Chapter 1

MEDIEVAL SPECTATORS AND PARTICIPANTS IN THE BARKING ABBEY *ELEVATIO* AND *VISITATIO SEPULCHRI*

THE RESIDENTS OF Barking Abbey—nuns, priests, and clerics—were heavily involved in the performance of their *Elevatio* and *Visitatio sepulchri*: the abbess began and ended the proceedings, the nuns and clergy represented various scriptural figures, they sang the chants recorded in the Barking Ordinal, and they moved between the choir, the sepulchre, the chapel of Mary Magdalen, and two more altars, carrying various objects. Yet the Ordinal does not mention any effect the ceremonies may have had on these residents. On the other hand, a note preceding the ceremonies announces that the *Elevatio* and *Visitatio* were moved to this later part of Matins and possibly modified in the second half of the fourteenth century by Abbess Katherine of Sutton with the aim of improving the laity's devotion:

> Nota quod secundum / antiquam consuetudinem ecclesiasticam resurexio dominica / celebrate fuit ante matutinas et ante aliquam campane / pulsacionem in die pasche et quoniam populorum concursus tempo/ribus illis videbatur deuocione frigessere. et torpor huma/nus maxime accrescens. venerabilis domina Domina Katerina / de Suttone tunc pastoralis cure gerens vicem. deside/rans dictum torporem penitus exstirpare. et fidelium deuocio/nem ad tam celibem celebracionem magis excitare: / vnanimi consororum consensu instituit. ut statim post tercium. / Responsorium. matutinarum die pasche fieret dicte resurexionis cele/bracio et hoc modo statuetur processio.
>
> Note that according to an ancient ecclesiastical custom, the Resurrection of the Lord was celebrated on Easter day before the Matins and before any bell ringing. And since the congregation of the people in those times seemed to grow cold in devotion and human apathy increasing greatly, the venerable lady, Lady Katherine of Sutton fulfilling her role of pastoral care, desiring to eliminate completely the said apathy and provoke more greatly the devotion of the faithful towards such a renowned celebration, instituted with the unanimous consent of the sisters that the said celebration of the Resurrection should be done immediately after the third responsory of Matins on Easter Day and that the procession was to be accomplished in this way.

The note testifies to the presence of the *populus* (people) witnessing the ceremonies; it also portrays them as the target audience. Yet the *populus* would

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not have experienced the *Elevatio* and *Visitatio* as directly as the house's nuns, priests, and clerics who, positioned in the church's chancel, would have seen and heard them most clearly, and actively participated in their performance.

In this first chapter then, I would like to examine the ways in which the medieval performance of the ceremonies may have affected and have been intended to affect its various spectators and participants. I will investigate the nuns and clergy of the house, as well as the laity of Barking to better understand their beliefs, expectations, and relationships with one another. This contextual part—based on the study of historical records, of the abbey's liturgical and literary culture, and of medieval lay devotion—will then be combined with an analysis of the *Elevatio* and *Visitatio* and of the ways in which—often through the use of dramatic means—they responded to this context. They seem to have addressed two significant preoccupations of their spectators and participants: the question of devotion and the question of self-definition.

Identity of Spectators and Participants

Nuns and Clergy

The nuns of Barking had long enjoyed ties to the English royalty and nobility, although at the time of the Ordinal they also came from the local gentry and from wealthy tradesmen's families.[1] Abbesses Sybil of Felton and Katherine of Sutton illustrate the diverse origins of these women. While Felton was the daughter of Sir Thomas Felton, a Knight of the Garter from Norfolk, Sutton seems to have belonged to a local family.[2] It is unclear how many nuns lived in the monastery when the Ordinal was written. However, they were forty-two in the mid-fifteenth century, thirty-three in 1499; the statutory number was thirty-seven, and thirty nuns and an abbess were recorded at the Dissolution.[3]

1 Oliva, "The Convent and the Community," 105–21.

2 Katherine of Sutton may have been related to Sir John Sutton, lord of the manor of Wivenhoe in Essex. Chettle and Loftus, *History of Barking Abbey*, 41, 44; "Ancient Parish of Barking: Manors," ed. Powell; "Wivenhoe: Manors and Other Estates," ed. Cooper. She may also have been related to the Lincoln family of Sutton or Lexington. If she was related to Hugh of Sutton, prior of Holy Trinity in Dublin, this may explain the similarities between the Dublin and Barking *Visitatio* and *Elevatio* ceremonies. Dolan, *Le drame liturgique*, 126, 187–89.

