



RYC2021-033027-I funded by MCIN/AEI /10.13039/501100011033 and by the European Union NextGenerationEU/PRTR.

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THE BOYDELL PRESS

The Ramon y Cajal contract (RYC-2021-033027-I) co-funded by the Spanish State Research Agency (AEI) and the European Social Funds (ESF) has contributed to the Chapter Processing Charge [CPC] to make this article freely available (OA) on the internet.

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First published 2023
The Boydell Press, Woodbridge

ISBN 978–1–83765–029–3

This chapter is an extract from *Medieval Women Religious, c. 800–c. 1500: New Perspectives*, edited by Kimm Curran and Janet Burton

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The Boydell Press is an imprint of Boydell & Brewer Ltd
PO Box 9, Woodbridge, Suffolk IP12 3DF, UK
and of Boydell & Brewer Inc.
668 Mt Hope Avenue, Rochester, NY 14620–2731, USA
website: www.boydellandbrewer.com

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

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CHAPTER 12

Between Collective Memory and Individual Remembrance in Women's Religious Communities

MERCEDES PÉREZ VIDAL

WOMEN, especially women religious, created individual, collective, and historical memory and, over the last two decades, their roles have gained increasing scholarly attention. There has been a flourishing of studies analysing women and the organisation of funerary memory, women commissioners and producers of chronicles, liturgical and devotional books, and other narrative sources,¹ artefacts of material culture from memorial stones to sacred vessels,² and architecture.³ These studies demonstrate how women created, reinvented, or even erased the past by consciously selecting some elements and concealing others, and also how men and women collaborated in the memorial tradition of the Middle Ages.⁴ Women who acted as patrons self-consciously manipulated liturgy, artworks, buildings, and spaces to shape their own, or their families', remembrance, and their dynastic identity. In the case of religious women, commemoration of their kin converged with

¹ Patrick Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance: Memory and Oblivion at the End of the First Millennium* (Princeton, 1994); Elisabeth van Houts, *Memory and Gender in Medieval Europe 900–1200* (London, 1999); Gabriella Zarri and Nieves Baranda Leturio (eds), *Memoria e comunità femminili. Spagna e Italia, sec. XV–XVII. Memoria y comunidades femeninas. España e Italia, siglos XV–XVII* (Florence, 2011); Eva Butz and Alfons Zettler, 'The Making of the Carolingian *Libri Memoriales*: Exploring or Constructing the Past?', in Elma Brenner, Meredith Cohen, and Mary Franklin-Brown (eds), *Memory and Commemoration in Medieval Culture* (London, 2013), pp. 79–92.

² GMC; Van Houts argued for a gendered dimension to the process of remembering through the use of objects, which functioned as 'memory pegs': Van Houts, *Memory and Gender*, pp. 93–120. On books and memory see, above, Charles, pp. 154–62.

³ Felipe Pereda, 'Liturgy as Women's Language: Two Noble Patrons Prepare for the End in Fifteenth-Century Spain', in Therese Martin (ed.), *Reassessing the Roles of Women as 'Makers' of Medieval Art and Architecture*, 2 vols (Leiden, 2012), vol. 2, pp. 937–88.

⁴ Griffiths, *Garden of Delights*; Fiona J. Griffiths and Julie Hotchin (eds), *Partners in Spirit: Women, Men and Religious Life in Germany, 1100–1500* (Turnhout, 2014).

the memory of their communities.⁵ Both of them were types of a collective and identity-oriented memorialisation developed since the Early Middle Ages, which coexisted with a later form of commemoration, a more individual one that entailed intercession, in the form of prayers, and donations, to shorten the time of the deceased in Purgatory.⁶ These have to be studied together as women had an active role in the making ‘multifaceted memory’ that in some cases commemorated at the same time, a dynasty, a religious community, and an individual.⁷

The role of women as memory keepers of their families, through the foundation of monasteries, donations, and the institution of anniversaries for the deceased, has been explored in different territories, although further comparative analysis between diverse monastic landscapes by adopting a gender perspective is still necessary. Many ‘elite’ women’s monastic communities worked as bastions of dynastic familial memory since the Early Middle Ages, and by the Central Middle Ages these foundations suffered significant changes as they passed from being ‘family monasteries’, closely ruled by members of the aristocracy, to being incorporated into the reforms based on the Rule of St Benedict and especially into the Cistercian Order.⁸ However, their role as funerary memorials for the aristocracy or the royalty continued, and women collaborated with the new reformed orders in the commemoration of their lineage, as they would do later with the mendicants.⁹

⁵ Stefanie Seeberg, ‘Women as Makers of Church Decoration: Illustrated Textiles at the Monasteries of Altenberg/Lahn, Ruperstberg, and Heiningen (13th–14th c.)’, in Martin, *Reassessing the Roles*, vol. 1, pp. 355–92.

⁶ Michel Lauwers, *La mémoire des ancêtres, le souci des morts. Morts, rites et société au moyen âge (diocèse de Liège, XIe–XIIIe siècles)* (Paris, 1996); Jean Claude Schmidt, ‘Images and the Work of Memory’, in Brenner, Cohen, and Franklin-Brown (eds), *Memory and Commemoration*, pp. 13–32, at p. 18.

⁷ Cf. Ángela Muñoz Fernández, ‘Memorias del coro: Constanza de Castilla y las políticas del recuerdo’, in Zarri and Baranda Leturio (eds), *Memoria e Comunità Femminili*, pp. 27–48, at p. 36.

⁸ Michèle Gaillard, ‘Female Monasteries of the Early Middle Ages (Seventh to Ninth Century) in Northern Gaul: Between Monastic Ideals and Aristocratic Powers’, in *WMMW*, pp. 75–96; Gregoria Caverio Domínguez, ‘Spanish Female Monasticism: “Family” Monasteries and their Transformation (Eleventh to Twelfth Centuries)’, in *WMMW*, pp. 15–52. See, above, Vanderputten, pp. 22–42 and Sykes, pp. 43–60.

⁹ Thomas Coomans, ‘Moniales cisterciennes et mémoire dynastique: églises funéraires princières et abbayes cisterciennes dans les anciens Pays-Bas médiévaux’, *Cîteaux*, 56 (2005), 87–146. See also, Anne E. Lester, ‘A Shared Imitation: Cistercian Convents and Crusader Families in Thirteenth-Century Champagne’, *JMH*, 35 (2009), 353–70; Ghislain Baur, *Les religieuses de Castille. Patronage aristocratique et ordre cistercien, XIIe–XIIIe siècle* (Rennes, 2012); Anne-Hélène Alliot, ‘Longchamp and Lourcine: The Role of Female Abbeys in the Construction of Capetian Memory (Late Thirteenth Century to Mid-Fourteenth Century)’, in Brenner, Cohen, and Franklin-Brown (eds), *Memory and Commemoration*, pp. 243–60.

