



Marian and Commemorative Iconography Combined: The ‘Spes Nostra’ Epitaph in the Context of the Liturgical Practices of Mariënpoel Convent

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The panel today known as the ‘Memorial Tablet of the Master of Spes Nostra’ (fig. 1) has inspired multiple studies centred on its interpretation, place of usage and commissioners.¹ The painting, made circa 1500 by an anonymous artist in the northern Low Countries, bears two Latin inscriptions in the tradition of *memento mori*, which conveys the message that life on earth is temporary and transitory. The aim of such panels, also known as epitaphs or ‘tablets’, was to remind the viewer of his own mortality.² In this specific case, the panel’s scene represents a unique combination of Marian and ‘transi’ iconography, showing the Virgin Mary seated in a walled garden that also contains an opened grave with a decaying corpse. In the most recent study of the painted representation, Rijksmuseum curator Matthias Ubl proposes an interpretation linked to the Office of the Dead, with the panel therefore believed to function as a ‘visual (and textual) instruction for the prayers of remembrance’.³ Ubl’s hypothesis is in line with that of previous authors like Godefridus Hoogewerff and Henk van Os, who also proffered liturgy-based interpretations from which arose the name of convenience ‘Master of Spes nostra’ still used today. This approach therefore requires an awareness of the place

< Fig. 1
MASTER OF
SPES NOSTRA,
Memorial Tablet,
c. 1500, painted
for Mariënpoel
Convent near Leiden.
Oil on canvas,
88.7 x 104.3 cm.
Amsterdam,
Rijksmuseum,
inv. no. SK-A-2312,
acquired with
the support of
the Rembrandt
Association.

and role of such church objects in the liturgical *Gesamtkunstwerk* of prayers, chants, vestments, processions and all possible ‘bells and smells’. Even so, the aforementioned authors have limited their subsequent research to seeking parallels in the visual arts. The present article examines the memorial tablet in the liturgical context more thoroughly by consulting liturgical manuals, with the aim of interpreting its ambiguous iconography and identifying its origin.

A Layered Contrast

Ubl’s article provides a comprehensive description of the iconography of the memorial tablet. For the unfamiliar reader, a brief summary is provided here. The image is composed of three layers, each comprising a variety of representations. The distinction between the different scenes is formed by the scale of the figures, their placement in the overall composition, the colour scheme of their raiment and the alternation of natural and architectural elements.

Visible in the foreground is a half-open tomb in which lies an almost fully decomposed cadaver (a *transi* tomb). Kneeling before the tomb are four priests, who in turn are presented by two saints flanking left and right: St Jerome (left, with lion and cardinal’s robes) and St Augustine (right, with

heart in hand). Discernible are two *memento mori* inscriptions – one inscribed on the stone tomb slab, the other adjacent to the tomb – that urge the viewer to pray on the behalf of the deceased individual (or individuals). Upon closer inspection, the visual and textual elements of the tomb are contradictory: the single grave does not correspond to the inscription on the slab, 'Requiescant in pace' (May they rest in peace) in the plural, and the presence of not one but four clerics, typically the deceased presented by saints when depicted in this manner.⁴ The rhyme 'Si quis eris qui transieris hoc respice plora / Sum quod eris quod es ipse fui pro me precor ora' (Whosoever passeth by here, behold and weep / I am what thou shalt be; what thou art, I have been; pray for me, I beseech thee) is written in the singular and addressed to the living, whose task is to pray for the soul of the dead. The words perfectly fit the *memento mori* tradition. Until now, the rhyme's origin has remained a mystery.⁵

In the middle register, seated on a grass-covered wall in a garden are the Virgin Mary, dressed in blue robes, and an older woman (note the walking stick), who reaches out to touch Mary's belly. Based on the presence of two women and the emphasis on Mary's belly, the scene can be interpreted as a Visitation: the meeting between Mary and her older cousin Elizabeth, whose own unborn child recognizes the divine fruit in Mary's womb. Scenes of the Visitation almost always show two figures standing or walking towards each other; unusual in this case is that the two figures are depicted seated. A rare example of a seated Visitation appears in a miniature accompanying the Hours of the Virgin in the *Spinola Hours* from circa 1510-20, as likewise mentioned in Ubl's article.⁶

Forming the background of the panel is an enclosed garden, to be interpreted as a *hortus conclusus*, described in the Bible book Song of Songs. A variety of

figures can be seen in this courtyard: Mary sitting under a tree and offering an apple (a reference to Eve, whose sin Mary redeemed through the birth of Jesus); Jesus, riding a hobbyhorse, accompanied by an angel; three music-making angels; and two female saints (recognizable by their appearance, typical of female saints in painting of the time; see for example, fig. 2⁷). The panel is unique in the contrasting juxtaposition of a Visitation (in such a garden) with a *transi* tomb from the *memento mori* tradition.

Previous Interpretations Based on the Standard Liturgy

To explain the memorial tablet's unique iconography, previous interpretations referred specifically to the liturgy. The liturgy can be defined as the whole of prescribed ceremonies, acts, texts, prayers and chants of the Christian worship service. The most commonly known expressions of the liturgy are the Eucharistic celebration (Mass) and the Divine Office (prayer services at set hours (Hours of Office) during the day and night, prayed in every monastery). Memorial objects played an essential role within the liturgy, in particular celebrations in the memory of a deceased person commissioned by a person, family or guild. Accordingly, it is logical that past authors

Fig. 2
CORNELIS
ENGBRECHTSZ,
Christ on the Cross with Mary, John, Mary Magdalene and the Sts Cecilia and Barbara (left) and Peter, Francis and Jerome (right), c. 1505-10, painted for Mariënwater Convent near Den Bosch. Oil on panel, 24.3 x 31.4 cm. Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. no. SK-A-859, on loan to Museum De Lakenhal, Leiden.



interpreted memorial objects – and as well the memorial tablet – in this manner. In the liturgy, the scope of commemoration was exceptionally broad, ranging from a simple prayer within one of the standard liturgies (whether or not supplemented with a befitting chant), to, in what amounts to the other extreme, a complete Mass and/or office of commemoration (the 'Office of the Dead'). Intermediate forms abounded, often in specific areas of the church: at a particular side altar, a specific altarpiece, a tomb (with or without memorial tablet), but also when in procession to such places. In some cases, burning candles were additionally provided for the designated graves on that day.⁸ In this manner, the celebration of the liturgy in particular locations and with certain objects made the liturgy more specific.

In these moments, numerous Gregorian chants could be performed. These were typically chants from the Office of the Dead, though a more specific choice of music (for example, from the devotion of a particular saint) was also possible. Polyphonic compositions were sung on occasion, but monophonic chants were the norm. Gregorian chants of this nature were recorded in a wide variety of manuscripts, depending on the character of the songs or the book's specific use: breviaries, hymnals, missals, graduals, processionals and antiphonals. Given that memorial objects and music were so closely tied, these types of sources are also of interest when researching commemorative culture.

In 1937, Godefridus Johannes Hoogewerff devised the name of convenience 'Master of Spes nostra' ('our Hope') for the anonymous painter of the memorial tablet based on an association with the Marian antiphon *Salve Regina*.⁹ A Marian antiphon is an independent composition sung daily directly after Compline (the final office at the end of the day). Each season of the liturgical year has

its own Marian antiphon that accentuates that season's appointed theme. The *Salve Regina* is sung during the season Ordinary Time, from the Monday after Pentecost Sunday until the First Sunday of Advent, the longest season of the church year. Hoogewerff interpreted the panel as a visual parallel to the song: the 'exiles, children of Eve' turn to Mary – 'our hope' – for intercession.

With respect to this first interpretation, I agree with Matthias Ubl's comment in his article: while it is true that the image contains the overall gist of the *Salve Regina*, Hoogewerff's interpretation fails to explain the inclusion of the central scene of the Visitation. Given Mary's essential role as *mediatrix* between the earthly 'valley of tears' and heavenly redemption, the existence of many other songs also celebrating this aspect must be observed as well. This includes virtually all the Marian antiphons and hymns (songs of devotion), in which case the painter might just as easily have been bestowed the name of convenience 'Master of the Felix caeli porta', referring to the open gate shown in the panel coupled with its mention in the Marian hymn *Ave maris stella*. Typically sung at Vespers (evening prayer), this hymn was also very popular in the Middle Ages. The song highlights Mary as a forgiving and loving mother, a message likewise depicted in the panel's background scene.

Henk van Os, in his turn, sought a connection between the panel and another Marian song: the *Magnificat*.¹⁰ As told in Luke 1:46-55, Mary spoke on the occasion of the Visitation, and these words were later put to melody. To explain the contrast tomb/Visitation, Van Os chose the line: 'the mighty He takes down from their thrones, the lowly He raises to prominence'. Although providing an explanation for the two central scenes, this interpretation finds little support when examining the iconography in liturgical manuscripts and books of hours

in which the *Magnificat* commonly occurs. Without exception, Netherlandish representations of the Visitation in these works are found at the opening of the prayer service, accompanying the *Deus in adiutorium* (or its Dutch translation), not directly accompanying the *Magnificat*.¹¹ Moreover, Van Os's interpretation is in fact based on a highly specific selection of the words in the *Magnificat*, namely the seventh line cited above. For the rest, the panel lacks any other reference to the content of the *Magnificat*. The presence of elements unclarified by this devotional song (Mary under the tree, the open gate) leave no doubt that Van Os's argumentation is incomplete.