3 *Charters of Barking Abbey*, ed. Kelly, 62; Barratt, "Keeping Body and Soul Together," 235, 237.

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As for the priests and clerics of the abbey, their number varied but there were nine priests at Barking by the end of the fifteenth century and, according to the Ordinal, at least four priests, three deacons, three subdeacons, and various acolytes, thurifers, and cross bearers at the beginning of the century.[4] They were appointed and paid by the abbess who tasked them with celebrating private and public Masses in the abbey church, as well as participating in the Divine Office.[5] It is also possible that they conducted administrative work as clerks, secretaries, or archivists for the nuns. Archbishop Peckham's 1279 injunctions indicate that they lodged in the abbey precinct. The injunctions also reveal concern over the clergy's closeness with the sisters: for instance, Peckham admonishes priests not to go through the nuns' cloister after the service of the dead.[6] Nuns were therefore not entirely removed from the clergy. The liturgy did not separate them either: the Ordinal makes it clear that they could see and interact with each other.[7] The relations of the priests and clerics with the nuns may thus have been cordial and collaborative, but they may alternatively, as was regularly the case in nunneries, have been plagued by disagreements over power and money.[8] Such a challenge to the abbey's authority is recorded at Barking at the end of the fourteenth century when the vicar refused to fulfil this duty. He was compelled to do so in 1414 after the nuns appealed to the pope, but he and his successors continued to dispute the abbey's authority until at least 1452.[9] Little else is known of the priests and clerics of Barking Abbey. Neither their literary culture nor their access to the books associated with the nunnery has been recorded, although we can assume that they would have known the abbey's liturgy and that they were probably familiar with its history and with broader liturgical matters. Because of these unknowns, this chapter will grant more attention to the nuns of Barking.

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4 "The Liturgical Dramas for Holy Week," ed. Yardley and Mann, 5; Sturman, "Barking Abbey," 140–44, 157–60, 326–32; Chettle and Loftus *History of Barking Abbey*, 56.

5 Oliva, "The Convent and the Community," 48–49.

6 Gilchrist, *Contemplation in Action*, 134–36; *Registrum epistolarum fratris Johannis Peckham*, ed. Trice Martin, 1:81–86.

7 See Hamburger, "Art, Enclosure and the *Cura monialum*," 112. Nuns were frequently separated from the clergy by screens, or they had their own emporium. This does not seem to have been the case at Barking.

8 See Johnson, *Equal in Monastic Profession*, 183–90.

9 "The Ancient Parish of Barking: Abbeys and Churches Founded before 1830," ed. Powell.

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The *Populus*

While the term *populus* refers to those who had not entered a religious life, it fails to provide further information about the laity attending the *Elevatio* and *Visitatio* of Barking Abbey on Easter Day.[10] A clue to the identity of these spectators can be found in the Ordinal, when, on the Day of the Dedication of the Church, *parochiani* (parishioners) were said to be present in the abbey church *sicut in die pasche* (as on Easter day).[11] The *populus* who witnessed the *Elevatio* and *Visitatio* thus appears to have been constituted—at least in part—of Barking parishioners. These parishioners lived on a large parochial territory located within the Hundred of Becontree in Essex, itself submitted to the abbey's lordship from the time of King Stephen.[12]

The number of parishioners alive at the time of the *Elevatio* and *Visitatio* is difficult to determine. Two accounts exist but they date from 1050 and 1670—considerably earlier and later than our period—and measure different things. In 1050, the Domesday Book indicated that the manor of Barking (which included the parishes of Dagenham and Barking) contained a population of 250, making it the most populous in Essex. In 1670, 461 houses were counted in the parish.[13] These figures can give us an order of magnitude but cannot accurately represent the number of parochial spectators.

The dominant employment in this rural parish was farming.[14] Other occupations recorded in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries comprise fishing and tanning in the borough of Barking, the production of wool on the abbey lands, and its shipping from the town wharf along with leather.[15] The parishioners—and spectators of the *Elevatio* and *Visitatio*—then appear to have come from different social classes and held various types of employment. They ranged from fishermen, village officials, craftsmen, labourers, servants, and tenants, to families in charge of a manor. However, the word *populus* may alternatively have designated a smaller group of people. In the

10 Yardley, *Performing Piety*, 152.

11 *Ordinale and Customary*, ed. Tolhurst, 2:257.

12 "Hundred of Becontree," ed. Powell; Chettle and Loftus, *History of Barking Abbey*, 61.