The gift-giving or donation of different artefacts of material culture – from luxurious garments, to relics, reliquaries, textiles, portable altars, liturgical books, or any other kind of *ornamenta ecclesiae* – made by women (either lay patronesses or monastic superiors) to religious institutions, has been subject to recent and increasing scrutiny. These studies show how women used these objects to express power over the religious foundations they protected, as well as showing their own identity and in the remembrance of their kin.¹⁰ However, there is still potential for further development and the role of many of these objects, from reliquaries to liturgical books, has yet to be analysed and clarified, particularly for the Later Middle Ages. Other points requiring further study are the circulation of these artefacts through different networks, their placement and display within the liturgical space, and how this defined their role as ‘objects of remembrance’.

Space and Memory

Space and materiality were indeed fundamental in the articulation and expression of individual, dynastic, or collective memory within religious foundations. The materials and the different position of tombs, memorials, or other commemorative artefacts, like shrines and reliquaries, within monastic spaces, helped to define their meaning in creating individual or collective memory. During the second half of the thirteenth century, as previous prohibitions were gradually abandoned, tombs moved progressively inside the church, to designated chapels, and later to areas of higher visibility: the choir, transept, and presbytery.¹¹ In addition to inhumation, the erection of tombs with a certain monumentality was allowed; later, chapels patronised by different families became frequent, with a ‘privatisation’ of some spaces.¹² However, some historians cling to the idea of a strict

¹⁰ Susan Marti, ‘Königin Agnes und ihre geschenke. Zeugnisse, zuschreibungen und legenden’, *Kunst und architektur in der Schweiz*, 47:2 (1996), 169–80; Therese Martin, ‘Mujeres, hermanas e hijas: El mecenazgo femenino en la familia de Alfonso VI’, *Anales de historia del arte*, 1 (2011), 147–79; Jitske Jasperse, ‘Matilda, Leonor and Joanna: the Plantagenet Sisters and the Display of Dynastic Connections through Material Culture’, *JMH*, 43:5 (2017), 523–47. These considerations can be extended to the liturgical books commissioned, donated, and used by these women: Mercedes Pérez Vidal, ‘Female Aristocratic Networks: Books, Liturgy and Reform in Castilian Nunneries’, in Emma O. Bérat, Rebecca Hardie, and Irina Dumitrescu (eds), *Relations of Power: Women’s Networks in the Middle Ages* (Göttingen, 2021), pp. 105–32.

¹¹ Caroline Bruzelius, ‘The Dead Come to Town: Preaching, Burying, and Building in the Mendicant Orders’, in Alexandra Gajewski and Zoë Opačić (eds), *The Year 1300 and the Creation of a New European Architecture* (Turnhout, 2008), pp. 209–30.

¹² Official approval of the doctrine of Purgatory by the First (1245), and Second (1274) Councils of Lyon resulted in the increasing number of intercessory prayers, requests for inhumation, foundation of anniversaries and masses for the dead: Jacques Le Goff, *La*

gender division regarding liturgy and liturgical memory and argue that the lesser spiritual effectiveness of women's monasteries (as a consequence of the restrained liturgical responsibilities of women religious), and the stricter regulations over enclosure, would together have occasioned a lack of burial requests in women's monasteries.¹³ This idea cannot be generalised as the implementation of enclosure varied significantly from place to place, even during the Later Middle Ages, and despite the limitations imposed on women's authority by conciliar legislation, there is evidence of women fulfilling ministerial roles during the Central and Later Middle Ages.¹⁴ Thus, we encounter examples of women's monastic communities that received a significant number of burial requests: Santo Domingo de Madrid was authorised to receive lay burials in their monastery, a permission confirmed in 1285 by Sancho IV, and from then on the monastery received numerous requests for burial, as well as anniversaries and suffrages.¹⁵ This situation only decayed in the fifteenth century when the superior of the community, Constanza de Castilla, promoted 'privatisation' of commemoration for the dead, by transforming the church's apse into a funerary chapel for her grandfather, King Pedro I, and other members of her lineage.¹⁶ In this case, as well as in many other communities - Poissy, Unterlinden, Oetenbach, and Las Huelgas (Burgos) - enclosure was also permeable for the sake of the rituals of remembrance, as well as of other ceremonies (see Fig. 12.1).¹⁷

naissance du purgatoire (Paris, 1981); Philippe Ariès, 'Le purgatoire et la cosmologie de L'Au-delà', *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales*, 38:1 (1983), 151–7.

¹³ Valerie Garver argues *sanctimoniales* had a less visible and more domestic liturgical role, commemorating the deceased and reciting their names during the mass. Valerie L. Garver, *Women and Aristocratic Culture in the Carolingian World* (Ithaca, 2009), pp. 84–8.

¹⁴ See, above, Vanderputten, pp. 22–42, Sykes, pp. 43–60, Lehfeldt, pp. 105–20.

¹⁵ On burial and tomb locations within monastic topography see Carola Jäggi, 'Gräber und memoria in den Klarissen- und Dominikanerinnenklöstern des 13. und 14. Jahrhunderts', in Heidemarie Specht and Ralph Andraschek-Holzer (eds), *Bettelorden in mitteleuropa: geschichte, kunst, spiritualität. Referate der gleichnamigen tagung vom 19. bis 22. März 2007 in St Pölten* (St Pölten, 2008), pp. 689–705. For anniversaries and commemorations of the deceased at Santo Domingo de Madrid, see Archivo Histórico Nacional, Madrid, Clero, Libro 7338; The Archivo Histórico Nacional, Madrid, Clero, Pergaminos, 1357/11.

¹⁶ Mercedes Pérez Vidal, *Arte y liturgia en los monasterios de dominicas en Castilla. Desde los orígenes hasta la reforma observante (1218–1506)* (Gijón, 2021), pp. 125–6.

¹⁷ Alain Erlande Brandenburg, 'Art et politique sous Philippe le Bel. La priorale Saint-Louis de Poissy', *Comptes-rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres*, 131:3 (1987), 507–18; Carola Jäggi, 'Architecture et disposition liturgique des couvents féminins dans le Rhin supérieur aux XIIIe et XIVe siècles', in Madeleine Blondel, Jeffrey. F. Hamburger, and Catherine Leroy (eds), *Les Dominicaines d'Unterlinden*, 2 vols (Paris, 2000), vol. 1, pp. 89–107, at p. 95.

