The Manuscrits of Gosnay

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Abstract: The signature of a nun on the first page of Cape Town, South African Library, MS Grey 3c23 made it possible not only to determine the provenance of the manuscript, but also to locate two similar manuscripts in France and two in Yugoslavia. All of these manuscripts are Antiphonaries for Lauds and Vespers written for nuns at the Charterhouse of Mont-Saint-Marie, at Gosney near Arras in France. They are the only extant Carthusian Antiphonaries for Lauds and Vespers and had been written for Mont-Saint-Marie because the nuns of that Charterhouse sang only those Offices. All are dated around 1540. The Antiphonaries conform to the Carthusian liturgy. There is no great divergence between the music in the five manuscripts and in the Carthusian Antiphonaries. Small differences exist, however. These are not the result of error, but prove that no general exemplar existed for the music of the Carthusian Antiphonary.

Keywords: Gosnay (France), Carthusian Antiphonaries, office for St Genevieve

The signature of a nun, the daughter of a Leuven librarian, on the first page of MS Cape Town Grey 3c23, made it possible not only to determine the provenance of the manuscript, but also to locate two similar manuscripts in France and two in what used to be Yugoslavia. All these manuscripts are Antiphonaries for Lauds, the Daily Hours and Vespers, which had been given to nuns at the Charterhouse of Mont-Sainte-Marie, at Gosnay, near Arras, France, when they took their vows. They are the only extant Carthusian Antiphonaries in manuscript for Lauds and Vespers. They are also the only Carthusian antiphonaries which include an office for St Genevieve. All are dated around 1540.

MSG 3c23

MSG 3c23 is part of the Grey Collection of the National Library in Cape Town. The name “Soeur Marie Utens” is written on fol. 1r in a later script than the rest of the manuscript. The date 1538 appears on fol. 126v at the end of the
Temporal and before the Dedication in the hand of the original scribe. The date is consistent with the script and the notation as well as the illuminations and border decorations. It is a volume of 179 vellum folios, ruled in feint brown ink. The measurements are 132×201 mm. It is fully notated.

It was possible to establish the history of Sister Marie Utens because of the existence of MS Sélignac 45, formerly in the Chartreuse of Sélignac, near Simandre, France. Since the Chartreuse of Sélignac no longer exists, the manuscript is now in the library of the Grande Chartreuse. A portion of this manuscript, written by Abbé Ingold towards the end of the nineteenth century, recounts the history of the Utens family. Marie was the eldest daughter of Jaspar Utens, a librarian, and a son of one of the first families of Leuven. He left Leuven for Béthune in 1570. Marie entered the Charterhouse for nuns at Gosnay, near Béthune, and took her vows at the age of sixteen. Her two sisters followed her example. MSG 3c23 was probably given to Soeur Marie Utens when she took her vows in 1614.

In this Antiphonary, the first page of the feast of St Mary Magdalene is particularly lavishly decorated. The illuminated letter “M” shows a royal figure, a Carthusian monk kneeling at his feet. An illumination in the first letter of an office is usually reserved for the saint whose office it is. After a careful analysis it emerged, however, that this was Saint Louis (Louis IX of France, 1214–70). He wears a white robe, probably representing a cassock, the red dalmatic of the deacon and a mantle with fleur-de-lis and a collar of ermine, closed in front like an old-fashioned chasuble. He wears the chain of the Order of St Michael, created by King Louis XI in 1469, and has a coronet on his blonde hair. He carries a sceptre in his left hand and in his right the instruments of the passion. One can distinguish the three nails, behind which one might suppose the crown of thorns would be: these are the traditional attributes of St Louis.