13 A nearly contemporary map of the borough of Barking (1653) reveals that around 170 houses stood in the town at the time. "The Ancient Parish of Barking: Introduction," ed. Powell. Chettle and Loftus estimate that there were about five to six hundred tenancies in the parish in 1456. Chettle and Loftus, *History of Barking Abbey*, 63.

14 "The Ancient Parish of Barking: Agrarian History, Markets, and Fairs," ed. Powell.

15 "Borough of Barking," ed. Powell.

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Middle Ages, the word was applied to those who were not members of religious orders, but it also at times referred to those who were not members of the nobility.[16] As we shall explore later, the abbey of Barking was embroiled in various troubles with its parishioners, especially with those of the lower classes. It may therefore have wished to target its dramatic liturgical ceremonies specifically towards them.

While Latin was probably not understood by many of the Barking parishioners, some may have been able to follow the content of the liturgical chants sung during the *Elevatio* and the *Visitatio*. In his influential book *The Stripping of the Altars*, Eamon Duffy argues that the liturgy would not have been a completely different experience for them than for the rest of the laity. On the contrary, there was "a remarkable degree of religious and imaginative homogeneity across the social spectrum, a shared repertoire of symbols, prayers, and beliefs."[17] In the case of Barking Abbey's *Visitatio* and *Elevatio*, the content of the chants supported and enriched the more general messages of renewal and salvation conveyed by the ceremonies.

Barking Abbey was clearly not an isolated monastery. The town of Barking, which seems to have mostly grown and expanded after the construction of the religious house (ca. 666), stood nearby.[18] This proximity led to various interactions between the religious and lay inhabitants of Barking. Such interactions were partially tied to the religious function of the monastery. Intercessionary prayers and obits spoken for donors by the abbey's nuns and priests, Masses for the Dead said at the chantries in the abbey church, and the burials of lay individuals in the church or its cemetery were all valued practices at the time. They were thought to help the souls of the dead, whose fate was a source of deep concern.[19] These services were provided by the Barking nuns and clerics in exchange for a monetary donation, making

16 Gaffiot, Félix. "populus," in *Dictionnaire latin français*, ed. Gérard Gréco (2016), accessed September 17, 2024; "populus," in *The Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources*, ed. Richard Ashdowne, David Howlett, and R.E. Latham (Oxford: Oxford University Press and Turnhout: Brepols, 1967–2014).

17 Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, 3. On literacy in the Middle Ages, see Bell, "What Nuns Read: The State of the Question," 120–21.

18 "Borough of Barking," ed. Powell; "The Ancient Parish of Barking: Abbeys and Churches Founded before 1830," ed. Powell.

19 Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, 338, 350; Oliva, "The Convent and the Community," 275–91. According to the Ordinal, obits were composed both of a Mass said by the clergy and of liturgical chants sung by the sisters. *Ordinale and Customary*, ed. Tolhurst, 2:359, 362; *Ordinale and Customary*, ed. Tolhurst, 1:8. On medieval nuns as valued intercessors, see Bugyis, *The Care of Nuns*, 225–90.

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them accessible first to the wealthy, although bequests to religious houses by guilds and poorer parishioners are also recorded.[20] At Barking, there is evidence of parishioners, generally tenants of the abbey, being buried in the abbey church or commemorated in obituaries in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.[21] The nuns further helped the souls of the faithful by singing an Office of the Dead almost daily and by saying the full office of nine lessons for the dead once a week.[22]

The laity could moreover improve their chances in the afterlife by visiting the shrines of local saints Ethelburga, Hildelith, and Wulfhilde, and a twelfth-century Rood, all located in the conventual buildings. In 1400, Pope Boniface even granted a relaxation of penance for those who prayed at the Rood on specific days.[23] The abbey's involvement in the spiritual well-being

20 Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars,* 30–34.