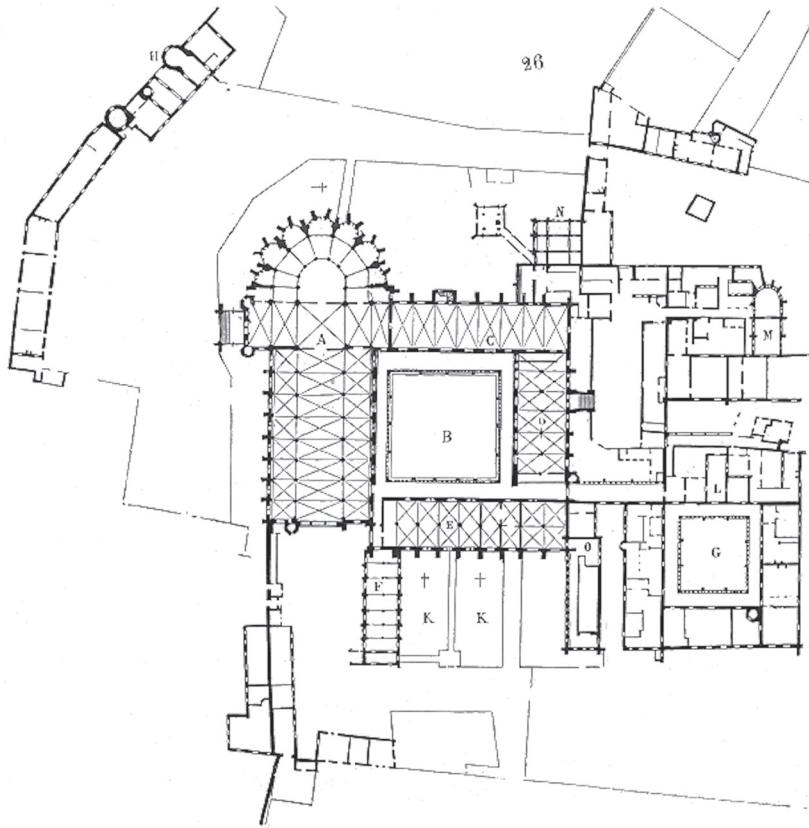


Fig. 12.1. Ground plan of Saint-Louis de Poissy. Viollet-le-Duc, *Dictionnaire raisonné de l'architecture française du XI^e au XVI^e siècle*, 1854–68, tome 1, p. 304.

Indeed, in some cases the choir for the women religious was a quasi-public space. From the mid-thirteenth in Las Huelgas, it was well documented that Pope Innocent IV offered indulgences to the faithful who visited the sepulchres of the monarchs in this choir on the anniversaries of their death.¹⁸

As friars entered the enclosure for the suffrages, women found innovative solutions to overcome enclosure limitations and to make themselves present in spaces often unavailable to them. The development of more precise and strict regulations on enclosure during the thirteenth century had far-reaching consequences on architecture, giving rise to a wide range of solutions for the position of

¹⁸ Raquel Alonso Álvarez, 'La cabecera de las iglesias cistercienses femeninas en la corona de Castilla: clausura, *cura monialium* y representación aristocrática y regia', *Hortus artium medievalium*, 15:2 (2009), 341–53.

the choir for the women's community.¹⁹ The location of the choir interfered with the memorialising of the dead, as the ideal placement of a tomb was in the presbytery, a restricted area for the women's community. As a consequence, women religious had restricted visibility of the monument, for instance, at the tomb of Maria of Hungary (c. 1257–1323) in Santa Maria donna Regina in Naples.²⁰ The double-sided funerary monument of Queen Elisenda de Montcada in the community of Pedralbes (c. 1340s) constituted an original solution to the problem of enclosure and the limiting of the sight of the women religious to view the tomb as part of the commemoration of the dead.²¹ It offered the double possibility for her to be remembered as Montcada, queen of Aragon, crowned and dressed in regal robes, on the south wall of the presbytery, or as a widow or tertiary, veiled and crownless, on the cloister side, intended for the community of Pedralbes.

Although commemoration of founders, benefactors, or patrons constituted an essential part of liturgy, the individual commemoration of some exceptional women monastic superiors is also worthy of note. The tombs of male superiors and members of the ecclesiastical hierarchy have been studied showing how these weave a meaningful discourse on collective identity. This identity was more complex than the case of secular members of the aristocracy, as it combined their belonging to an order with their status as members of a family and lineage.²² Sepulchres, located either in the choir for women's community or in the chapterhouse, were powerful reminders serving as *exempla* for the community who were sometimes depicted expressing their grief. A useful example is the procession of eleven women religious receiving the condolences of a male superior seen on the tomb of Urraca Díaz de Haro (r. 1222–62) in the community of Santa María de San Salvador de Cañas.

¹⁹ Caroline Bruzelius, 'Hearing is Believing: Clarissan Architecture, ca.1213–1340', *Gesta*, 31 (1992), 83–91, and 'Nuns in Space: Architecture in the Thirteenth Century', in Ingrid J. Peterson (eds), *Clare of Assisi: A Medieval and Modern Woman* (New York, 1996), pp. 53–74; Mercedes Pérez Vidal, 'Estavan todas no coro e ben cantand' e eendo. Tipologie e funzioni dei cori nei monasteri delle domenicane dal XIII al XVI secolo, con particolare riferimento alla Castiglia', in Haude Morvan (ed.), *Spaces for Friars and Nuns: Mendicant Choirs and Church Interiors in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Rome, 2022), pp. 227–58.

²⁰ Tanja Michalsky, 'Mater serenissimi principis: The Tomb of Maria of Hungary', in Janis Elliott and Cordelia Warr (eds), *The Church of Santa Maria Donna Regina: Art, Iconography, and Patronage in Fourteenth-century Naples* (Aldershot, 2004), pp. 61–78.

²¹ Eileen McKiernan González, 'Reception, Gender and Memory: Elisenda de Montcada and her dual-effigy Tomb at Santa María de Pedralbes', in Martin (ed.), *Reassessing the Roles*, vol. 1, pp. 309–52.

²² Alexandra Gajewski, 'Burial, Cult and Construction at Clairvaux', *Cîteaux*, 56, 1–4 (2005), 47–85; Haude Morvan, 'Sépultures cardinales et mémoire communautaire', in Fermín Miranda García and María Teresa López de Guereño Sanz (eds), *La muerte de los príncipes en la edad media* (Madrid, 2020), pp. 337–52.



Fig. 12.2. Tomb of Urraca Díaz de Haro, in San Salvador de Cañas. Photo: G. Freihalter with licence CC BY-SA 3.0.