St Louis was the patron of the scribe and miniaturist, Dom Loys de Villebecq, vicar of St Mary at Gosnay, who wrote his name in another Antiphonary of Mont-Sainte-Marie, MS AGC C II 817. A comparison of the script of the two manuscripts shows that Brother Loys was also the scribe of MSG 3c23. St Mary Magdalene was the patron of Dame Magdelaine Bornicourt, who was apparently the first owner of MSG 3c23. She is the only


nun with the name of Magdalene who entered the cloister in the 16th century before 1538. It seems plausible that the Antiphonary was written for her. Dame Magdelaine appears in the accounts of Gosnay of 1544 (p. 377). “Dame Magdelaine Bornicourt... 12 Livres per year.” Dom Loys chose the office of St Mary Magdalene to present himself at the feet of his patron. According to MS Sélignac 39 (dated between 1361 and 1411), a Calendar of Mont-Sainte-Marie at Gosnay, the feast of St Louis was celebrated there with twelve lessons.

**MS AGC CII 817**

MS AGC CII 817 of the Grande Chartreusse near Grenoble is, like MSG 3c23, fully notated. On the flyleaf at the end of the manuscript is written in the same Gothic hand as the rest of the manuscript: “The book belongs to sister Anne de Monchy, nun of the cloister of St Mary at Gosnay, written by Brother Loys de Villebecq, humble vicar of the monastery above, 1537” (my translation).

On the binding of MS C II 817 one can find in letters of gold “Dame Catherine (sic) (F)asse Religieuse aux Dames de Gosnay 1600”. In MS Sélignac 45, p. 386, the name of Sister Catherine Fasse appears in the list of nuns of the Charterhouse of Monte-Sainte-Marie, Gosnay, towards the middle of the list headed “Cueilloir de 1614” and in the minutes of the General Chapter of 1634 one finds “Obiit Soror Catherine Fasser (or perhaps “Falson”) moniales domus Gosnay”. The date 1600 could have been the date when she took her vows.

Two of the miniatures in the two manuscripts show a marked similarity. The illumination on fol. 87r (Vigil of Easter) of MS C II 817 is identical to that on fol. 85v in MSG 3c23. The “A” of “Alleluia” shows Christ with a hat and a spade, appearing in the garden before St Mary Magdalene, who is carrying a jar of perfume. The same illumination also appears in Pleterje 4, fol. 85r, but there Christ does not wear a hat. The two Antiphonaries are from the same period: 1537 and 1538.

**MS Caen, Mus. des Beaux-arts, coll. Mancel 242**

The third almost identical manuscript is MS Caen, Mus. des Beaux-arts, coll. Mancel 242, which has on the last page the inscription:

This book is for the use of Dame Jacqueline de Mons, nun of the church and monastery of the Carthusian order and sacristan of this church. [The manuscript] was

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3 Un Chartreux, Soeur Marie Utens, 18.
4 Ibid.
5 Ibid.
written by Brother Jehan de Marissal, a Carthusian monk of the convent of Montreuil in the year 1549.

The scribe was therefore not the same as for the other two manuscripts. The ductus of Dom Jehan Marissal’s handwriting has a pronounced slant to the left and a very distinctive “s” although he apparently tried to adapt to the earlier manuscripts.

Dame Jacqueline de Mons was the sacristan of Mont-Sainte-Marie de Gosnay when the Antiphonary destined to be used by her was copied. Some years later, in 1560, at the death of Sister Marguerite de Licques, she succeeded her in the office of cellarer. Sister Jacqueline died while holding that office in 1568 or 1569, as is testified to by the Charta of the General Chapter. Dom Jehan Marissal was a Carthusian monk and resided at the Charterhouse of Notre-Dame des Prés at Montreuil. He had the reputation of being an excellent scribe. “Dom Jean Marissal, as appears from his competency and the excellence of his miniatures is a master of his art. He transcribed numerous manuscripts, and was considered one of the most celebrated miniaturists of the time”.

Although similar in appearance and content to the other two manuscripts, the Caen manuscript differs from them not only in regard to the script, but also in other respects. It has three full-page illustrations, which the others do not have. The only historiated miniature in the manuscript (on fol. 73r) does not seem to have been painted by the miniaturist who decorated the other two manuscripts, although an attempt was made to adapt to the same style.