21 According to the Barking Ordinal, at least five lay benefactors of the abbey were buried in its church: Thomas Fulkynge, William Dun (who probably gifted the free tenement of Downshall manor, located within the parish of Barking, to the religious house in 1250), Sir John de Cokerinne, Lady Mary (the sister of Abbess Sybil of Felton), and her mother Joan. Three of them are also said to be remembered through liturgical services (Fulkynge, Dun, and Cokerinne). Dun, at least, thus seems to have been a parishioner. Further lay benefactors of the abbey, some of whom may have belonged to the parish, are mentioned in the house's obituaries—included in the Ordinal's *Kalendarium* (Calendar). Thomas Samkynon, for example, was probably abbess of Felton's squire. According to the Barking Abbey Manor Rental of 1456, a Thomas Samkynon held a messuage in the parish of Barking. It is moreover possible that his family—Sampkyn or Samkyn—held two manors in the same parish: the manor of Fulks (1440) and the manor of Wyfields (fourteenth century). Another potential parishioner is Walter Taillour; he may also have belonged to a local family since the 1456 Rental makes mention of a Thomas Taillour, the owner of a house in Barking town. Extant wills identify some of the nunnery's other lay benefactors. Among them is the Sutton family, who were possibly related to Abbess Katherine and to Prioress Isabella Sutton, and who owned the manor of Wangey, at the limit between the parishes of Barking and Dagenham. However, apart from the Suttons, these benefactors do not appear to have been parishioners. Chettle and Loftus, *History of Barking Abbey*, 40–45; Bamford, "Bequests Relating to Essex," 262, 264, 258; *Ordinale and Customary*, ed. Tolhurst, 1:1–12 and 2:361–62; Vickers, "Barking Abbey Rental"; Cawley and FMG, "Lords Montagu"; "Ancient Parish of Barking: Manors," ed. Powell; "Dagenham: Introduction and Manors," ed. Powell.

22 *Ordinale and Customary*, ed. Tolhurst, 1:16 and 2:359, 370; Harper, *Forms and Orders of Western Liturgy*, 105–6. Some of the Barking chants for the office of the dead are recorded in a hymnal (Cambridge, Trinity College, 1226) and in a Book of Hours (Cambridge, Cambridge University Library, Dd.12.56). Yardley, "Chants for the Holy Trinity," 184.

23 Chettle and Loftus, *History of Barking Abbey,* 40.

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of its parishioners continued with its responsibilities of parochial care: Barking was meant to nominate and maintain priests for both the parish church and the nunnery's appropriated churches.[24] It moreover summoned parishioners to its own church on certain feast days, celebrating the liturgy with them. This was the case on Good Friday, Palm Sunday, Rogation Days, the Feast of St Mark, Ascension Day, the Feast of St Ethelburga, and the Day of the Dedication of the Church.[25] On Maundy Thursday, it was the poor who were called to the monastery, where the nuns washed their feet as part of the *Mandatum* (foot washing) ritual.[26]

In addition to these spiritual connections and benefits, parishioners had more temporal ties to the abbey. Barking was a powerful monastery: it ranked third in wealth among the nunneries of England and had been granted royal patronage since the reign of King Edgar.[27] Its abbess was titled as a baron—a rare privilege shared only with the abbesses of Wilton, Winchester, and Shaftesbury. She enjoyed but was also bound to manage—with the help of various officials—the house's extensive estates. As a lord, the abbess and her nunnery supplied land to their tenants and expected either money, goods, or labour in return. The monastic community encountered the laity in other circumstances as well: when they hired workers to fix the conventual buildings, when they purchased food and other necessities, when they acted as patrons or were handed bequests, when they gave alms to the poor and managed their lepers' hospital in Ilford. Relations could at times visit them and the monastery also housed boarders, corrodies, and children. Servants and farm workers were regular fixtures in the abbey, their presence necessary for its smooth operation. This range of interactions between

24 In the Late Middle Ages, the laity were generally meant to at least attend Matins, Mass, and evensong on Sundays, services on feast days, on the day of their yearly communion and confession. The Barking laity usually attended these services in the parish church of St Margaret. It had been their parish church since around 1300. "Abbeys and Churches," ed. Powell; Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, 11; Oliva, "The Convent and the Community," 42–50.

25 The feast of St Mark took place on April 25, the Day of the Dedication of the Church on July 13, and the Feast of St Ethelburga on October 11. See *Ordinale and Customary*, ed. Tolhurst, 1:94, 124–27, 96–101, 84–88, 127–130 and 2:257–59, 218–20, 319–20 for a description of these ceremonies.

26 The Ordinal indicates that the feet of the poor were washed by the abbess in her chapel, by the prioress in the chapter house, and by the other nuns in the cloisters. *Ordinale and Customary*, ed. Tolhurst, 1:94.

27 "Houses of Benedictine Nuns: Abbey of Barking," ed. Page and Round; "Religious Houses: Introduction," ed. Page and Round; Sturman, "Barking Abbey," 367, 41–43.