Matthias Ubl's interpretation of the present panel linked it to the Office of the Dead: a series of prayer services for the deceased, found in many kinds of liturgical books. The standard form of this office comprised a trio of successive prayer services: Vespers (evening office), Matins (night office) and Lauds (morning office) – in summary, a wake (vigil).¹² Given its size, the memorial tablet conceivably could have hung on the wall above the tomb of (one of) the depicted priests, with the Office of the Dead sung in close proximity. An interpretation based on this office, however, fails to provide an explanation for one key element in the painted representation: the presence of Mary. In fact, one finds scarcely any emphasis on Mary in the readings, prayers and chants of the Office of the Dead.¹³ Ubl's interpretation (in line with Van Os) that the 'devotions culminate in the *Magnificat*' is incomplete. Vespers, even with the *Magnificat* as its climax, is but one of several hours together forming the complete Office of the Dead. Matins, for example, in terms of duration, chants and prayers, are a far grander affair. The most important themes of the Office of the Dead are summarized in the final responsory of Matins, the *Libera me*: the forgiveness of sins and the total fear of the Last

Judgment. Also, Ubl's interpretation of the tablet provides no satisfactory explanation for the inclusion of the *hortus conclusus* and the Visitation, both of which are entirely absent from the Office of the Dead.

Comparison with Liturgical Sources from the Devotio Moderna

The briefly cited interpretations underscore the necessity of a full and critical understanding of the panel's complex iconography. Yet from the work of these authors it also becomes evident that, in contemporaneous visual art and standard liturgy, no single component exists that encompasses *all* the depicted themes simultaneously. In an endeavour to find an 'explanation' that addresses the work in all its facets, I therefore chose an uncontested iconographic element as my first starting point: the four clerics in the foreground, whose raiment – with the clearly recognizable black *almutium* over their shoulders – identifies them as Augustinian canons, or more specifically, priests in an order following the Rule of Augustine.¹⁴ Given the panel's dating and localization, this was undoubtedly a community within the Devotio Moderna, a spiritual reform movement that emerged in the Low Countries towards the end of the fourteenth century. This movement manifested itself in a wide range of religious communities, varying from lay collectives free of monastic regulations to monastic communities under the Rule of Augustine. Around the time when the memorial tablet was created (dated circa 1500), these various monastic groups had successfully organized themselves into so-called chapters (monastic congregations). Examples include the Chapter of Windesheim (named after the mother monastery of Windesheim, near Zwolle) and the Chapter of Sion (also called 'Holland', named after the monastery of Onze Lieve Vrouwe op de Berg Sion near

Delft). Previous authors mentioned Devout Chapter monasteries like these as possible locations where the memorial panel might have been used: Sion¹⁵ (a men's monastery), Mariënpoele (a women's convent near Leiden), Onze Lieve Vrouwe-Visitatie¹⁶ (henceforth olv-Visitatie, a men's monastery near Haarlem) and Sint-Hieronymusdal, also known as Lopsen¹⁷ (a men's monastery near Leiden).

The context of the Devout Chapter traditions offers ample opportunity for research: chapters were characterized by standardized liturgical regulations and practices that are well documented in numerous liturgical books, chant books, archival documents and secondary literature.¹⁸ These offer a clear framework for the interpretation of the memorial tablet, as do the documents attesting to some degree of deviation from that standard practice.

After comparing a large corpus of sources from the Devout context, it can be stated that in the traditional liturgies of the Mass and the Divine Office (including the Office of the Dead) there is no single feast day, commemoration or celebration that can solely explain the combination of all themes present on the panel.¹⁹ This in itself underscores its thematic unicity.

Interpretation Based on Paraliturgical Chants

As stated above, the *Salve Regina* also fails to provide an overarching explanation for the plethora of themes depicted. Given the frequency with which it was sung, however, this chant, like the other Marian antiphons, offered an irresistible opportunity for expansion through troping: the addition of textual and melodic phrases based on a given theme – a trope – that could potentially enhance and colour a standard chant, thus allowing for a degree of variation. Occurring throughout Europe, the practice has left traces in numerous Dutch sources.²⁰ By means of troping,



Fig. 3
Mariënpoele
Convent before
its destruction
in 1573, 1572.
Drawing in
graphite and ink.
Leiden, Erfgoed
Leiden en
Omstreken,
sign. PV.25521.

themes otherwise absent from the *Salve* – so too the Visitation – became possible. Even so, among the *Salve* tropes found in Dutch manuscripts, only one example could be found that convincingly integrates all the panel's themes, appearing in a convolute (collection manuscript) dating from circa 1500, originated in the Devotio Moderna context in the region of the IJssel river valley.²¹ These tropes, to be inserted at the end of the *Salve*, read as follows:

Virginalis castitas, puellaris puritas, te
deceat laus et reginalis dignitas. *O clemens.*

Virginal chastity, purity of a maiden,
Thee befitte the praise and the
dignity of a queen. *O, Thou merciful.*

Supernorum civium angelorum
dominum, profers virgo filium, mundi
solacium. *O pia.*

As Virgin, Thou bringest thy Son into
the world, the Lord of angels, the
inhabitants of heaven, the solace of
the world. *O, Thou loving.*

Da virtutes anime; post transitum
miserie gressus nostros dirige et duc
nos ad thronum glorie. *O dulcis Maria.*

Give strength to our soul; guide our
footsteps after we have endured
earthly misery, and lead us to the
throne of glory. *O, Thou sweet Mary.*



Fig. 4
Opening of *Maria
serenissima*, in the
processional-hymnal
of Mariënpoel
Convent, 1556.
Vilnius, Library
of the Lithuanian
Academy of
Sciences, Dept.
of Manuscripts,
ms. F22-95,
fols. 113v–114r.

That this combined thematic content is also a rarity within the broad-based genre of tropes, only serves to reconfirm the panel's specificity. Nevertheless, the practice of troping draws our attention to the so-called 'paraliturgy': rituals surrounding the traditional liturgy, such as processions, votive services (non-regular services for a devotion, commemoration or thanksgiving), along with the performance of newly composed, multilingual songs, etcetera. In the sources examined, one such song addressing all the themes in the memorial tablet was found in a manuscript used in the Augustinian convent Mariënpoel near Leiden (fig. 3). It concerns a two-voice song called *Maria serenissima*, found only in that convent's processional-hymnal

from 1556 (fig. 4).²² According to the colophon, this chant book for devotional songs performed during processions was compiled by one brother Adrianus for one sister Maria Arnolda. Already in the opening couplet – the first of three – one encounters a convincing integration of all the themes of the memorial tablet: Paradise, Adam, Eve, the pregnant Mary and the uncertainty of the earthly, 'fleshly' existence. The song appears in a section of the hymnal that contains comparable songs dedicated to various periods and feasts of the liturgical year (St Catherine, St Nicholas, Easter, Christmas). Unfortunately, it cannot be determined for which specific occasion *Maria serenissima* was intended.

Maria serenissima, tu rosa sine spinis;
 Mary, most bright, Thou, rose without
 thorns;
 Restaurants vi fortissima, que dudum in
 ruinis:
 Who with the greatest power restores that
 which had already long fallen into ruin:
 Ade casu, Eve suasu.
 Through the fall of Adam, on the advice
 of Eve.
 Iam Gabrielis ore fecunda celi rore;
 Thou who, through the mouth of Gabriel,
 is finally impregnated with heavenly dew;
 Concha madens scabrum radens.
 Moist shell, Thou who smoothenes
 coarseness.
 Te secluse plebs illusa solamine carebit.
 In termino carni dato sperans in te
 gaudebit.
 Without Thy presence shall the people,
 misled, find no comfort.
 But at the end of the life that is bestowed
 on the body, they will rejoice in Thee
 full of hope.

The *Salve* trope and the song *Maria serenissima* clearly affirm that, in the (para)liturgy of the Devotio Moderna, a combination of the aforementioned themes was by no means inconceivable though indeed highly specific.

Visitation

A second, overtly evident iconographic starting point in the memorial tablet is the Visitation. The meeting of Mary and Elizabeth was marked by the Feast of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, originally celebrated on 2 July, now on 31 May. The readings, prayers and chants of the Mass and the extensive Office of the Visitation of the Blessed Mary are largely inspired by the Song of Songs, together constituting a joyous, lyrical whole.²³ The comparison of sources relating to this feast revealed the 'unity of policy' that so characterized the various monasteries affiliated with the Devout Chapters. Diverging points of departure that might explain the *memento mori* element of the opened tomb in the memorial tablet were virtually non-existent. But one striking exception was discovered, again in the processional-hymnal of Mariënpoel Convent. For the Feast of the Visitation, referred to in the rubric on page 59v (fig. 5) and on the following pages, a procession comprising four chants and a prayer is prescribed. The texts and translations follow below.