Her monumental tomb was made some years after her death, showing the importance given by the community at this moment to the commemoration of her memory (see Fig. 12.2). Moreover, memory and identity were frequently re-elaborated to convey a particular message to the community. Thus, around the mid-fifteenth century, when the golden age marked by the ruling of Urraca as the superior had passed, the community remade her memory giving her a (new) fame of holiness.²³ In a similar way, Gerburg of Cappenberg (r. 1126–37), superior of St Servatius at Quedlinburg, also recreated the identity and story of the community, by likely commissioning a group of nearly identical effigial tomb-slabs commemorating the three eleventh-century superiors. According to Gerburg's interpretation, they would fit with the reforming ideals she was promoting.²⁴

Commemoration of women superiors of monastic communities went in some cases far beyond the monastic walls, through different media, among which mortuary rolls stand out for their complexity. These were travelling artefacts that

²³ Ghislain Baury, 'Sainteté, mémoire et lignage des abbeses cisterciennes de Castille au XII: la compesse Urraca de Cañas (Av.1207–1262)', *Anuario de estudios medievales*, 41:1 (2011), 151–82.

²⁴ Karen Blough, 'The Abbatial Effigies at Quedlinburg: A Convent's Identity Reconfigured', *Gesta*, 47:2 (2008), 147–69.

functioned as vehicles carrying individual memory in a collective act of remembrance. Their production is attested from the eighth to the sixteenth century, in different religious houses in France, Catalonia, Belgium, Germany, Austria, and England.²⁵ They consisted of a letter reporting the death, mainly of the superior, accompanied by a request of prayers for his or her soul, and they were carried by a roll-bearer (*breviator*) to many religious houses, where responses (*tituli*) to that request were added to the roll. The *tituli* included an exchange of prayers, a request and a promise, between the community who sent the roll and those who issued each *titulus*. Commemoration was thus articulated through a religious network that could involve a high number of religious communities, encompassing a vast territory. For instance, the roll of Matilda, the superior of Caen, (†1113), included *tituli* from 253 religious houses of both women and men, in France and England.²⁶ The functionality and materiality of a mortuary roll changed in the period between the announcement of a death, to its return to the monastery where it was stored or displayed. Its construction during the journey was completed at its return to the monastery and was therefore part of the performance.²⁷

Ritual for the Dying and Liturgy for the Dead

Both the rituals of assistance to the dying and burial rites, and the weekly office for the dead, were at the roots of the collective identity and collective memory building. This was not only due to the insistence on the participation of all the members of the community, but also due to the character of the prayers, processions, and images used in them. All these rituals showed that the deceased were still members of the human community.²⁸ Liturgical processions together with visual reminders of the dead in the form of graveyards, tombs, painted and carved images, and manuscripts served to affirm collective notions of responsibility, community, and vocation. Apart from the tombs and other objects of remembrance, written sources are fundamental to our understanding of these performances that built collective memory and identity.

²⁵ Jean Dufour, *Recueil des rouleaux des morts (VIIIe siècle-vers 1536)*, dir. Jean Favier, 4 vols (Paris, 2008).

²⁶ Daniel Sheerin, 'Sisters in the Literary Agon: Texts from Communities of Women on the Mortuary Roll of the Abbess Matilda of La Trinité, Caen', in Laurie J. Churchill, Phyllis R. Brown, and Jane E. Jeffrey (eds), *Women Writing Latin: From Roman Antiquity to Early Modern Europe*, 3 vols (New York, 2002), vol. 2, pp. 93–131.

²⁷ Stacy Boldrick, 'Speculations on the Visibility and Display of a Mortuary Roll', in Jack Hartnell (ed.), *Continuous Page: Scrolls and Scrolling from Papyrus to Hypertext* (London, 2020), pp. 101–21.

²⁸ Patrick J. Geary, *Living with the Dead in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, 1994), p. 2.

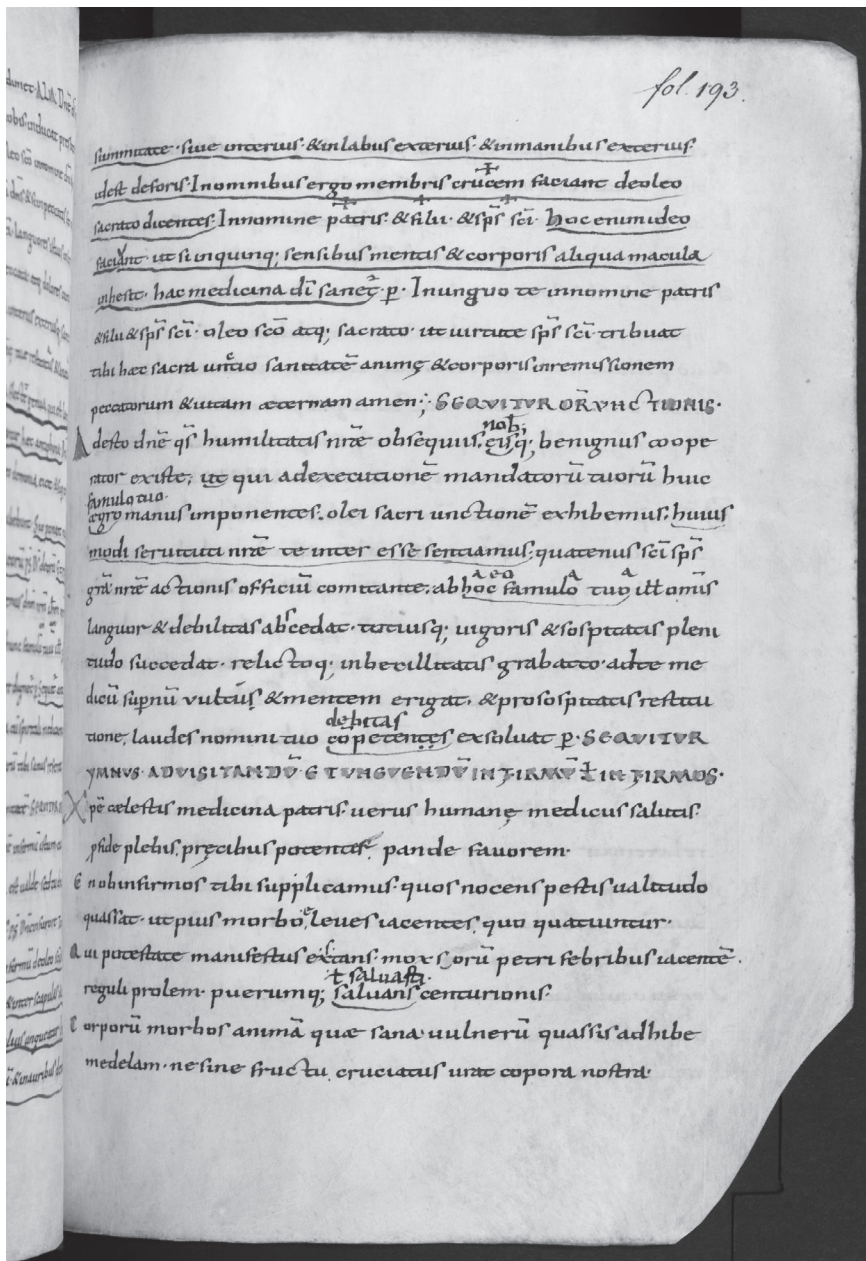


Fig. 12.3. Sacramentarium, Essen. Düsseldorf, ULB, MS-D-2, f. 193r. Photo: USL, Düsseldorf, urn: urn:nbn:de:hbz:061:1-174127, with licence CC BY-NC-ND 4.0.