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the Barking laity and the religious house provided parishioners with a multifaceted image of this nunnery, which held a significant role for their community. It was at once a provider of spiritual assistance and charity, a lord, an employer, and even a host.[28]

Participation in the Ceremonies

Having introduced the spectators and participants in the Barking Abbey *Elevatio* and *Visitatio sepulchri*, I will now investigate the nature of their participation in the ceremonies. While the nuns, clergy, and laity present in the abbey church on Easter Sunday all watched these liturgical ceremonies, they participated to various degrees in their performance. The parishioners witnessed it from the nave, where their view may have been obstructed by a choir screen and/or a *pulpitum* (screen).[29] As for the nuns and clergy, they were responsible for this performance—singing and moving as directed by the Ordinal and Customary. Yet, in addition to their role in the ceremonies' performance, they may also have been involved in their creation.

From the early years of the religious house, the nuns of Barking were readers, composers, buyers, and sponsors of written texts. In the Anglo-Saxon period, they produced—under Abbess Hildelith (d. 712)—and influenced the creation of written works, and they transmitted their knowledge with their monastic school.[30] Styli from this period—

28 For evidence and examples of these ties between the abbey and the laity, see Chettle and Loftus, *History of Barking Abbey*, 25–46, 53–65, 69; Sturman, "Barking Abbey," 109, 168–205, 216, 299, 391, 394, 476–77, 484; "The Ancient Parish of Barking: Agrarian History, Markets, and Fairs," ed. Powell; Oliva, "The Convent and the Community," 41–42, 65, 154–56, 221, 279–87, 253–55, 293, 305; Wogan-Browne, "Barking and the Historiography of Female Community," 296; Power, *Medieval English Nunneries*, 69–74, 146–48, 150, 157–58, 198, 261–84, 401; Warren, *Spiritual Economies*, 65–67; Johnson, *Equal in Monastic Profession*, 47–55, 61, 153–58, 232; "The Ancient Parish of Barking: Introduction," ed. Powell; "Houses of Benedictine Nuns: Abbey of Barking," ed. Page and Round.

29 Rood screens were standard in churches in England at this time, although no record of them can be found for Barking Abbey. A *pulpitum* is however mentioned in the *Ordinal*. Bond, *Screens and Galleries*, 157–59; *Ordinale and Customary*, ed. Tolhurst, 1:27. Wiles, basing himself in part on the work of Kate Matthews, believes that the altar behind which the priest representing Christ appeared and disappeared in the *Visitatio* was situated in front of the *pulpitum*. Wiles, *Short History of Western Performance Space*, 47.

30 Hildelith produced a now lost *libellus* (short book) relating the origins of the abbey and the life of her predecessor St Ethelburga. This same *libellus* was used by Bede when he wrote his ca. 731 *Historia ecclesiastica gentis anglorum*. Weston, "The

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perhaps used by the nuns—were further found on the site of the abbey.[31]

Although it is difficult to say whether this culture persisted uninterrupted, post-Conquest sisters are known to have corresponded with leading churchmen, such as Osbert of Clare, prior of Westminster (works from ca. 1120s–1150s).[32] Two of the sisters moreover composed Anglo-Norman translations and adaptations of Latin lives of saints: the *Life of St Edward* by an anonymous nun (ca. 1163–1166) and the *Life of St Catherine of Alexandria* by Clemence of Barking (earliest manuscript ca. 1200).[33] The nunnery also sponsored various written works, all connected with the house's history or saints. The role of sponsor—adopted by many medieval women—seems to have implied a certain involvement in the works commissioned.[34] At Barking, Abbess Mary Becket, sister of Thomas, commissioned Guernes (Garnier) de Pont-Sainte-Maxence to compose *La vie de Saint-Thomas le martyr de Cantorberie* (1173–1175). Adgar's *Gracial*, the first known translation in the vernacular of the Latin miracles of Mary—patron saint of the abbey church—appears to have been written under the patronage of Abbess Maud/Matilda (1175–1198). Finally, Abbess Aelfgifu commissioned Goscelin de Saint-Bertin (ca. 1058) to write texts on three of Barking's foundational saints: Abbesses Ethelburga, Hildelith, and Wulfhilde. Goscelin acknowledges that his work is based partly on Bede but adds that he obtained information from sister Judith/Vulfruna, whom he considers a reliable and authoritative source.[35] It seems evident from surveying the literary

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Saint-Maker and the Saint," 57, 69; Weston, "Conceiving the Word(s)," 149–50; Hollis, "Barking's Monastic School," 34–37.

31 "An Exploration of Barking Abbey: Exhibition." Valence House.