On the whole, MS Caen, coll. Mancel 242 seems to have been more carefully written than the other manuscripts. Although there are mistakes that have been corrected, they are fewer than in the other manuscripts. It is clear that the Caen manuscript was not copied from the others, nor from the same exemplar.

**Chartreuse de Pleterje, MS 4**

MS Pleterje 4 is almost identical to the other Antiphonaries. Like MS Caen, the scribe was Dom Jehan Marissal, but MS Pleterje 4 precedes MS Caen by three years. On the last page of the manuscript is the inscription:

> This book is the property of sister Franchoise de la Haye, nun of the Carthusian order in the house of St Mary at Gosnay at Bethune written by Brother Jehan Marissal in the year of grace 1546.

This is followed by an inscription in a much less neat and later hand: “This book belongs to a Carthusian lady of Gosnay at Bethune”.

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Dame Francoise de la Haye entered Mont-Sainte-Marie de Gosnay towards 1531. She appears in 1544 in a list of nuns, in the Register of Revenues of the house. She was the daughter of the “noble Jehan de la Haye, exuier”, who promised to pay for his daughter an annual sum of forty livres. In addition to the Antiphonary which Dom Jehan Marissal copied for her in 1546, he also wrote for her in 1558 a manual for the Consecration of the Virgin. Sister Francoise died on 21 October 1571 after a long illness.

The general style of the illuminations indicate the same artist as in MSG 3c23 and MS AGC CII 817. The miniaturist was possibly Dom Loys de Villebecq, the scribe and possible miniaturist of MSG 3c23 and MS AGC CII 817.

**MS Pleterje 2**

MS Pleterje 2 is again almost identical to the other manuscripts. This is another manuscript written by Jehan Marissal, dated 1548. The colophon on the last page reads:

> The present book is for the use of sister Marie de la Fosse, professed nun of Mont St Marie at Gosnay of the Carthusian Order. Written by brother Jehan Marissal, who is a Carthusian monk, professed of the convent of Montreuil. At the instance, entreaty and request of lady Anne Camp, mistress of the same sister Marie. In the year of grace fifteenhundred and forty-eight. 1548.

On the flyleaf of the manuscript one finds written in very large letters in a late Gothic hand “To Dame Marie le Vasseur”.

According to MS Sélignac 45 the death of Marie le Vasseur was announced by the General Chapter in 1624, with the addition “after 67 years of exemplary life in the order”, which places her entry into the order in 1557.

Sister Marie de la Fosse figures on a list of amounts paid to the Charterhouse in MS Sélignac 45: “20 livres by her father Jehan de la Fosse, attorney at court at Arras”. She was therefore the daughter of a wealthy lawyer. There are no illuminations in this manuscript.

These five manuscripts contain no chants for Matins at all. They do, however, contain most of the Antiphons and Responsories for Lauds, the Daily Hours and Vespers. Chants for the Daily Hours, although given in incipit, are mostly not notated. They are the only extant Carthusian chant books for Lauds and Vespers I could find. MS British Library Add. 17302 is called a Carthusian “Antiphonale Diurnum” by David Hiley in his book Western Plainchant. It

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7 MS Sélignac 45, Les Archives du Mont St Marie de Gosnay, 377.
8 Le Vasseur, Ephemeride, vol. 4, 22.
9 MS Sélignac 45, Dom A. Devaux, communication, 20 January 2000.
10 Ibid.
does contain the chants for Lauds, Vespers and the Daily Hours, but also the Invitatoria, the Venite Psalm and some of the chants for Matins for each service. The notated section stops at Dominica post octavam Epiphaniam, after which the Commons and an Office Book follow. In the *Bibliographie Cartusienne* compiled by Fathers Gabriel van Dijck and Augustin Devaux, formerly of the Charterhouse of Sélignac, now of the Grande Chartreuse, which appeared in 2002 there are several printed books listed as “Antiphonarium Diurnum”, published between 1689 and 1997, the contents of which vary widely. I did not call the Antiphonaries of Gosnay “Antiphonale Diurnum” for that reason. Andrew Hughes noted that “...here is a major area for research”.

