the prison also grew, and they were trained by the Prison Service.

The mission of love responded to change. Progress in the prison had been held back by a lack of funding and interest from successive governments, but also by the nuns' intransigence. This intransigence was characterized by critics as a resistance to science and oversight, but by at least the mid-twentieth century it seems to have also been a resistance to uncommitted and incompetent actors who briefly passed through the prison. The nuns did not resist outside technical knowledge; they incorporated it into their mission, but on their own terms. They trained themselves, studying law, psychology, social sciences, and counselling, and taking the Prison Service guards' course. They also trained and evangelized *Gendarmería* staff and guards, creating for them supporting roles in the congregation's rehabilitation, which remained a project of evangelization. This Good Shepherd project inside the Vicuña Mackenna *correccional* sits outside the narrative of a contest between modern science and timeless religion for influence within women's prisons. It represents a unique collaboration in the history of female incarceration in Latin America.

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