32 Hollis, "The Literary Culture of the Anglo-Saxon Royal Nunneries," 176.

33 They translated and adapted an Aelred de Rievaulx version of the life of Edward (1161–1163) and the *Vulgata* version (eleventh century) of the life of Catherine. See Russell, "The Cultural Context of the French Prose Remaniement," 290; Watt, *Medieval Women's Writing*, 80; Robertson, "Writing in the Textual Community," 25; Wogan-Browne, *Saints' Lives and Women's Literary Culture*, 223, 245.

34 Green, *Women Readers in the Middle Ages*, 203, 251. There are many examples of medieval women sponsoring literature. According to Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, between the twelfth and the fourteenth century, these women generally belonged to the gentry, the nobility, or the urban elites (as did the nuns of Barking Abbey). Wogan-Browne, *Saints' Lives and Women's Literary Culture*, 1.

35 Goscelin composed *The Life and Miracles of St Ethelburga*, *The Life and Miracles of St Wulfhilde*, a shorter and a longer translation of Saints Ethelburga, Hildelitha, and Wulfhilde, a vision about their translation, and lessons on the translation of St Hildelith. Slocum, "Goscelin de Saint-Bertin," 74, 80–81; Colker, "Texts of Jocelyn of

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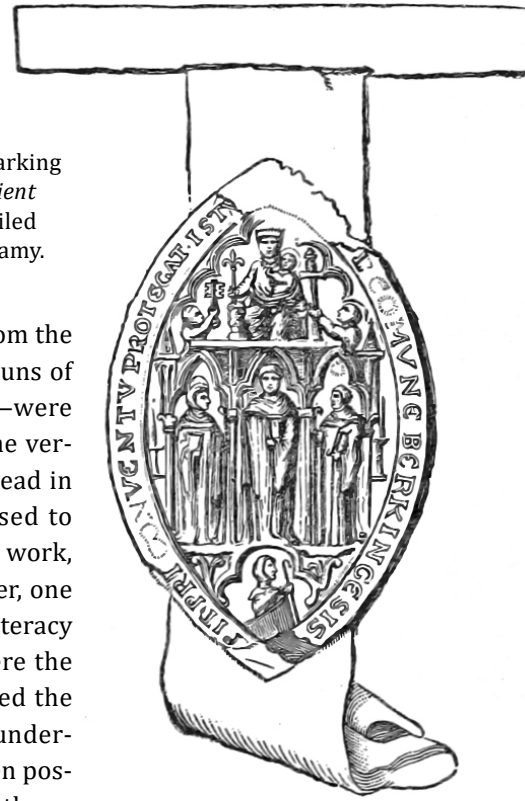

Figure 1.1. Sketch of the thirteenth-century seal of Barking Abbey. From *A Sketch of Ancient Barking and its Abbey*, compiled and revised by E. Tuck. © Alamy.

production at Barking Abbey that, from the seventh to the twelfth century, the nuns of Barking—or at least some of them—were regarded as learned. They read in the vernacular, but they were also able to read in Latin: letters in Latin were addressed to them, they commissioned Goscelin's work, and translated saints' lives.[36] However, one may wonder what the state of their literacy was at the time of the Ordinal.[37] Were the sisters who performed and witnessed the Latin *Elevatio* and *Visitatio* able to understand their content? Is it perhaps even possible that they wrote the ceremonies themselves?

It seems that the nuns of Barking continued to present themselves—to the outside world and to their community—as learned. The conventual seal used at Barking Abbey from the thirteenth century until the Dissolution in 1539 featured Barking abbesses holding books in their hands, showing the importance of the written word for this religious community (Figure 1.1).[38]

Evidence suggests that, in practice, the sisters could read at least basic liturgical Latin. The ability to read and to sing liturgical texts was sometimes listed in the Late Middle Ages among the requirements for women to enter monastic life, so that they could fulfil their main task in the choir. This is the

Canterbury," 387, 391. On literary patronage at Barking, see also O'Donnell, "'The Ladies Have Me Quite Fat,'" 96; Bérat, "The Authority of Diversity"; Benoit, *Le Gracial d'Adgar*, 20, 32.

36 The word "reading" should also be understood in a broad sense. It can mean reading aloud for another, reading for oneself, or simply listening to another reading aloud. Green, *Women Readers in the Middle Ages*, 4–6; Meale, "'Alle the bokes,'" 133.