The reason for the existence of these books is probably that Gosnay was the only Charterhouse for nuns where only Lauds, the Daily Hours and Vespers were sung. It is therefore understandable that the nuns of Gosnay would have separate books for these offices. No manuscripts originating from Mont-Sainte-Marie de Gosnay containing Matins could be found, although quite a number of other manuscripts from this Charterhouse have been preserved. During the years 1530 to 1550 there were seven Charterhouses for nuns, of which Mont-Sainte-Marie de Gosnay was the only one in the Province of Picardy. There are no extant Antiphonaries for Lauds and Vespers for any of the other six Charterhouses for nuns.

In an ordinance “for the direction of nuns” dated 19 May 1677 Dom le Masson (Prior of the Grande Chartreuse, 1675–1703) formally allowed all nuns to recite the nocturnal psalms and Antiphons of Matins “recto tono”, except on solemn feasts such as Christmas, Easter, Pentecost, Corpus Christi, Assumption, St Bruno and All Saints. Lauds and Vespers had to be sung on all occasions. The vicar of a Charterhouse for nuns could, however, permit them to sing Matins with notes at his discretion, provided that this would not tire them unduly. Dom le Masson would have been aware of the practice at Gosnay to sing only the chants for Lauds and Vespers, since he was visitator for the Province of Picardy.

The rule of Carthusian nuns is similar to that of the monks but their lives are less solitary. The life of a Carthusian monk is almost that of a hermit. Each monk lives by himself in his own cell. The monks do not talk to each other

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14 Letter, Dom Gabriel van Dijck, dated 19 April 2002; Georgius Schwengel, Propago Ordinis Cartusiansis, Aparatus ad t.11, Analecta Cartusiana 90/2/1, 240.
15 Un Chartreux (Dom B. Gaillard), Antiphonaire de Dame Jacqueline de Mons, typescript, 1995, 2; Abbot Ingold, Dépouillement des Archives du Mont-Sainte-Marie de Gosnay, MS Sélignac 45.
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except on Sundays and feast days during the communal weekly walk. They eat
together only at noon on Sundays and feast-days. There have always been
much fewer Charterhouses for nuns than for men: only 22 through the ages
compared to 271 for monks. There are today only five Charterhouses for nuns
with a total of 75 nuns in the world.  

In comparing the manuscripts discussed in this paper, it was found that
chants were often fully written out in one manuscript when appearing only in
incipit in others. Chants were also often written out or given in incipit in some
manuscripts when others only referred to the common. There were many
orthographic differences.

The music in the manuscripts are almost identical, although on occasion
chants are notated with different clefs. Ligatures are used in some manu-
scripts, separate notes in others. In comparing the music of the five manu-
scripts discussed here with other Carthusian Antiphonaries, there are also no
great divergences. Small differences exist, however. These differences are not
the result of error, but prove that no general exemplar existed for the music of
the Carthusian Antiphonaries.

All the manuscripts are notated in the square notation, which was common
at the time. There are few conjunctions, and only for the Clavis, not the Pes.
Regarding the history of notation in the Carthusian choir books a change in the
ligatures came about towards the end of the 15th century. The Podatus,
Scalicus and Scandicus were divided into their components and the single
notes simply lined up. The sign which lasted the longest time was the
Climacus. 

Neither liquescents nor Quilismas are notated. The Carthusian notation
ignored from the beginning the liquescent neumes like the Epiphanus,
Cephalicus, Salicus and Ancus. This is an example of the Carthusian tendency
to simplify the monastical and liturgical elements, which they incorporated.
The Quilisma became rare and disappeared in certain regions as early as the
11th century. It has been absent from Carthusian chant ever since.  