The Mariënpoel procession is a unique whole: in the first processional song, *Videte miraculum*, the miracle of Mary's Immaculate Conception is sung in a lyrical manner; the second, *Quam pulchra es et quam decore*, is a loving text from the Song of Songs, which speaks of lush flora reminiscent of the *hortus conclusus*; the third processional, *Media vita in morte sumus*, is an entirely unforeseen, highly dramatic plea for salvation from eternal death. This trio of responsories²⁴ is followed by the antiphon *Sancta Maria*: a song that asks for Mary's intercession, specifically on the behalf of the clergy and Devout women (the convent sisters). The procession concludes with a sung prayer – the collecta – in which all the previous chants are summarized and the Visitation is specifically mentioned (fig. 6).

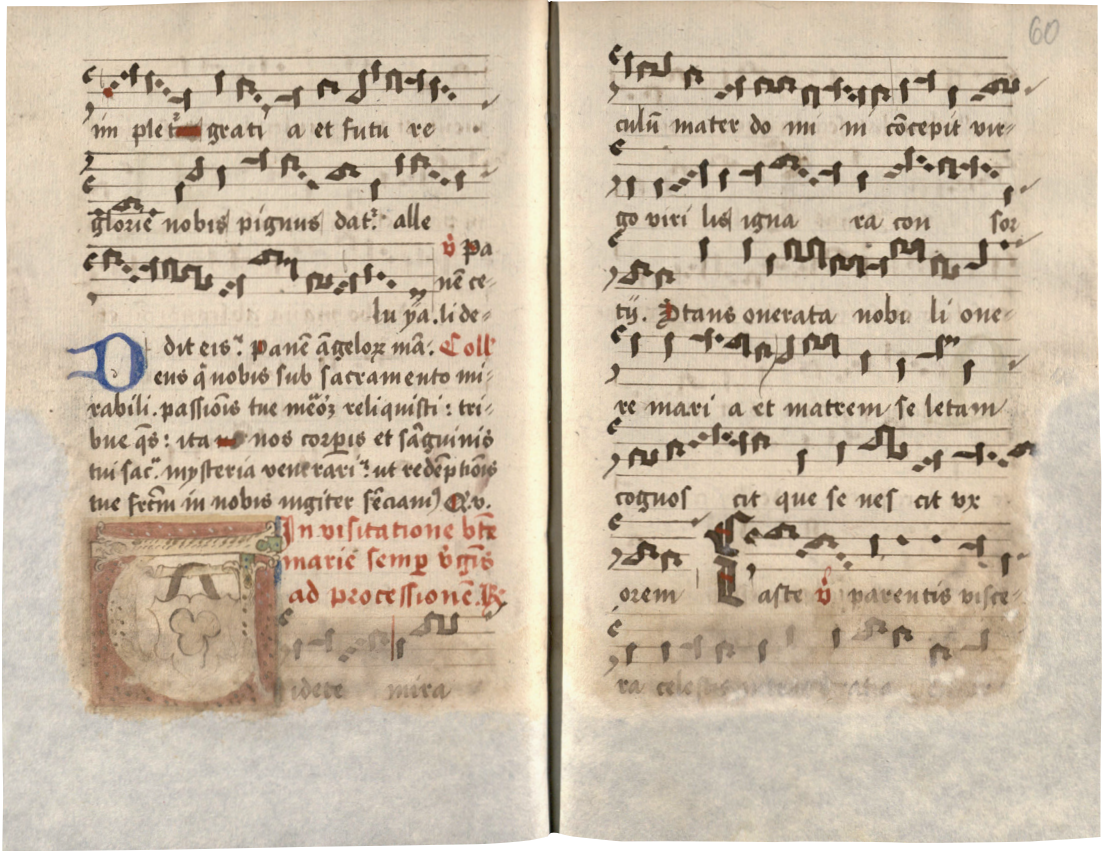


Fig. 5
Rubric and opening
Videte miraculum,
part of instructions
for chants on the
Feast of the Visitation
of the Blessed
Virgin Mary, in the
processional-hymnal
of Mariënpoel
Convent (see fig. 4),
fols. 59v-60r.

Videte miraculum mater Domini
concepit virgo virilis ignara consortia.
Stans onerata nobili onere Maria et
matrem se laetam cognoscit quae se
nescit uxorem.

[Verse:] Caste parentis viscera celestis
intrat gracia venter puelle baiulat
secreta que non noverat. Stans...

[Verse:] Gloria Patri et Filio et Spiritui
sancto. Stans...

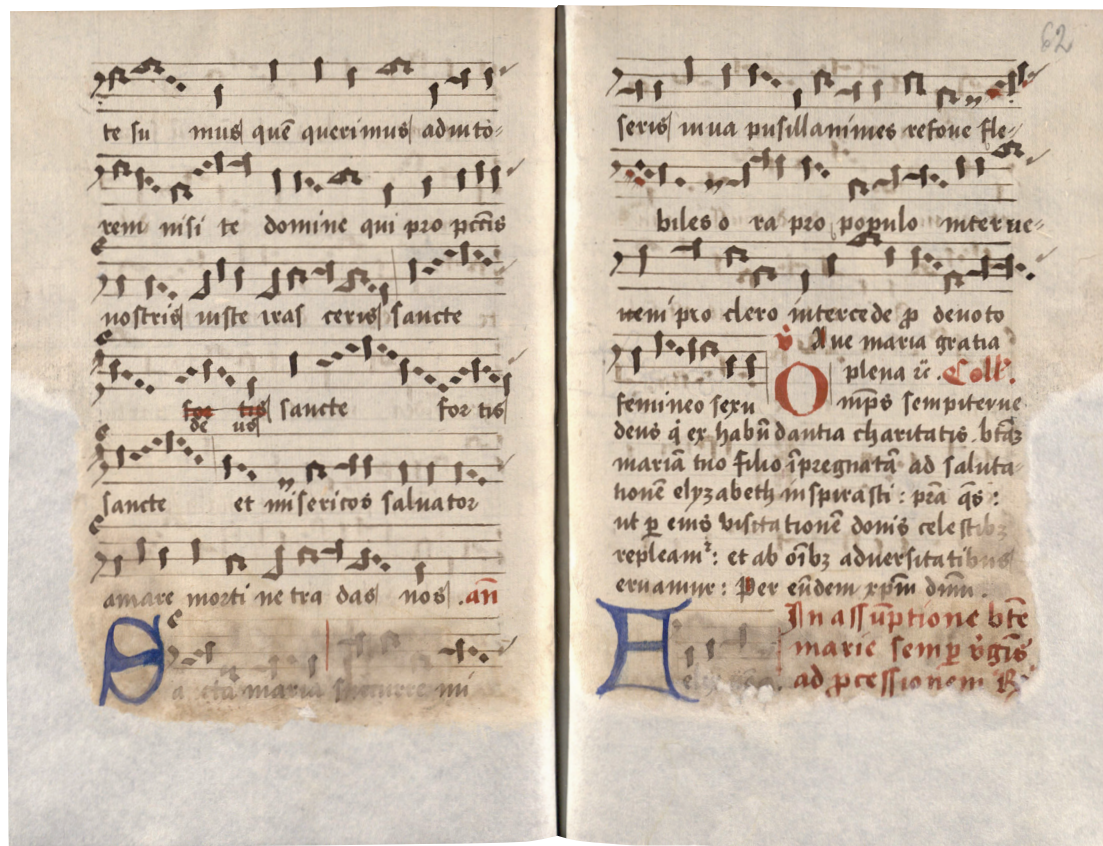
Behold the miracle! The mother of the
Lord has conceived as a virgin, though
she knew no relations with a man. Mary
stands there, bearing a lofty burden
and she recognizes that she is a joyous
mother, though she knew not that
she was a wife!

V. Heavenly grace enters the womb
of the honest mother; the belly of
the maiden carries a secret of which
she knew nought! Mary stands there...

V. Glory to the Father and the Son

and the Holy Spirit. Mary stands
there...

Quam pulchra es et quam decora
carissima in deliciis. Statura tua
assimulata est palmae et ubera tua
botris. Caput tuum ut Carmelus, collum
tuum sicut turris eburnea. Veni dilecte
mi egrediamur in agrum, videamus si
flores parturient si floruerunt mala
punica; ibi dabo tibi ubera mea.
How beautiful art thou, my beloved, how
desirable art thou, love and exaltation,
that thou art! Thy stature is like a palm
[tree], thy breasts are as clusters of
grapes [Song of Songs 7.7-8] Thy head
rises up like [Mount] Carmel [7.6],
thy neck is like a tower of ivory [7.5].
Come, my beloved, let us go out into
the field [7.12], let us see if the flowers
have already blossomed, the pome-
granate already bloomed. There I will
court you [7.13]



Media vita in morte sumus. Quem quaerimus adiutorem nisi te, Domine, qui pro peccatis nostris iuste irasceris? Sancte Deus, sancte fortis, sancte et misericors Salvator: amarae morti ne tradas nos.

In the midst of life, we are in death. Whom must we beseech as helper, but Thee, Lord, who art justly angry for our sins. Holy God, holy strong, holy and merciful Saviour: do not deliver us unto bitter death!