TEXTS AND SPACES

The *libri vitae* or *libri memoriales* were the most evident commemorative text of the Carolingian world, produced by both men and women's communities. They combined liturgical texts with lists with the names of those to be commemorated, either living or dead, including members of the community, relatives, or individuals belonging to the social networks of the religious institution that produced them. They were deposited on altars with prayers offered for those named on their folios. In some cases, like the mid-ninth-century *Liber vitae* from San Salvatore and Santa Giulia in Brescia, entries recording the gifts to the house by the families of some women religious were also included.²⁹ Thus, these books embodied and shaped the collective memory and identity not only of these communities, but also of their social and political networks. Recent studies show the active role women played in the production of the *libri memoriales*, as well as their gendered use.³⁰

This kind of analysis has also been done on other books, which had a similar function, transmitting practices relating to the remembrance of the dead, by the inclusion of some commemorative entries. A list naming both sisters and members of the laity to be commemorated was added in the tenth century to a ninth-century sacramentary from Essen, and a second sacramentary from the first half of the tenth century was used – and maybe written – by the sisters where they adapted liturgical material intended for male communities to reflect their own identity (see Fig. 12.3). For instance, the rituals for the sickness and the death in both, fit in with the Carolingian funerary liturgical culture that emphasised spiritual purification rather than physical recovery of the sick, but the ritual in the second sacramentary reflects a strong concern to prepare the soul for the Last Judgement, through confessions, penance, and anointing.³¹

A close examination of this and other liturgical sources highlights the participation and agency of women in the liturgy as they scripted, copied, and remade the memorial and liturgical books,³² and they orchestrated and starred in various

²⁹ Rosamond McKitterick, *History and Memory in the Carolingian World* (Cambridge, 2004), p. 166.

³⁰ Rosamond McKitterick, *Books, Scribes and Learning in the Frankish Kingdoms, 6th–9th Centuries* (Aldershot, 1994), pp. 1–35; Grimard-Mongrain, *Genre, mémoire et histoire*.

³¹ Jirki Thibaut, 'De ambigue observantie en heterogene identiteit van vrouwengemeenschappen in Saksen, ca. 800–1050' (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Ghent University & KU Leuven, 2020), pp. 355–83.

³² The close connections between illumination, liturgy, communal memory, and devotion have been explored by Jeffrey Hamburger, *The Visual and the Visionary: Art and Female Spirituality in Late Medieval Germany* (New York, 1988); Paula Cardoso, 'Art, Reform and Female Agency in the Portuguese Dominican Nunneries: Nuns as Producers and Patrons of Illuminated Manuscripts (ca. 1460–1560)' (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Universidade Nova de Lisboa, 2019).

performances.³³ These examples - and others - confirm that women religious fulfilled ministerial roles, which had increasingly become exclusive to men since the post-Carolingian period, and particularly after the monastic and ecclesiastical reforms of the Central Middle Ages. The division of roles in liturgy was indeed organised, not on the basis of sex, but on office and, therefore, the superiors of a women's monastic communities could fill the role of the presider of the liturgy, as it is proved by several customaries and ordinals from these communities.³⁴

Both customaries and ordinals provide a wealth of details on how men's and women's communities interacted within the liturgical spaces, on fluctuating spatial boundaries, changing uses of the different monastic spaces, and on the objects used in these ceremonies. Customaries appeared around the late eighth century and describe the daily customs (*consuetudines*) of a community, whether inside or outside the choir.³⁵ *Libri Ordinarii* provide a plan for the performance of liturgy throughout the calendar. They emerged in the eleventh century and are widespread from the following century.³⁶ The *consuetudo* from the women's monastic community of Las Huelgas is a unique source of information among Iberian *consuetudines* and *ordinales*, with specific allusions to the topography of the monastic complex.³⁷ Chapters 128–30, which describe funerary rituals and the celebration of anniversaries, are of striking importance for what they suggest of the role of the house as a dynastic pantheon. This was in the choir of the women's community, and clerics entered on special occasions.³⁸ Furthermore, Chapters

³³ Thibaut, *Rectamque regulam*, p. 352; Mary M. Schaefer, *Women in Pastoral Office: The Story of Santa Prassede, Rome* (Oxford, 2013); Katie A.-M. Bugyis, 'Women Priests at Barking Abbey in the Late Middle Ages', in Kathryn Kerby-Fulton, Katie A.-M. Bugyis, and John Van Engen (eds), *Women Intellectuals and Leaders in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, 2020), pp. 319–34.

³⁴ Gisela Muschiol, 'Gender and Monastic Liturgy in the Latin West (High and Late Middle Ages)', *CHMM*, vol. 2, pp. 803–15.

³⁵ Isabelle Cochelin, 'Customaries as Inspirational Sources', in Carolyn Malone and Clark Maines (eds), *Consuetudines et Regulae: Sources for Monastic Life in the Middle Ages and the Early Modern Period* (Turnhout, 2014), pp. 27–55.

³⁶ Jürgen Bärsch, 'Liber ordinarius: zur bedeutung eines liturgischen buchtyps für die erforschung des mittelalters', *Archa Verb: Yearbook for the Study of Medieval Theology*, 2 (2005), 10–58; Klaus Gereon Beuckers (ed.), *Liturgie in mittelalterlichen frauenstiften. Forschungen zum 'liber ordinarius'* (Essen, 2012); Jeffrey Hamburger and Eva Schlotheuber (eds), *The Liber Ordinarius of Nivelles (Houghton Library, MS. Lat 422): Liturgy as Interdisciplinary Intersection* (Tübingen, 2020).

³⁷ David Catalunya, 'The Customary of the Royal Convent of Las Huelgas of Burgos: Female Liturgy, Female Scribes', *Medievalia*, 20: I (2017), 91–160, at p. 103.