The most important feature of the music in the Gosnay manuscripts is the
inclusion of two Antiphons, in the 1st and 2nd modes, for the Liturgy of St
Genevieve. The Antiphons could not be found in any of the 28 Carthusian
Antiphonaries in manuscript of the 14th to the 16th centuries, studied, nor in
the printed Antiphonarium Diurnum of 1898, except for manuscripts of
Gosnay. There are 67 known extant Carthusian Antiphonaries in manuscript.

16 Un Chartreux, Soeur Marie Utens, 18.
17 J. B. Klein, Der Choralgesang der Kartäuser in Theorie und Praxis unter besonderer Berücksich-
from the 12th to the 17th centuries. According to Dom Gabriel van Dijck, who has had insight into even more Antiphonaries, the office of St Genevieve is not present in any other Antiphonary.\(^\text{19}\)

The feast of St Genevieve is not mandatory in the Carthusian order. It is not mentioned in Carthusian Calendars, not even in the Calendars of Gosnay (MSS Sélignac 38 and 57).\(^\text{20}\) Her presence in the Antiphonaries written for the Charterhouses of Gosnay might have been due to unrest and disease in the region at the time and was certainly the result of a special dispensation for Gosnay. Dom le Masson in his ordinance of 1677 forbade prayers and devotions, which were not prescribed by the Statutes, but specified that in cases of public emergency a text specified by the vicar of the nuns could be used.

In MSG 3c23 the liturgy in honour of St Genevieve appears on fol. 171v–172r and in MS AGC in exactly the same place, on fol. 171v and 172r, in both manuscripts between the Gloria Patri in 8 tones and a liturgy for Presentation, near the end of the manuscripts. In MS Pleterje 4 it appears at the end of the manuscript on fol. 180r and 180v. In MS Pleterje 2 and MS Caen it appears between Feria VI in Parasceve (Sabbato Sancto) and Vigilia Sancti Pasche on fol. 78v–79r and 69r and 69v respectively. It would therefore seem that the liturgy of St Genevieve, while initially added at the end of the earlier manuscripts was incorporated into the contents of the two later ones. The liturgy consists of two Antiphons, each followed by one versicle. They are followed by a prayer. This is the scheme of a commemoration of Lauds and Vespers. The same prayer is used for both Offices. The absence of an intonation or termination for the psalmody respectively of the Magnificat and the Benedictus at the ends of the Antiphons indicates that these are not the pieces of a proper office.\(^\text{21}\)

The two versicles pose no problem; they have been taken from the Common of Virgins of the Carthusian rite for Vespers and for Lauds respectively. However, the prayer, “Beate Genovefae natalitia veneranda. Domine quis ecclesia tua devota discipiatur; et fiat magne glorificationis amore devotionum et tante fidei proficiat exemplo Per Dominum” is not the prayer “Beatae Genovefae virginis tue, Domine Deus, gloriosis meritis...” which is found in the Carthusian Missal printed in Paris in 1541 and in the subsequent editions. The prayer in the Gosnay manuscripts appears in two (non-Carthusian) Breviaries of Amiens and of Troye, both very conservative in contrast to their contemporaries, and is therefore the traditional prayer for the feast of St


Genevieve on 3 January, in use since the Merovingian period. The prayer in
the Carthusian Missal appears in the Breviary of Moulin (that is, of Autun,
since the diocese seceded from Autun). It is the traditional prayer for the feast
of the miracle of the saint of 26 November: it insists therefore on her rule as
thaumaturge, protectress or healer.\textsuperscript{22}

The two Antiphons, “Sponsa Dei Genovefa” (\textit{Example 1}) and “Gloriosam
Christi sponsa” (\textit{Example 2}) are quoted “ad magnificat” for first and second
Vespers for the feast of St Genevieve in the \textit{Analecta Hymnica}.\textsuperscript{23} Five sources
are quoted, four from the 15th and one from the 16th century. The sources are:
Brev. MS S. Genovefae, Cod. Sangenovefian, BB1 IV 15A; Brev. MS Parisiense,
Cod. Parisin. 751B; Brev. MS Meldense, Cod. Parisin. 1054 C; Brev. MS Landunense,
Cod. Pianorem M 91 D; Brev. Roschildense imp. Parisiis 1517 E.