Sancta Maria, succurre miseris, iuva pusillanimes refove flebiles ora pro populo interveni pro clero intercede pro devoto femineo sexu.

Holy Mary, quicken to the aid of the wretched, support the faint-hearted, refresh the mournful, pray for thy people, provide thy help to the clergy and intercede for the devout women.

Coll(ecta) Omnipotens sempiterne Deus qui ex habundantia charitatis beatam Mariam tuo filio inpregnatam ad salutationem Elyzabeth inspirasti: presta, quaesumus: ut per eius visitationem donis celestibus repleamur: et ab omnibus adversitatibus eruamur. Per eundem Christum Dominum...

Collecta prayer: Almighty, everlasting God, who from Thy overflowing love, hath inspired the holy Mary, pregnant with Thy son, to greet Elizabeth, we beseech Thee, provide that, through this visitation by her, we are filled with heavenly gifts and are protected against all forms of adversity, through the same Christ, our Lord...

Fig. 6
Collecta prayer
Omnipotens
sempiterne Deus,
part of instructions
for chants on the
Feast of the Visitation,
in the processional-
hymnal of Mariënpool
Convent (see fig. 4),
fols. 61v-62r.

The usual timing of these chants, sung individually at fixed times throughout the liturgical year according to other manuscripts, points to a highly deliberate combination in Mariënpool's processional-hymnal. The *Videte miraculum* actually belongs in the Matins of Candlemas (2 February); out of 109 sources in the Cantus database – the largest international database of Gregorian chants – only two other sources prescribe this chant on the Feast of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary.²⁵ *Quam pulchra* can be found on numerous Marian feasts, but of the twelve sources on Cantus, only one also included it on this particular feast.²⁶

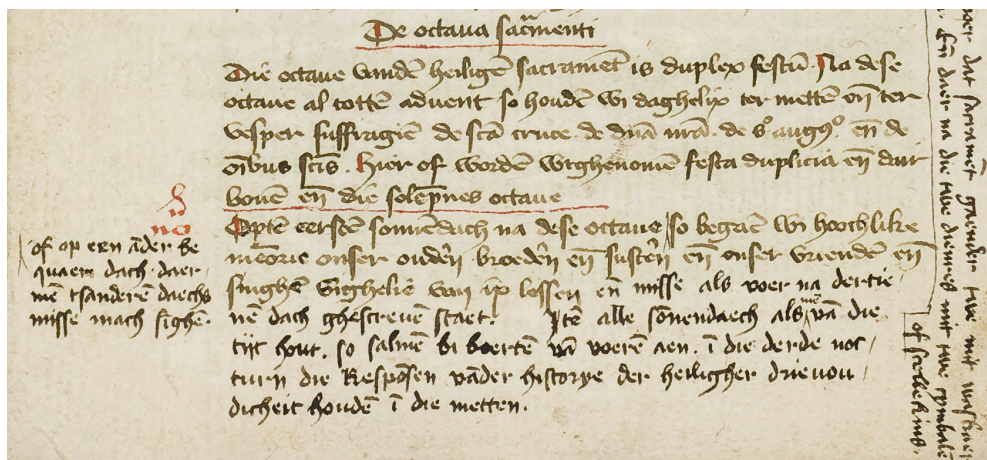
There are no Gregorian sources in which the words 'memento mori' literally appear in the inscription above the (collections of) chants. In terms of content, however, the *Media vita* fits exceedingly well in the *memento mori* tradition. That this widespread, popular chant was actually sung in the context of wakes and commemoration is affirmed by at least three fifteenth-century Netherlandish sources: an order of service (a specified structure of a church service, including texts and chants) for the funeral of a priest from Delft;²⁷ a similar order of service from the Delft convent of St Barbara;²⁸ and a Utrecht processional (c. 1475-

1500), in which the *Media vita* is given together with the chants and prayers of the Office of the Dead.²⁹ Furthermore, anecdotes from secondary literature recount how the chant was used for all kinds of 'crisis' situations, such as the plague.³⁰ Most sources list it as one of the office chants for the Third Sunday of Lent, the period of repentance and penance leading up to Easter.³¹ According to the processional-hymnal, this was also the case in Mariënpool; another rubric on fol. 240r reports that the *Vita media* was also sung on the ensuing Sundays, thus starting with the Third Sunday of Lent up to and including Passion Sunday. Apart from the processional-hymnal, however, not one other source in the entire corpus of sources examined appoints the *Media vita* or similar *memento mori* chants or prayers to the Feast of the Visitation.

In eighty-one of all the sources consulted, the *Sancta Maria* appears on a multitude of Marian feasts, yet not one source places it with the Feast of the Visitation. The only song of those included for the Feast of the Visitation in the processional-hymnal that was typically performed on this feast is the collecta prayer *Omnipotens sempiterne Deus*.³²

The Mariënpool processional-hymnal is the only Devout source that

Fig. 7
Instruction for the commemoration of deceased brothers, sisters and benefactors of the convent in 'Aantekeningen betreffende de kerkelijke diensten in Klooster Mariënpool', c. 1500. Erfgoed Leiden en omstreken, Archieven van de kloosters buiten Leiden, Klooster Mariënpool te Oegstgeest, inv. no. 882, fol. 26v (detail).



contains this remarkable combination of contrasting chants. Although this book dates from approximately fifty years later than the memorial panel, we may assume that this instruction reflects a use already practiced in years prior.

Commemoration in Mariënpoele

The possible reason for this Mariënpoele custom can namely be found in a source from circa 1500, contemporaneous with the memorial tablet. A manuscript marked as 'Aantekeningen betreffende de kerkelijke diensten in het klooster' (Notes regarding the church services in the monastery) contains the following annotation (fig. 7):

On the first Sunday after this octave [of Corpus Christi, mentioned in the item before this one] * so we undertake the high commemoration of our elder brothers and sisters and our friends and sing the vigil of nine lessons and the mass as it stands written for after thirteenth day.³³

* or on another suitable day when one may sing mass on the following day

The note describes when a 'high' (the most extensive) commemoration is held in Mariënpoele for the deceased brothers, sisters and benefactors of the convent. It then proceeds to state precisely what this commemoration entails: first and foremost, a vigil or wake. In the processional-hymnal, this can be found starting on fol. 201r, for Matins and Lauds. The prescribed 'nine lessons' (nine readings) are those concerning Matins; these are stated explicitly, as there were also shorter Matins with only three readings. In addition to the vigil, a Mass similar to that celebrated on 'Thirteenth Day' (the thirteenth day after Christmas, as described on fol. 14r) was also to be held.

That Mariënpoele commemorated its sisters and benefactors is to be ex-

pected. But the note clearly states that the convent, though exclusively for women, also commemorated 'our elder brothers'. These would be the male clergy members associated with the convent. Because certain sacraments (sacred acts) – the Eucharist, confession and the anointing of the sick – could only be performed by male clergy, each convent had at least one affiliated priest. The senior priest in charge was called a 'rector', who could be assisted by one or more other male clergy members bearing the title 'socius', or companion. As specified in the so-called *Memorieboek* of Mariënpoele (a memorial book recording the deaths and burial sites of clergy and benefactors compiled by multiple 'socii'), these individuals were often recruited from the Devout men's monastery Stein in the vicinity of Gouda.³⁴

The above annotation also states when this 'high commemoration' was to be held: on the first Sunday after the Octave of Corpus Christi, or on another suitable day preceding a day on which Mass is celebrated. This requires some explanation. In monasteries like Mariënpoele, Mass was celebrated every day. Even so, there were two types of days: one 'ordinary', the other a feast day (with Sundays always having the rank of a feast day). The specifically mentioned 'mass' in the annotation is to be understood as referring to a feast day. This distinction in rank manifested itself in the following: if held on a day that was not a Sunday or feast day, the Office of the Dead was in fact separate from the other celebrations occurring that day. For Sundays and feast days, the sequence of associated hours already began on the Vespers of the night before. Accordingly, the night office was also dedicated to the theme of the feast day. The Mariënpoele 'hooiglike memorie' is an example of this latter case, with the commemoration purposely included in the whole of celebrations on a specific feast day.