³⁸ Raquel Alonso Álvarez, 'La cabecera de las iglesias cistercienses', 341–53; David Catalunya, 'Music, Space and Ritual in Medieval Castile, 1221–1350' (Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Universität Würzburg, 2016), p. 210.

111, 126, and 133 describe in great detail the rituals for the dying and the burial of sisters: chapter 133 states the nurse sister should touch the rattle (*tabula*) through the new cloister – *por la claustra nueva* – to announce the death of a sister. When this signal was heard, the community was to gather around the deceased.³⁹ This moment is depicted in a powerful and unusual image in a ritual from the Portuguese community in Aveiro, written in 1491 by sister of the house, Isabel Luís. The whole community gathers around the *tabula* and the instrument is used to illustrate the burial rite described in the text, symbolising the death of a member, and reinforcing the sense of community.⁴⁰ As stated in a fifteenth-century *breviarium* from Santo Domingo de Toledo, the rattle also had to be played in the cloister and other places when one of the sisters entered her final agony: ‘soror penitus morti appropinquaverit, crebis ictibus pulsetur tabula in claustro et in aliis locis si necesse fuerit’ (see Fig. 12.4).⁴¹ Such rituals for the dying, and between the moment of death and the moment of burial, were also included in sacramentaries, as well as breviaries, psalters, processional, and books of hours in the Later Middle Ages.⁴²

The chapter house was also a burial place and a locus of memory, where the deceased were commemorated daily. It was a multi-functional space: a chapter of the rule was read daily there, and it served also to discuss all the affairs of the community; it was the place of confession of punishable acts (chapter of faults); and it was also a privileged burial place and a place of memory, where the deceased were commemorated daily. The book of the chapter, *Liber capituli*, was also called martyrology, although this was in fact a synecdoche, because besides the martyrology, it included the obituary-calendar with the anniversaries to be recited, the lessons of the gospels for the whole year, the rule and the constitutions, texts related to the history of the monastery or its mother house, and, in some cases, also rituals of profession.⁴³ If the ritual of the dying marked the end of a sister’s life within a convent, its beginning was shaped by the rite of profession and, in some

³⁹ Ms. 6. Chapter 133, f 70v; Catalunya, ‘The Customary’, pp. 147–8.

⁴⁰ Museu de Aveiro, MAV-32/CD, fo. 29r. Paula Cardoso, ‘Autonomy and the *Cura Monialium* in Female Monastic Art: The Fifteenth-Century Illuminated Manuscripts from the Dominican Monastery of Jesus of Aveiro’, *JMH*, 44:4 (2018), 484–505, at p. 490.

⁴¹ Bernardo Fueyo Suárez, *El breviario portátil de Santo Domingo el real de Toledo (ss. XIV–XV)* (Salamanca, 2014), p. 84.

⁴² The difference between communal liturgy and some personal piety was not pronounced; see Susan Boynton, ‘Prayer as Performance in Eleventh and Twelfth-Century Monastic Psalters’, *Speculum*, 82 (2007), 895–931.

⁴³ As in the *Martirologium ad usum ordinis cisterciensis* (Las Huelgas, Ms. 1). Suárez determined it was made between 1236 and 1247 for Cîteaux, where marginal notes indicated it was used. It travelled to Burgos between 1240 and 1287, probably during the ruling of

communities, both took place in the chapter house.⁴⁴ The rituals of profession developed over the centuries, from the cutting of hair, to the changing of clothing, the presentation of a ring,⁴⁵ the *Altarsetzung* (altar setting) – a tradition that goes back at least to the High Middle Ages and to which from the tenth century was added the ceremony of coronation of women religious. Other ceremonies, such as the announcement of the Annunciation and Christmas or the Assumption of the Virgin, were also held in the chapter house, which was also one of the stations in many monastic processions.⁴⁶

Texts from the lives of saints, the Virgin Mary, or even exegetical texts, intended to commemorate the history of the community or its religious identity might be read (*lectio publica*) in the chapter house or refectory, frequently during matins, or recited or sung.⁴⁷ These compositions were in many cases original and specific to the monastery or to the local religious context, and all these elements were arranged by religious communities to provide a place for the proclamation of monastic identity. Some of them were directly linked with specific, often miraculous, images venerated in the community, as for instance two Byzantine icons of the Virgin, worshipped respectively in Unterlinden, and in San Sisto in Rome. The Unterlinden legend associated with the icon was copied into the first part of the *Liber miraculorum*, which commemorated the history and memory of the community. At San Sisto it was copied in a lectionary in the early fourteenth century and was to be read at matins of the *Beatae Mariae Virginis in sabbato* office, between 22 and 28 April. This was in commemoration of the translation of the image, but it also followed the liturgical practice of Santa Maria in Tempulo, the community to which it had belonged.⁴⁸

Abbess Eva (1261–2): Ana Suárez González, ‘Un ex libris y algunas respuestas sobre el ‘MS.1’ de las Huelgas de Burgos’, *Cistercium*, 245 (2006), 587–614.

⁴⁴ This was probably the case of Santo Spirito di Verona, whose *Liber capituli* also included also the ritual of profession, see Gian Maria Varanini, *Gli scaligeri, 1277–1387. Saggi e schede pubblicati in occasione della mostra storico-documentaria allestita dal museo di Castelvecchio di Verona (giugno-novembre 1988)* (Verona, 1988), p. 468.

⁴⁵ The *ordo romanus* specified that in their dedication as virgins, women religious should be presented with rings to symbolise marriage to Christ. Cf. Eva Schlotheuber, ‘Best Clothes and Everyday Attire of Late Medieval Nuns’, in Regula Schorta and Rainer Christoph Schwinges (eds), *Fashion and Clothing in Late Medieval Europe* (Riggisberg, 2010), pp. 139–54.

⁴⁶ The chapter houses of both Santo Domingo de Toledo and Jesús de Aveiro (Portugal) were decorated with a text of an antiphon from the office of the feast of the Assumption; see Cardoso, ‘Autonomy and *cura monialium*’, pp. 484–505; Pérez Vidal, *Arte y liturgia*.

⁴⁷ Hamburger, Schlotheuber, Marti, and Fassler (eds), *Liturgical Life*, vol. 1, pp. 211–80.

⁴⁸ See Joachim Joseph Berthier, *La vergine acheropita dei santi Domenico e Sisto a Roma* (Ferrara, 1889), Appendix, Doc. I; Vladimir J. Koudelka, ‘“Le monasterium tempuli” et la fondation dominicaine de San Sisto’, *AFP*, 31 (1961), 5–81.