Two other manuscripts from Gosnay containing the Antiphons and prayer
for St Genevieve were found. The one is Pleterje 5, a very small volume of 9
by 13.5 cm, and 87 folios. The small size excludes the possibility that it would
have been used in the choir. The Carthusian statutes forbid that a book should
be held in the hand in the stalls except by the weekly priest and the precentor
during the parts where they sing alone.

A colophon on fol. 87v reads that the volume was copied by Dom Jean
Marissal, a monk of the Charterhouse of Notre-Dame des Prés near
Montreuil-sur-mer in 1547 to be used by Sister Marie de la Fosse at the request
of sister Anne de Camp, the mistress of the novices. Sister Marie de la Fosse
entered the Charterhouse as a nun in 1547 and her death was announced by the
General Chapter in 1610 under the shortened form “Maria Fosse”.\textsuperscript{24} She is the
subject of a notice inserted in the Ephémérides by Dom le Vasseur (t. 2, p.
151):

\begin{quote}
Vowed from her very early years to the service of God, she kept until the end her
simplicity and her innocence ... she died in a very saintly fashion on 26 May 1625,
in the 66th year of her profession.
\end{quote}

The manuscript contains an assortment of chants for various feast days
including Lauds and Vespers for Christmas, Matins for the octave of Christ-
mas, Lauds for Epiphany, small responsories and versicles of Lauds and Ves-
pers of Septuagesima until Holy Saturday, Lauds and Vespers for Ascension,
Lauds, Vespers and Invitatories for Pentecost. It includes on fol. 86v the
Antiphon “Sponsa Dei Genovefa”.

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{23} \textit{Analecta Hymnica medii aevi}, eds. G. M. Drevès, C. Blume, and H. M. Bannister,
\textsuperscript{24} MS Sélignac 45.
Example 1: The Antiphon “Sponsa Dei Genovefa”

The other manuscript is MS Pleterje 1, a complete Antiphonary. It has no colophon and is not dated. The provenance is possibly the nearby Charterhouse for monks, Val-Saint-Esprit de Gosnay. It contains both the Antiphons and the prayer for St Genevieve towards the end of the manuscript. It con-

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forms in all other respects to the complete Carthusian Antiphonaries studied, except for MS Cape Town Grey 4c7, written for the Chartreuse of Champmol in 1398.

The Sequence “Virgo templum trinitatis” is a particularly conspicuous component of MS 3c23. It does not appear in the other Gosnay manuscripts (or in any other Carthusian manuscript). The Sequence, the text of which deals with the Seven Joys of Mary, follows the liturgy for St Genevieve in the manuscript, and appears before the Antiphon and Oration for Presentation near the end of the manuscript. The Carthusian liturgy does not include Sequences. Sequences occur quite often in the manuscripts of Carthusian Graduals, however, where the manuscripts still contain their first and last pages. These pages are the refuge of liturgical and non-liturgical pieces, foreign to the original content of the manuscript. The presence of the Sequence in MSG 3c23 could mean that it was sung in the Charterhouse during a local paraliturgical ceremony.

Example 2: The Antiphon “Gloriosam Christi sponsa”
The author of the text of “Virgo templum trinitatis” is Philip the Chancellor (Phillipus de Grevia, who died in 1236). Philip de Grevia was chancellor of Notre Dame in 1270. He is named as author of “Virgo templum trinitatis” in MS Laurentiana, Pl. 25,3, a Franciscan prayer book of 1293. Although the Sequence is mentioned in the Analecta Hymnica, the text is not given.²⁵ The melody of the Sequence “Virgo templum trinitatis” is, however, much longer than “Lauda Sion salvatorem”.

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²⁵ Analecta Hymnica, Vol. 50, 528 and 531.