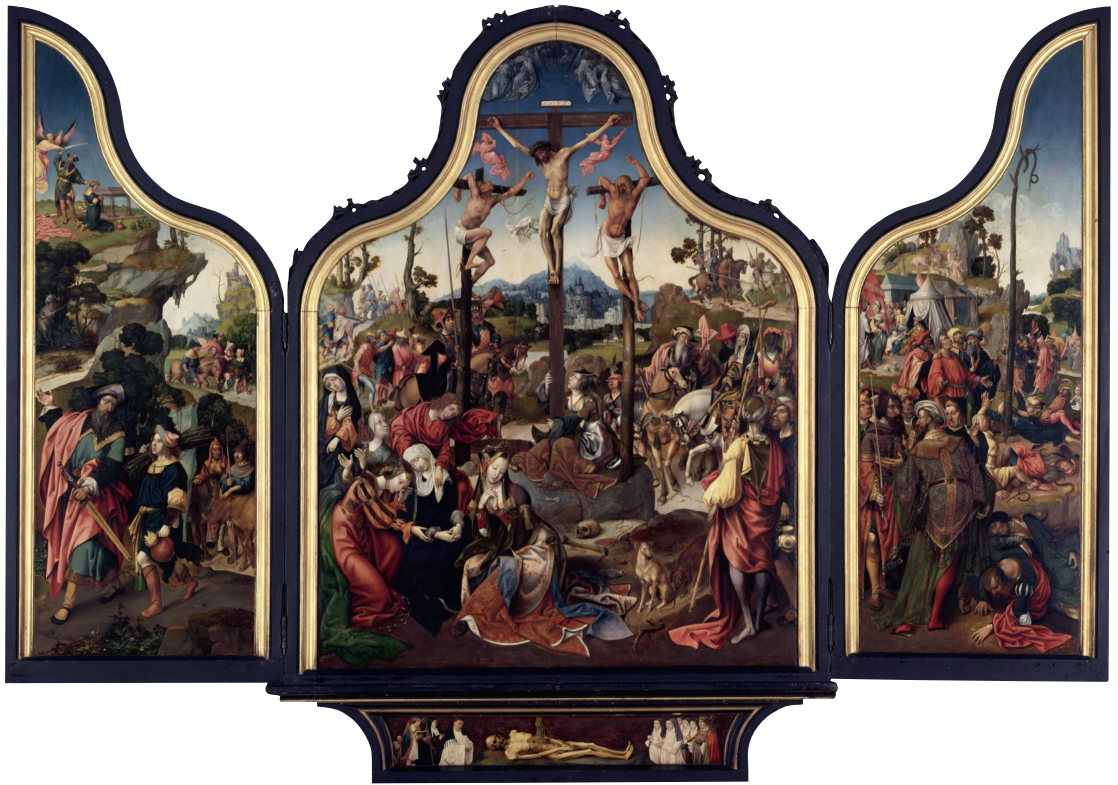


Fig. 8

CORNELIS
ENGBRECHTSZ,
*Triptych with
Crucifixion of Christ*,
c. 1515-17, painted
for Mariënpoel
Convent.
Oil on panel,
15 x 109 cm (predella).
Leiden, Lakenhal,
inv. no. s 93.
Photo: Rik Klein
Gotink Fotografie

The date on which the commemoration was celebrated could vary: Corpus Christi is a feast held on the second Thursday after Pentecost; the Octave constitutes an extension of a feast lasting eight days and therefore concerns the following Sunday. Because Corpus Christi and the Octave depend on what day Easter falls, both have shifting dates.³⁵ Consequently, the Sunday after the Octave of Corpus Christi occurs somewhere between 31 May to 4 July. The Feast of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, by contrast, has a fixed date: for the period in question, 2 July.³⁶ This situation meant that the high commemoration of the convent sometimes fell on the Feast of the Visitation (between 1470 and 1515, this was the case in 1508) or that the specified date landed on the day prior to this feast (as was the case in the years 1470, 1481 and 1492); in by far a majority of the years between 1470

and 1515, it was a date close to 2 July. The added explanation in the annotation specifies that any night before a feast day in this period could be chosen, meaning the commemoration could be placed on a day convenient to Mariënpoel Convent. The explicit, combined themes of praying on the behalf of deceased clergy and the expectant Mary in the chants prescribed for the Feast of the Visitation in the 1556 processional-hymnal clearly confirm that, in any event by 1556, the practice of commemoration at the convent had acquired a permanent place on the Feast of the Visitation; the memorial tablet itself suggests that this was already the case as early as circa 1500. And this practice, with a striking contrast between the depiction of the pregnant Mary with Elizabeth in the *hortus conclusus* and the message of the open tomb, was strictly unique to Mariënpoel.

The spontaneous thematic shift in the processional chants can perhaps be explained by the actual physical place in the convent where these were sung: other instructions for procession chants in the processional-hymnal reveal that some of these were sung inside the convent (typically two chants), and others upon entering the monastery church (typically one final chant). It is therefore quite conceivable that the *Media vita* was sung only after entering the church, as the sisters moved in procession to their designated choir stalls and the nearby tomb slabs (and perhaps the memorial tablet?). Given that prayers were sung at a standstill, the procession would undoubtedly have already reached its destination by the time the collecta *Omnipotens sempiterne Deus* was sung. It is this thematic shifting that is merged in the iconography of the memorial panel.

Another element of the panel that can be explained through the processional-hymnal is the detail of the open gate of the *hortus conclusus*. The *In Mariae vitae viam* and *Adsunt festa jubiliaea* were by far the hymns most commonly sung for the Feast of the Visitation, but the processional-hymnal states that at Mariënpoel the aforementioned *Ave maris stella* was sung instead (fol. 138r).³⁷ As explained above, this hymn addresses the themes of the open gate, the redemption of Eve's sin and Mary's motherhood.

In any case, this combinatory iconography is so unique that one may plausibly conclude the painter of the epitaph received specific instructions in advance. Unfortunately, no direct evidence of this can be found in the surviving Mariënpoel sources; in fact, there is no mention whatsoever of a commission for the panel. The convent's earliest surviving financial recordkeeping dates from 1518, with no indication found in any of the overviews of revenue and expenditures.³⁸ Accordingly, it is also unclear whether the painting of the memorial object was in any way motivated by the death of the four rectors (or, at least, the first three). This can be deemed tenable, however, particularly as only male rectors (no convent sisters) are depicted on the memorial tablet. By contrast, Cornelis Engebrechtsz's *Triptych with the Crucifixion of Christ*³⁹ from circa 1515-17, a memorial tablet made for one of Mariënpoel's rectors and used in the monastery church, indeed shows six sisters and a rector (fig. 8). Furthermore, a record of the commission for another memorial tablet, made for Mariënpoel in 1552, is also not found in the convent's sources: the large painted panel showing founder Boudewijn van Zwieten (c. 1371-1454) and his descendants kneeling before the Virgin Mary (fig. 9).⁴⁰

Fig. 9
ANONYMOUS,
Memorial Tablet
of Boudewijn
van Zwieten and
his Descendants,
1552, painted for
Mariënpoel Convent,
copy after older
original.
Oil on canvas,
129.3 x 385 cm.
Leiden, Museum
Lakenhal,
inv. no. 5 250.



The Mariënpoel Context

Secondary arguments further bolster this unique liturgical parallel in support of localizing the memorial panel in Mariënpoel Convent. The first concerns the presence of the four saints: St Jerome and St Augustine and the two unspecified female saints. While the first two are indeed commonly considered 'general' saints within the Devotio Moderna, the main altar of Mariënpoel was dedicated to Mary, St Jerome, St Augustine, St Catherine, and St Ursula and her companions.⁴¹ The tomb of the Mariënpoel priests ('paters grave', plural) was in front of this main altar, placed immediately adjacent on the left; the tombs of the sisters ('soessen graven', plural), in their turn, were immediately adjacent on the right.⁴² The present panel may therefore very well have been appointed to a (regular or fixed) place in close proximity to the main altar.

The saying 'Requiescant in pace', a standard phrase from the Office of the Dead, was a prayer of blessing used when more than one person was involved. It was by no means specific to Mariënpoel Convent. Its equivalent in the singular – 'Requiescat in pace' – appears with great frequency in both the convent's necrologium and memorial book, thus confirming that the saying was quite common there.⁴³ Remarkably, when the plural form 'requiescant' is used, occurring one time in the memorial book, it applies to 'alle tconvents verscienen' (all the con-

vent's deceased) just as in the description of the 'hoiglike memorie'. It is found in an added annotation from 1558, whereby the socius Adriaen Adriaensz – the one and the same Adrianus who wrote the processional-hymnal! – reports that he has completed the memorial book after the untimely death of a fellow socius, one Claes Cornelisz (fig. 10):

Idem anno Domini xvc lviii. So is that register book written as all the convent's deceased are recorded in it by heer Cornelijss van Steyn and the socii of this convent. He died before the book was completed which brother Adriaen Adriaenss van Steyn, socius of this convent, completed. Requiescant in pace.⁴⁴

A second mention of the plural form 'requiescant' appears in Boudewijn van Zwieten's founding letter from 1431, thus indicating that commemorative culture and Mary's intercession were fundamental to Mariënpoel Convent from its inception. The letter stipulates that all sisters were required to say an 'Ave Maria' in front of the Van Zwieten family tomb each time before entering the church's choir; and each time when leaving 'Anima eius et animae omnium fidelium defunctorum per piam memoriam Dei requiescant in pace. Amen.' (May his soul and the souls of all the departed faithful rest in peace in the pious remembrance of God. Amen.).⁴⁵ This means that the 'requiescant' was heard at least

Fig. 10
The saying 'Requiescant in pace' in an added annotation of socius Adriaen Adriaensz from 1558, in the memorial book of Mariënpoel Convent. Erfgoed Leiden en Omstreken, Archieven van de kloosters buiten Leiden, Klooster Mariënpoel te Oegstgeest, inv. no. 889, fol. 14r (detail).

Item a^o dñi xv^o lviii. soe is dat register bouck gescreuen daer alle tconvents brienē in staen van heer claes cornelijss van steyn en sornē vā dit tconent hy starff eert bouck voleynt was twelck broder adriaen adriaenss vā steyn en sornē vā dit tconent voleyndt heeft. Requiescant in pace.