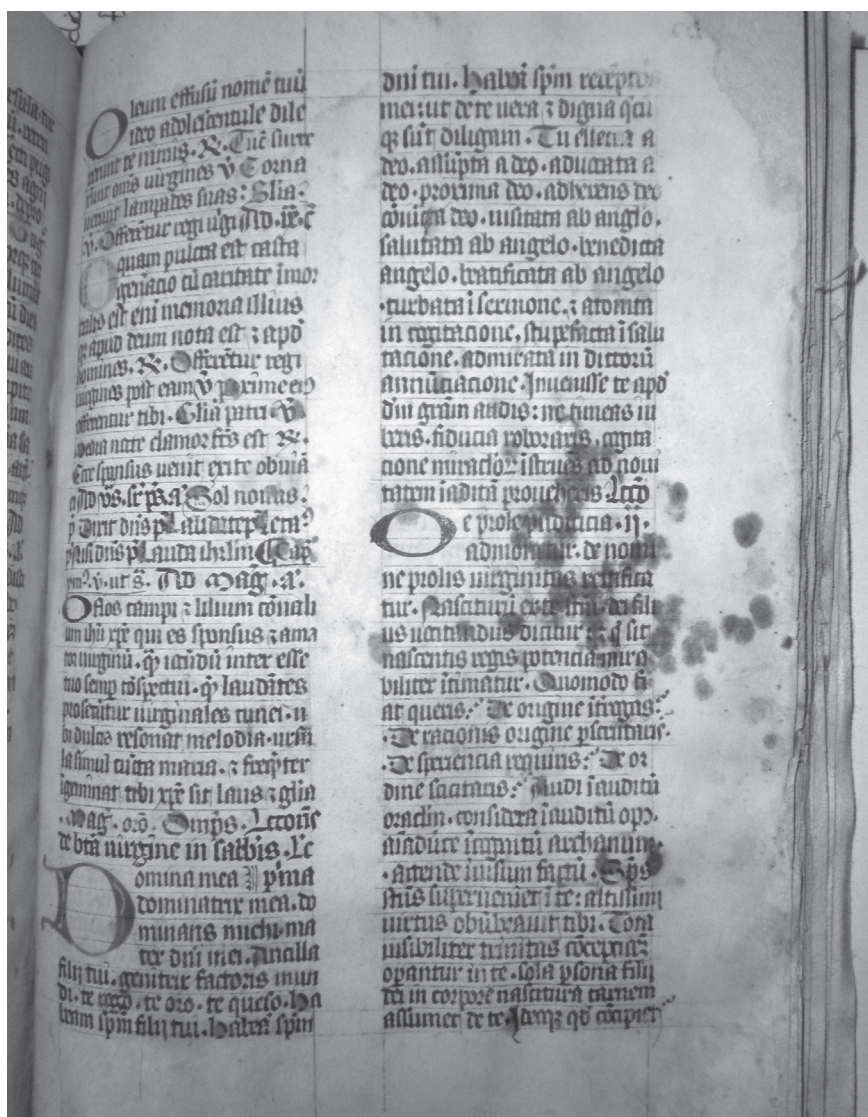


Fig. 12.4. *Breviarium Portatile* from Santo Domingo de Toledo, Ms 06/508. Final section. c. 1460-70. *Lectiones de beata Virgine in sabbatis* (ff. 343r-344v). Image copyright of author, M. Pérez Vidal.

Some of these *interpolations* were also related to the commemoration of the deceased, as, for instance, were most likely the *historiae* included in the breviary from Santo Domingo de Toledo (c. 1460–70), mentioned above. One striking feature of this book is the inclusion of nine lessons taken from the treatise *De virginitate perpetua Sancte Marie* by Ildefonso, who was bishop of Toledo from 657 to 667, in the matins of the Office of the Virgin on Saturday (fols 343r–344v). *The Historiae de beata virginis in sabbatis*, were frequently interpolated in this part of the office in Dominican liturgical books, but the use of *De virginitate* is a peculiarity in a Dominican breviary.

This text was read in the office at matins in the Old Hispanic rite, and linked with *festum commemorationis annuntiationis beatissimae virginis*, whose celebration on 18 December was established by the Tenth Council of Toledo in 656.⁴⁹ Its presence in the breviary, apart from being clearly intended at the *cura monialium*, shows a continuation with this liturgical tradition.⁵⁰

REMEMBRANCE AND MEMORY THROUGH DYNAMIC RITUALS AND PROCESSIONS

Both private and collective commemoration were linked to specific spaces and texts, but they were also expressed through dynamic rituals, moving from place to place, in which different kinds of material artefacts were involved. Liturgical space was not static but rather ‘discursive’, created to a large extent by liturgical performance,⁵¹ in whose definition diverse notions of gender played an important role. It has already been discussed how during the Central and Later Middle Ages the progressive limitation of access to the altar and the sacraments by women religious found material articulation in the buildings using physical barriers. Thus, although the legislation on enclosure in women’s communities has to be considered critically and in comparison, with the reality of each monastic community, there was a gender difference in the use of space.⁵² As women religious had limited access to the church, some performances and processions

⁴⁹ Margot Fassler, ‘Mary in Seventh-Century Spain: the Mass Liturgy of Dec. 18’, in Ismael Fernández de la Cuesta, Rosario Álvarez Martínez, and Ana Llorens Martín (eds), *El canto mozárabe y su entorno. Estudios sobre la música de la liturgia viejo hispánica* (Madrid, 2013), pp. 217–36; Kati Ihnat, ‘Orígenes y desarrollo de la fiesta litúrgica de la Virgen María en Iberia’, *Anuario de Estudios Medievales*, 49:2 (2019), 619–43 at p. 623.

⁵⁰ A continuation also found in other books, see Office of the Blessed Virgin, Madrid, National Library, MS. 1566; Higinio Anglés and José Subirá, *Catálogo musical de la biblioteca nacional de Madrid* (Madrid, 1946), pp. 92–4, n. 31.

⁵¹ Susan Boynton, ‘Cluniac Spaces of Performance’, in Sulamith Brodbeck and Anne-Orange Poilpré (eds), *Visibilité et présence de l’image dans l’espace ecclésial. Byzance et moyen âge occidental* (Paris, 2019), pp. 63–91, at pp. 78–9.