37 On nuns' literacy and their books, see Bell, *What Nuns Read*; Bell, "What Nuns Read: The State of the Question."

38 Bugyis, *The Care of Nuns*, 35, 237.

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case in Bishop Gray's 1432 injunctions to the nuns of Elstow. He orders the abbess not to admit any woman to the monastery unless she is:

> nisi in in cantu et lectura et aliis requisitis in hac parte doctam, vel ex verisimili in proximo de facili imbuendam, et talem que onera chori [illegible word] ceteris religionem concernentibus poterit suportare.
>
> taught in singing and reading and the other necessary things in this part, or it is probable that in the near future she may easily be instructed and will be able to manage such things as the burden of the choir [and] the other things concerned with religion.[39]

Some of the sisters may even have had a more advanced command of liturgical Latin: the *cantrix*, for instance, who was responsible for the appropriate performance of the liturgy, had to understand it to handle various liturgical books and to choose some of the chants.[40]

The Barking Abbey nuns also probably understood non-liturgical Latin texts. Reading in the vernacular but also in Latin seems to have been particularly encouraged in the nunnery. According to the Rule of St Benedict, certain times of the day were reserved for reading. During the mid-day meal in the refectory, a *lectrix* read sermons, tracts, saints' lives, extracts from the New Testament, Mass texts, or commentaries while the rest of the sisters ate. These could be in the vernacular or in Latin. Every evening, a reading—the "collation"—was conducted in the chapter house before compline.[41] Other moments were dedicated to the *lectio divina*: the daily reading, ruminating, and internalizing of scriptural texts (in Latin).[42] Reading was seen as a spiritual practice, as a way into prayer because it allowed the intellectual and emotional assimilation of texts. It would both educate and stir the readers' feelings for the love of God. Understanding the texts was necessary for

39 Yardley, *Performing Piety*, 76–77. Similar requests are made in the 1521 injunctions to the Augustinian sisters of Burnham and the injunctions to the Premonstratensian house of Irford. Moreover, Thomas de la Mare, Abbot of St Albans between 1349 and 1396, ordered that in the subordinate nunnery of St Mary de Pré new nuns should be literate and profess the Rule of St Benedict in writing. Green, *Women Readers in the Middle Ages*, 133–34; Power, *Medieval English Nunneries*, 245. Power does add however that "professions were often written by others, and the postulant only put his or her cross."

40 Yardley, *Performing Piety*, 52–60, 180.

41 Lindenbaum, "Drama as Textual Practice," 394. See also Yardley, "Musical Education of Young Girls," 50.

42 *Règle de Saint-Benoît*, ed. Schmitz, 111–13. The Ordinal indicates that the nuns of Barking were in possession of the Rule. *Ordinale and Customary*, ed. Tolhurst, 1:67.

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these benefits to be felt. The importance of reading—of the *lectio divina* in particular—is emphasized in additional manuscripts contemporary with or acquired around the time of the Ordinal and in the Ordinal itself.[43] The latter recommends—as does the Rule of St Benedict—that, to ensure that the nuns were indeed reading during the times allocated for this activity, nuns called *circuitres* go about the monastery. Like the Rule, it describes at length the distribution of books to the sisters, which took place on the first Monday of Lent.[44] The value given to reading is further emphasized by the Ordinal's indication of the presence—rare in English nunneries—of an *armaria* (a book cupboard) and of a librarian at Barking.[45]

The books of the *armaria* seem to have included a variety of works in Latin. Barking is the English nunnery attached to the second largest number of extant books: at least fifteen.[46] In addition to liturgical books, these are liturgical tracts, gospels, as well as devotional treatises. While these books appear to indicate a decline in the use of Latin—standard in nunneries from the thirteenth century onwards—they also testify to its continuous use in the house until at least the fifteenth century.[47] The Latin texts associated with Barking are a twelfth-century manuscript (Oxford, Bodleian Library,

43 These manuscripts are Oxford, Bodleian Library, Bodl. 923, containing *The Clensyng of Mannes Soule*; *Olim* Foyle, MS, previously owned by William Foyle of Beeleigh Abbey, Essex and now privately owned, containing William Flete's *De remediis contra temptationes*; MS privately owned, previously in the library of Allan Heywood Bright of Barton Court and containing *A Mirror for Recluses*. Kirchberger, "The Cleansing of Man's Soul," 292–94; see also Everett, "A Critical Edition," 83–84; Lamothe, "An Edition of the Latin and Four Middle English Versions," 1–2, 216; Jones, "*A Mirror for Recluses*," 427. See Erler, "Private Reading," 136–43, 145–46; Hutchison, "Devotional Reading in the Monastery," 218–22.