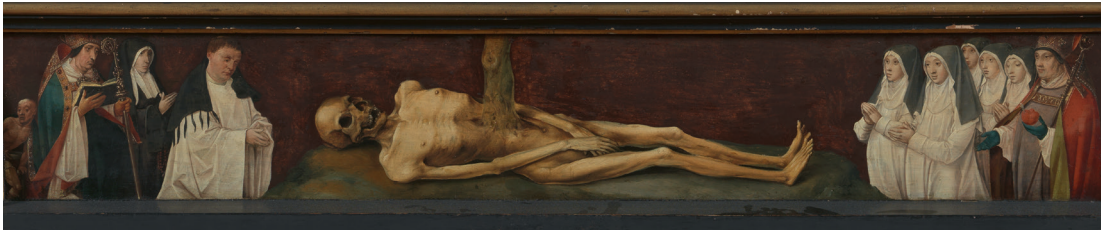
Figs. 11a, b
Details of St Jerome
in *Memorial Tablet*
(fig. 1) (a) and
Christ on the
Cross (fig. 2) (b).

eight times per day in the monastery church, during every prayer service. It confirms that holding a commemorative service on a Marian feast day was entirely in line with daily Mariënpoel practice.

Likewise noteworthy are visual similarities in two contemporaneous paintings. Elements of the memorial tablet can be compared to works by Cornelis Engebrechtsz, a painter responsible for at least two altarpieces and very likely a number of devotional objects made for Mariënpoel.⁴⁶ First to be noted is the resemblance of the iconography of St Jerome to that of the same saint on a painted panel of the *Christ on the Cross* from circa 1505-10 (figs. 11a, b), made for a

Bridgettine abbey.⁴⁷ In addition to his standard attributes – a lion and cardinal's robes – Jerome appears in both works holding a highly similar cross staff (a more variable element in the saint's iconography). Yet parallels can also be observed in other minor details, specifically, the grey collar and the gold clasp of the cords of his cardinal's hat. As this is unfortunately the only known example of St Jerome in Engebrechtsz's oeuvre, there exists no basis for further comparison.

The cadaver lying in the tomb can also be compared to another work by Engebrechtsz. The predella of the aforementioned *Triptych with the Crucifixion of Christ* (1515-17),⁴⁸ painted for Mariënpoel (albeit dating from fifteen



a



b

Figs. 12a, b
The Cadaver of Adam from which a Tree Grows, with Rector Jacob Maertensz Schout with St Martin (left) and Sisters of Mariënpoel Convent with St Augustine (right), predella of Triptych with Crucifixion of Christ (fig. 8) (a) and detail of cadaver in Memorial Tablet (fig. 1) (b).

years later), shows a cadaver positioned between the praying rector and sisters that greatly resembles that of the present panel. In this case, the corpse is that of Adam; from it, a tree grows, culminating in the cross of the crucified Christ in the panel surmounting the predella (figs. 12a, b). The anonymous Master of Spes Nostra should therefore perhaps be sought in the circle of Engebrechtsz, who contributed significantly to the pictorial tradition of the Mariënpoel Convent.

In finalizing the argument for the panel's localization in Mariënpoel, the aforementioned monasteries of Lopsen (near Leiden), Sion (near Delft) and OLV-Visitatie (near Haarlem) should also be considered. While documentary sources or works of art are scant from the latter two, the scarce surviving information does indicate liturgical customs entirely consistent with those described in sources from other Augustinian communities during the period in question.⁴⁹ The sole manuscript surviving from OLV-Visitatie, a misal from 1447,⁵⁰ shows no sign of

associating commemoration with the Feast of the Visitation,⁵¹ while the other liturgical practices are no different from those in comparable Devout Chapter monasteries.⁵² An examination of the surviving liturgical books and abundant archival material from the Lopsen monastery brings us to the same conclusion.⁵³

The panel itself provides the main argument against a localization in one of these three entirely male religious communities. Although the foreground of the memorial tablet is indeed exclusively populated with male figures, there is a prevailing feminine sphere manifest in the themes of the *hortus conclusus*, Mary and Elizabeth, the playful scene in the background and the presence of the pair of female saints. The most obvious, logical explanation for this combinatory iconography lies in a function in the context of a women's convent served by male *socii*. Viewed in conjunction with the liturgical, historical and stylistic arguments that have been presented here, Mariënpoel Convent emerges as the most plausible localization.

Conclusion: Localization and Interpretation

As early as 1979, Jeremy Dupertuis Bangs already proposed to localize the memorial tablet in Mariënpoeel Convent based on a possible identification of the depicted clergy.⁵⁴ In the present article, this localization is confirmed by the identification of this convent's unique liturgical practice centred on the Visitation. Perhaps even more relevant than this, however, is that it has revealed the basis for the panel's remarkable, contrasting iconography. This underscores the importance of including all possible liturgical sources in the research of church objects. At Mariënpoeel, the deceased brothers, sisters and benefactors of the convent were commemorated on and around the Feast of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary: during and after a procession on that day, Mary, to whom the monastery and the main altar close by were dedicated, was beseeched for intercession. In line with Hoogewerff's interpretation, it was indeed during this period of the year that the *Salve Regina* was certainly sung after Complines every day, together with – in line with

Van Os's interpretation – the daily *Magnificat* of Vespers. It was also when – in line with Ubl's interpretation – the Office of the Dead was performed in its most complete form. In the end, however, it was the theme of the feast itself that prompted the inclusion of the representation of the Visitation in the iconography of the epitaph. The extraordinary combination of processional chants, prayers and this painting made Mariënpoeel's commemoration a unique celebration.

ABSTRACT

Remarkable for its unique combination of Marian and commemorative iconography, the so-called 'Spes Nostra' painting of circa 1500 – a memorial tablet also known as an epitaph – has fuelled an ongoing debate regarding its purported message and commissioners. Despite a wide range of proposed interpretations, none of the proffered hypotheses fully explains all the elements the image contains. In the present article, the oft-mentioned possibility of a connection to liturgical practice (from which the unknown master's name of convenience was born) is further explored through the consultation of liturgical sources, including chant books. To this end, two undisputed elements of the panel are taken as starting points: the clergy's vestments, pointing to the panel's function in a *Devotio Moderna* community under the Rule of St Augustine, and the Visitation iconography. Based on a large corpus of *Devotio Moderna* sources, the unicity of the panel's combinatory iconography is demonstrated. Moreover, a unique practice in the Devout convent of Mariënpoeel near Leiden, combining the Feast of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary with the commemoration of the convent's members and benefactors, is brought to light. The exact parallelism of Mariënpoeel's specific practice to the panel's iconographic themes provides compelling argument for its localization in that community.