⁵² Pérez Vidal, ‘Estaban todas no coro’, pp. 225–8.

were moved to other spaces: the cloister, inner oratories or chapels, specific places *ad caelebrandum officium*, as well as outside the convent.⁵³

Since the Early Middle Ages, a specific commemorative day for the deceased had been set, although it varied from place to place. Odilo of Cluny chose All Souls Day (2 November) to institute the annual commemoration of all the faithful departed, with alms and prayers to relief the souls in Purgatory. The festivity was to be observed in all the monasteries dependent on Cluny, but it spread quickly beyond the Order to the whole western Church.⁵⁴ The procession on 2 November, *Commemoratio omnium fidelium defunctorum*, was also crucial in shaping collective memory through the monastic topography, as it had several stations in the different burial places in the convent: the church, choir for the sisters, cloisters, and chapter house, as well as in some images linked to funerary commemoration. In some cases, particularly among communities of Dominican women religious, there was a close relationship between the Marian devotions and the memory for the dead, influenced by the practices and customs of confraternities. For instance, in Santo Domingo de Lekeitio, a procession was held every Sunday and every feast day, after Compline, praying the Holy Rosary, and proceeding through different monastic spaces. This linked the commemoration of the deceased, both from the community, and lay people from the town of Lekeitio, among whom were probably some relatives of the women religious.⁵⁵ The community of the Alsatian monastery of Unterlinden used to pray the Rosary, especially at the time of their death.⁵⁶

Together with the Marian feasts, Eucharistic piety and particular saints, the devotion to the passion of Christ took on added importance during the Late Middle Ages. Easter brought together the most remarkable moments of the liturgical year, starting with the procession held on Palm Sunday. This was followed by the liturgical celebration of the Sacred Triduum, from Maundy Thursday to Easter Sunday. During the Central and Later Middle Ages entire liturgical dramas might

⁵³ There is evidence for processions outside monastic communities and the participation of women religious in the *Corpus Christi* procession see, Gisela Muschiol, 'Time and Space', p. 198.

⁵⁴ *The Liber tramitis aevi Odilonis* is the oldest of the three preserved customaries from Cluny; see Isabelle Cochelin and Susan Boynton (eds), *From Dead of Night to End of Day: The Medieval Customs of Cluny: Du coeur de la nuit à la fin du jour: les coutumes clunisiennes au moyen âge* (Turnhout, 2005).

⁵⁵ Mercedes Pérez Vidal, 'La liturgia procesional de completas en el ámbito de los monasterios femeninos de la orden de predicadores en Castilla', *Hispania Sacra*, 69:139 (2017), 81–99.

⁵⁶ Jeffrey F. Hamburger, 'La Bibliothèque d'Unterlinden et l'art de la formation spirituelle', in Blondel, Hamburger, and Leroy (eds), *Les Dominicaines*, vol. 1, pp. 110–59, at p. 134.

be interpolated into the liturgy of these days, involving artworks and props, such as sepulchres, Christ's effigies, *sudaria*, or relics.⁵⁷

The importance of liturgical performance, along with the associated images and objects, for building collective memory and strengthening the feeling of monastic community was particularly significant for the Observant reform movement during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.⁵⁸ The Observance promoted the return to a fundamental monastic value: obedience. In the case of women's religious communities, the application of this precept had a series of implications including strict enclosure, common life, the presence of friars-vicars, or the liturgical uniformity within a religious order,⁵⁹ although the implementation of all these measures varied from place to place. The attempt to restore enclosure determined the development of liturgies and para-liturgies and associated representations. For example, some processions originally performed outside the cloister, like the procession of the *Corpus Christi*, were moved inside and, in some cases, women religious re-created places they could not reach on a real pilgrimage inside the cloister. Topographic space was thus transformed by theological imagination and reconstructed as sacred locations through meditative exercises: the enactments of the Passion were performed by the communities of Wienhausen, of Augsburg, San Niccolò de Prato, and the Poor Clares of Madre Deus in Lisbon by way of 'virtual pilgrimage' to Jerusalem or Rome.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Tanjia Mattern, 'Liturgy and Performance in Northern Germany. Two Easter Plays from Wienhausen', in Elizabeth Andersen, Henrike Lähnemann, and Anne Simon (eds), *A Companion to Mysticism and Devotion in Northern Germany in the Late Middle Ages* (Leiden, 2013), pp. 285–316.

⁵⁸ See, above, More, pp. 72–3.

⁵⁹ Cf. Bert Roest and James D. Mixson, *A Companion to Observant Reform in Late Middle Ages and Beyond* (Leiden, 2015); Jürgen Bärsch, 'Liturgy and Reform: Northern German Convents in the late Middle Ages', in Elizabeth Andersen, Henrike Lähnemann, and Anne Simon (eds), *A Companion to Mysticism* (Leiden, 2013), pp. 21–46 at pp. 22–3.

⁶⁰ Muschiol, 'Time and Space', p. 198; June. L. Mecham, 'A Northern Jerusalem: Transforming the Spatial Geography of the Convent of Wienhausen', in Sarah M. Hamilton and Andrew Spicer (eds), *Defining the Holy: Sacred Space in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Aldershot, 2005), pp. 139–60; Marie Louise Ehrenschtendner, 'Virtual Pilgrimages? Enclosure and the Practice of Piety at St Katherine's Convent, Augsburg', *JEH*, 60:1 (2009), 45–73; Kathryn Rudy, *Virtual Pilgrimages in the Convent: Imagining Jerusalem in the Late Middle Ages* (Turnhout, 2011); cf. Pérez Vidal, *Arte y liturgia*, pp. 282–91.

Conclusion

Both lay and religious women had a key role in the making of a ‘multifaceted memory’ that at the same time commemorated lineage, individuals, and religious communities: spaces, written sources, and different kind of artefacts from material culture were the material vehicles of remembrance. However, rather than being static, memory was mutable in time and space – both inside and outside the monastic walls – trespassing the borders of enclosure. Dead and living members of the social network where the community of women religious was settled were commemorated inside enclosure, whereas artefacts such as mortuary rolls travelled through a vast territory, carrying both the memory of a particular deceased superior and the collective memory of the religious community. The role the circulation, display, and performance of a great variety of ‘objects of remembrance’ – from reliquaries to liturgical books – had in building collective identity and individual remembrance has yet to be analysed and clarified. Moreover, moving from the particular to the general, the rituality of memory in women’s religious communities should be studied in a comparative analysis between diverse monastic landscapes and territories.

To conclude: the analysis of the life and the afterlife of different kind of objects would constitute another area for future study related to collective memory building. The study of both continuities, similarities, or resignification in the functionality and materiality of many ‘objects of remembrance’ beyond the Middle Ages will be crucial to understand the past and the present of women’s religious communities. This would include an exploration not only of the intention and purposes of these memorial images but, as well, of the sensorial affective response to them by the religious community and the devotees. Finally, in line with this long-term approach, a bigger challenge will be to offer a transversal and global perspective, overcoming Eurocentric accounts and periodisation.⁶¹

⁶¹ The research for this chapter was conducted with the support of the Government of the Principality of Asturias through the FICYT, project SCPA-21-AYUD/2021/57166.