NOTES

- * A word of thanks to the librarians and archivists of the institutions cited in this article for their assistance in the consultation of all sources. I extend special thanks to Mr Ton Tromp for the Latin-language translations and Dr Anne-Maria van Egmond for her valuable editorial contribution.
- For technical details and art historical analysis, see Jan Piet Filedt Kok (ed.), *Early Netherlandish Paintings in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam*, vol. 1: *Artists Born Before 1500*, online coll. cat. Amsterdam (Rijksmuseum) 2010: hdl.handle.net/10934/RM0001.COLLECT.905 (consulted 16 April 2025).
 - Truus van Bueren, 'Zorg voor het hier en het hiernamaals: De functie van memorietafels in het (aarts)bisdom Utrecht in de Middeleeuwen', *De Nederlandsche Leeuw* 115 (1998), pp. 153-91. In most cases, memorial tablets also encouraged the viewer to pray on the behalf of the deceased. In the Middle Ages, it was believed that this would enable the soul of a deceased individual in purgatory to gain faster entry into heaven.
 - Matthias Ubl, '“The Office of the Dead”: A New Interpretation of the Spes Nostra Painting', *The Rijksmuseum Bulletin* 61 (2013), no. 4, pp. 323-37.
 - The priest far right was added in a later stage of painting; see online catalogue entry (note 1). Jeremy Dupertuis Bangs formulated a hypothesis whereby the four priests are identified as the four rectors of Mariënpool Convent (near Leiden) known to have died shortly after each other, to wit: Johannes Crispiani (†1496), Gijsbert N. (†1496), Gerard Dirksz (†1504) and Sebastiaan Fransz (†1507); see *Cornelis Engebrechtsz's Leiden: Studies in Cultural History*, Assen 1979, pp. 23-24. Noteworthy here is that in the necrologium of Mariënpool (see note 43), Gerard Dirksz's name is recorded as *Gerrit* Dirksz.
 - Contrary to the description of the work in the online catalogue entry (note 1), which states that the origin of the rhymed inscription adjacent to the tomb is unknown, the saying in question was definitely dispersed internationally and is documented in precisely the same wording in the following locations: Monk Sherborne Abbey (twelfth century?), see Herbert Arthur Doubleday and William Page (eds.), *A History of Hampshire and the Isle of Wight*, 5 vols., London 1900-14, vol. 4, p. 237; the church of St Augustine in Broxbourne (c. 1460), see Herbert Haines, *A Manual for the Study of Monumental Brasses*, Oxford 1848, p. 16; the Crosier monastery in Cologne (mid-fifteenth century), see Johan Jacob Merlo, *Nachrichten von dem Leben und den Werken Kölnischer Künstler*, Cologne 1850, p. 238; and the tomb of Jan v van Arkel in the church of Leerdam (mid-fifteenth century), whereby the inscription, though scarcely legible in its present state, is cited in various eighteenth- and nineteenth-century publications, e.g. Theodorus van Brussel, *Aanhangsel tot Ludolf Smids, M.D. Schatkamer der Nederlandsche oudheden*, Amsterdam 1778, p. 173.
 - Ubl 2013 (note 3), p. 326, fig. 4: Master of James IV of Scotland (Flemish), detail of the Visitation miniature from the Spinola Hours, c. 1515-20.
 - C.f. *Triptych with the Virgin and Child with Donors and Saints* by the Master of Delft, c. 1500-10 (Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. no. SK-A-3141: online catalogue entry (note 1): hdl.handle.net/10934/RM0001.COLLECT.9539) and *Triptych with the Lamentation of Christ with Founders and Saints* by Cornelis Engebrechtsz, c. 1508-10 (Leiden, Museum De Lakenhal, inv. no. s 94: online collection link: <https://www.lakenhal.nl/nl/collectie/s-94>).
 - The sexton's books of Mariënpool Convent contain, for example, detailed descriptions regarding what number of candles were to be placed on which graves on a given day; see Leiden, Erfgoed Leiden en Omstreken (henceforth *NL-LdnRAL*), *Kloosters van Leiden en omstreken* (acc. no. 0503), *Archieven van de kloosters buiten Leiden*, *Klooster Mariënpool te Oegstgeest* (henceforth *Mariënpool*), inv. nos. 883 ('Coster boeck'); 884 ('Costerinne boeck').
 - Godefridus Johannes Hoogewerff, *De Noord-Nederlandsche schilderkunst*, 5 vols., The Hague 1936-47, vol. 2, pp. 278-80.
 - Henk van Os, 'On the Function of Early Netherlandish Art', in Henk van Os et al., *Netherlandish Art in the Rijksmuseum 1400-1600*, coll. cat. Amsterdam 2000, pp. 80-81.
 - For sixty-eight representations of the Visitation found in Dutch manuscripts, see the website *Medieval Illuminated Manuscripts*: <https://manuscripts.kb.nl/> (National Library of the Netherlands (KB) and Museum Huis van het Boek, The Hague), search term 'Visitation' (consulted 16 April 2025).
 - For a comprehensive discussion of the Office of the Dead and its development, see Knud Ottosen, *The Responsories and Versicles of the Latin Office of the Dead*, Aarhus 2008.

- 13 Cf. the Office of the Dead in Leiden, Universiteitsbibliotheek (University Library, henceforth UB), ms. BPL 3515 (antiphonal originating from an unknown monastery within the Devout Chapter tradition, 1425-75).
- 14 Lonneke Hoondert, *Kloosterkleding in beeld*, Utrecht (master's thesis Utrecht University) 2010, pp. 20-30. See also the eponymous website, part of the Medieval Memoria Online (MEMO) project: https://staticweb.hum.uu.nl/memo/kloosterkleding/Reguliere_kanunniken_en_kanunnikessen.html (consulted 16 April 2025).
- 15 Remmet van Luttervelt, 'De herkomst van de Meester van de Virgo inter Virgines', *Bulletin Museum Boijmans Rotterdam* 3 (1952), pp. 57-71, esp. p. 71. See also H. Schulte Nordholt, 'Meester van Spes Nostra, Allegorie op de vergankelijkheid', *Openbaar Kunstbezit* 7 (1963), p. 35; Bangs 1979 (note 4), p. 24.
- 16 Unpublished paper by Renée Simons, University of Amsterdam 1988; see Truus van Bueren, *Leven na de dood: Gedenken in de late Middeleeuwen*, Turnhout 1999, p. 206.
- 17 Unpublished paper by Jeroen Peters, University of Amsterdam 2007; see Friso Lammertse and Jeroen Giltay (eds.), *Vroege Hollanders: Schilderkunst van de late Middeleeuwen*, exh. cat. Rotterdam (Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen) 2008, pp. 289-90, no. 54.
- 18 For the liturgy of the Devout Chapter monasteries, see Ernest Persoons and Willem Lourdaux, 'Bibliographische inleiding tot de studie van de Windesheimse liturgie', *Sacris Erudiri* 17 (1966), pp. 401-10. For the music, see Ulrike Hascher-Burger and Hermina Joldersma, 'Introduction: Music and the Devotio Moderna', *Music in the Spiritual Culture of the Devotio Moderna (Church History and Religious Culture*, vol. 88, no. 3), Leiden 2008, pp. 313-28.
- 19 As methodology, the hereafter cited sources were thoroughly examined for liturgies with possible parallels in acts, prayers, readings or music to the thematic combination of the panel; in this endeavour, special attention was given to the appointed offices of the Dead and the celebrations of the Feast of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. For this purpose, a corpus comprising four groups of sources was used:
 1. All Devout sources preserved in the Netherlands such as cited in the largest (though incomplete) overview of such sources: Ulrike Hascher-Burger's former website *Musica devota – Music in Manuscripts and Incunabula from the Ambience of the Devotio Moderna*, which was moved to the Data Station Social Sciences and Humanities after Burger's death: <https://ssh.datastations.nl/dataset.xhtml?persistentId=doi:10.17026/dans-xxz-6gsy> (consulted 16 April 2025); search terms 'Handschriften', 'Liturgische Handschriften' and 'Ausserliturgische Handschriften'.
 2. The largest collection of Devotio Moderna liturgical books in the Netherlands, the Collectie-Soeterbeeck, Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen, UB, including all types of (chant) books: <https://www.western.ubn.ru.nl/soeterbeeck/>. Entire liturgies for the Feast of the Visitation can be found, for example, in the following digitized antiphonals: ms. 447 (IV 6) (c. 1504), fol. 58r ff.; ms. 449 (IV 15) (1499), fol. 134r ff.; ms. 454 (IV 25) (c. 1478), fol. 154v ff.
 3. All surviving sources of Mariënpool Convent: Vilnius (Lithuania), Library of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences, Dept. of Manuscripts, ms. F22-95 (processional-hymnal, 1556); Nová Říše (Czech Republic), Premonstratensian Abbey, ms. 70 (diurnal); NL-LdNRAI, Mariënpool, inv. no. 881 (processional); *ibid.*, inv. no. 887 (Agenda Mortuorum); *ibid.*, ms. LB 65052-11 (breviary, c. 1460, possibly from Mariënpool); *ibid.*, inv. no. 882 (liturgical regulations); *ibid.*, inv. no. 884 ('Costerinne boeck'); *ibid.*, inv. no. 883 ('Coster boeck'); *ibid.*, inv. no. 888 (necrologium).
 4. Other Devout sources: Haarlem, Noord-Hollands Archief (henceforth NL-HlMnHA), ms. 187 C 17 (missal, 1447); Utrecht, Catharijneconvent, 'Brevier van Beatrijs van Assendelft' (c. 1485); Leiden, UB, ms. BPL 3515 (antiphonal, 1425-75); Utrecht, UB, ms. 432 (processional, fifteenth century); Leiden, UB, ms. BPL 3683 (gradual, c. 1480-1500); Heidelberg, UB, Cod. Trübner 21 (missal, c. 1400-25); Tilburg, Tilburg Catholic University, Theologische Faculteit, ms. 31 (antiphonal, 1409); Den Haag, KB, ms. 129 E 3 (ritual, 1450-1500); Enschede, Rijksmuseum Twenthe, ms. 381 (missal, after 1457); Utrecht, Catharijneconvent, ms. BMH h149 (antiphonal-gradual, 1562); NL-LdNRAI, Kloosters van Leiden en omstreken (acc. no. 0503), Archieven van de kloosters te Leiden en in de

- vrijheid, Sint Hieronymusdal monastery or Lopsen (henceforth Lopsen), ms. LB 65052-7 (cantual, before 1428); Utrecht, Utrechts Archief, Oud-Katholieke Kerk in Nederland (henceforth OKK, acc. no. 88), inv. no. 296 (manual, fifteenth century); Delft, Stadsarchief Delft, Archief 598, inv. no. 574 (manual, fifteenth century); Amsterdam, UB, ms. 1 A 23 (antiphonal, 1544); The Hague, KB, ms. 68 A 1 (antiphonal, c. 1520); The Hague, KB, ms. 128 C 6 (antiphonal, late sixteenth century); The Hague, KB, ms. 71 J 67 (diurnal, 1448); The Hague, KB, ms. 76 E 3 (psalter, early sixteenth century).
- To compare sources originating from outside the Low Countries, the largest repertoires of liturgical-musical sources were consulted: the Cantus database (<https://cantusdatabase.org/>) and Medieval Music Manuscripts Online (MMMO) database (<https://musmed.eu/>) (consulted 16 April 2025).
- 20 E.g. NL-LdnRAL, Lopsen, ms. LB 65052-7 (Leiden, Hieronymusdal/Lopsen), fol. 25v ff.: tropes for all Marian antiphons; Amsterdam, UB, ms. 1 A 8 (Utrecht, Buurkerk), fol. 172r ff.; *ibid.*, ms. v J 59; *ibid.*, ms. 1 B 50 (Groningen), fols. 174r ff.; Den Bosch, Illustre Lieve Vrouwebroederschap, 'Codex Smijers' (Den Bosch), fol. viiiv ff.; NL-HlmNHA, ms. 184 C 3 (Heemskerk), fol. 197v ff.
 - 21 Utrecht, UB, ms. 16 H 34, fol. 41r-41v. Edition of the manuscript by Ulrike Hascher-Burger as *Publications of Mediaeval Musical Manuscripts*, vol. 31, Ottawa 2004. A convolute contains texts that are bound together but not produced at the same time.
 - 22 Vilnius, Library of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences, Dept. of Manuscripts, ms. F22-95. Edition of the manuscript by Ike de Loos and Victoria Goncharova as *Publications of Mediaeval Musical Manuscripts*, vol. 29, Ottawa 2003: *Maria Serenissima* on fols. 113v ff.
 - 23 Incidentally, this is likewise the case in Netherlandish music manuscripts produced in the non-Devout context, such as Utrecht, UB, ms. 406 (antiphonal), fol. 243r ff.; Zutphen, Erfgoedcentrum Zutphen, ms. 6 (antiphonal), fol. 199v ff.; NL-HlmNHA, ms. 187 C 5 (antiphonal), fol. 152r ff.; The Hague, KB, ms. NL-DHK 73 E 8 (antiphonal), fol. 112v ff.; Delft, Oud-Katholieke Parochie, 'Cantuale Novum', pp. 335 ff.
 - 24 A responsory is a type of plainchant, named after its formal aspects. Verses sung by the cantor alternate with the responses sung by the choir.
 - 25 Cantus database (note 19). The two sources are:
 - Wolfenbüttel, Herzog August Bibliothek, Cod. Guelf. 28 Helmst. (Heinemann-Nr. 31): an early sixteenth-century antiphonal from the Augustine convent St Vitus in Hilwartshausen.
 - Wellington (New Zealand), The Alexander Turnbull Library, Rare Books, ms. MSR-03: a late fifteenth-century antiphonal made for the Sisters of the Common Life of St Agatha in Amersfoort.
 - 26 Vienna, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek, Handschriftensammlung, ms. 1799**: a thirteenth-century Cistercian antiphonal from Rein (Austria).
 - 27 Utrecht, UB, ms. 423, 'Ordo ad sepeliendum presbyterum', Delft, Nieuwe Kerk?, c. 1450: *Media vita* op fol. 16r.
 - 28 Utrecht, Utrechts Archief, OKK, inv. no. 296, 'Ordo ad sepeliendum presbyterum', St Barbara Convent, Delft, fifteenth century, no foliation: *Media vita* appointed as final chant, 'de sepulchro ad chor(um) ca(n)ta(n) do ha(n)c antipho(na)'.
 - 29 Utrecht, UB, ms. 421, processional according to the usus of the bishopric of Utrecht, c. 1475-1500: *Media vita* op fol. 83r.
 - 30 George Gordon Coulton, *Five Centuries of Religion*, vol. 4: *The Last Days of Medieval Monachism*, Cambridge 1950, pp. 123-24.
 - 31 For an overview, see the Cantus database (note 19), search term 'media vita' (consulted 16 April 2025).
 - 32 The term 'collecta' refers to 'collective' (summarizing) prayer. Such a prayer expresses the distinct character of the celebration.
 - 33 'Opte(n) eerste(n) sonne(n)dach na dese octave [van Sacramentsdag, daarvoor genoemd] * so begae(n) wi hooiglike me(m) orie onser oude(re)n broede(re)n en(de) suste(re)n en(de) onser vriende(n) en(de) singhe(n) vighilie van ix lessen en(de) misse als voer na dertiene(n) dach ghescreve(n) staet. * of op een ander bequaem dach daer men tsandere(n) daechs misse mach si(n)ghe(n)'. NL-LdnRAL, Mariënpool, inv. no. 882: Aantekeningen betreffende de kerkelijke diensten in het klooster, fol. 26v.
 - 34 Upon its founding in 1431, Mariënpool was admitted into the Chapter of Sion, whereby the priors of Schoonhoven and Stein were appointed visitators (NL-LdnRAL, Mariënpool, inv. no. 860, Letter of Foundation). A visitation was an inspection of monastic

- discipline by superiors of another monastery. For mentions of *socii* from Stein, see for example NL-LdnRAL, Mariënpool, inv. no. 889, memorial book.
- 35 For an overview of the varying dates of Easter in the fifteenth century (with which the dates of these feasts can be calculated), see also Guus J. den Besten, *Een nieuw millennium! Hoezo een probleem?*, Zoetermeer 1999, p. 151.
- 36 That Mariënpool Convent also celebrated the Feast of the Visitation on 2 July, can be confirmed, for instance, in the convent's necrologium; see NL-LdnRAL, Mariënpool, inv. no. 888 (c. 1500).
- 37 At the time of this writing, the Cantus database (note 19, consulted 16 April 2025) contained thirty-one sources with the Feast of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, of which twenty-four contain repertoire for the Divine Office (hymns are sung only in the Divine Office). Fourteen manuscripts appoint the *In Mariae vitae viam* as hymn for the feast, the remaining ten manuscripts *Adsunt festa jubilaea*.
- 38 NL-LdnRAL, Mariënpool, Financial Documents, inv. nos. 901, 902, 904-910.
- 39 See online collection Lakenhal: <https://www.lakenhal.nl/nl/collectie/s-93>.
- 40 This memorial tablet was made to replace a panel most likely painted after Boudewijn van Zwieten's death. See online collection Lakenhal: <https://www.lakenhal.nl/nl/collectie/s-250>.
- 41 NL-LdnRAL, Mariënpool, inv. nos. 883, 'Coster boeck', fol. 44v; 884, fol. 22r.
- 42 NL-LdnRAL, Mariënpool, inv. nos. 883, 'Coster boeck', fol. 45r; 884, fol. 24v.
- 43 NL-LdnRAL, Mariënpool, inv. nos. 888, necrologium, fols. 9v, 22v, 23r, 27v, 28v; 889, memorial book, esp. fols. 13v (at the bottom), 16r ff.
- 44 'Item a(nn)o D(omi)ni xvc LVIII. Soe is dat register bouck gescreven daer alle tco(n) vents v(ers)cience(n) in staen van heer claes cornelijss van steyn en(de) sociis va(n) dit co(n)vent(.) hij starff eert bouck voleynt was twelck broder adriaen adriaensss van(n) steyn en(de) sociis va(n) dit co(n) vent voleyndt heeft. Requiescant in pace.' NL-LdnRAL, Mariënpool, inv. no. 889, memorial book, fol. 14r.
- 45 NL-LdnRAL, Mariënpool, inv. no. 860, Letter of Foundation.
- 46 Bangs 1979 (note 4), esp. pp. 22-24.
- 47 See online catalogue entry (note 1): hdl.handle.net/10934/RM0001.COLLECT.8386 (consulted 16 April 2025).
- 48 See online collection Lakenhal: <https://www.lakenhal.nl/nl/collectie/s-93> (consulted 16 April 2025).
- 49 Eelcko Ypma, *Het Generaal Kapittel van Sion: zijn oorsprong, ontwikkeling en inrichting*, Nijmegen 1949, pp. 54-55; Bernard Antoon Vermaseren, *Het klooster 'Sancta Maria in Monte Sion' tussen Delft en Rijswijk, 1433-1574: een vrucht van de Moderne Devotie*, Pijnacker 2001; A.G. Weiler, *Volgens de norm van de vroege en inrichting, Nijmegen 1949*, pp. 54-55; Jacques Moerman, *Sion: klooster, buitenplaats en landbouwgebied. De rijke historie van het Rijswijkse Sion. Rijswijkse Serie 21*, Rijswijk 2010; Gerrit Verhoeven, *De derde stad van Holland: Geschiedenis van Delft tot 1795*, Zwolle 2015, pp. 114-117. For a concise overview of the history of the OLV-Visitatie monastery, see Wilhelmina C.M. Wüstefeld, *De boeken van de Grote of Sint Bavokerk*, Hilversum 1989, pp. 36-38.
- 50 NL-HlmNHA, Ms. 187 C 17.
- 51 To be concluded from the included liturgies 'Pro benefactoribus' (fol. 110v), 'In anniversario et exequiis defunctorum' (fol. 102v), 'In commemoratione defunctorum' (fol. 103r) and 'In visitatione BMV' (fol. 161v), and the included sequence for OLV-Visitatie *Ave preclara maris stella* (fol. 204v).
- 52 See note 19.
- 53 NL-LdnRAL, Lopsen, esp. ms. LB 65052-8 (vigil book) and ms. LB 65052-7 (cantual).
- 54 See note 4, esp. Bangs 1979 (note 4), pp. 22-24.