44 *Ordinale and Customary*, ed. Tolhurst, 1:67–70; 2:374; *Règle de Saint-Benoît*, ed. Schmitz, 111–13. The Ordinal extensively quotes here the 1225 Decrees of the General Northampton Chapter. Sturman, "Barking Abbey," 312, 231.

45 *Ordinale and Customary*, ed. Tolhurst, 1:67. There are references to libraries for the nunneries of Syon, Campsey, St Sexburga, and Nunnaminster, and references to a librarian at Barking, Syon, and Nunnaminster. Barking Abbey probably owned more than forty books since the Ordinal indicates that there were books in the *armaria* in addition to the books given to the nuns. Bell, *What Nuns Read*, 42, 45–48.

46 There are significantly fewer books associated with English nunneries than with continental ones. English monks also seem to have possessed more books than nuns. It is difficult to say whether English nuns read substantially more than is provable today or whether they simply had fewer books than monks and continental nuns. Wogan-Browne, "Women's Formal and Informal Traditions," 85.

47 Bell, *What Nuns Read*, 64; Barratt, "Small Latin?," 64–65.

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Laud lat. 19) containing the *Song of Songs* and *Lamentations*, and two manuscripts from the twelfth and thirteenth century (?Cardiff, Public Library, 3.833 and 1.381) including seven *vitae* (lives) of saints, Defensor de Ligugé's *Scintillarium*, Beleth *Summa de ecclesasticis officiis*, and an extract from Comestor's *Historia scholastica.* Three fifteenth-century manuscripts—*Olim* Foyle, MS; London, British Library, Add. 10596; ?Nijmegen, U.L (Radboud university), 194—containing both Latin and Middle English texts have also been connected to the Essex nunnery.[48] Peckham's 1279 Latin admonitions to the monastery moreover seem to show that the language was understood by its nuns. The sixteenth-century will and inventory of William Powsnett, the abbey's last steward, may further confirm the continuing study of Latin at Barking. It mentions twenty-nine books said to have come from the nunnery, many of them in Latin. Their acquisition is difficult to date, however, and some or all may have been in the possession of the steward rather than the nuns.[49] Yet, the accumulation of evidence—the use of Latin in non-liturgical books up to at least the fifteenth-century, the references found in the Rule of St Benedict and other manuscripts concerning reading, and the requirements of liturgical offices—shows that the sisters of Barking Abbey would most likely have understood the *Elevatio* and the *Visitatio sepulchri*, as well as other Latin texts present in the nunnery.

Such a knowledge of Latin makes their involvement in the creation of the ceremonies—a mixture of liturgical chants, scriptural texts, and seven apparently unique chants—more likely. There is no evidence that the sisters wrote—in the sense of wrote out, as scribes—the *Elevatio*, the *Visitatio,* or the Ordinal but it is possible that they did. Some English women religious were able to write, and records indicate that the sisters of Barking may have been used to writing: Goscelin de Saint-Bertin identified eleventh-century nun Vulfruna (Judith) as the scribe of a missal,[50] sisters may have provided additions and corrections transforming a gospel book for liturgical use in the twelfth century,[51] five nuns signed their names in books associated with the house, and a fifteenth-century cellaress may have written an account

48 Bell, *What Nuns Read*, 106–7.

49 Bell, "What Nuns Read: The State of the Question," 117–18.

50 Yardley, "Liturgy as the Site of Creative Engagement," 278. On Judith/Vulfruna, see Bugyis, *The Care of Nuns*, 40, 65–70. See also Bugyis, "Female Monastic Cantors," 151–71.

51 Bugyis, *The Care of Nuns*, 148–71

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herself (in English).[52] A fifteenth-century rental for Barking moreover mentions other "rentals maintained by the abbey's abbess, sacristan, and cellaress."[53] References to writing are also included in the Ordinal (where nuns are warned not to write in books) and in a contemporaneous Barking manuscript, *The Mirror for Recluses* (where recluses are recommended the "writyng of holy and edificatif thynges of deuocyoun").[54] However, like most monastic houses, Barking employed clerks who could have written texts for the nuns—including the Ordinal and Customary.[55]

Even if the sisters had not written this text with their own hands, they may have composed it. Composing can be more frequently attributed to medieval women than scribal work.[56] However, composers regularly employed scribes who at times contributed to the text or edited what had been dictated to them: it is often difficult to separate clearly the intent of the composer from the influence of the scribe.[57] In the case of Barking, the identity of the Ordinal's scribe(s) remains unknown, as does their contribution. The manuscript's composition too remains undocumented. The liturgy of Barking was most likely composed over centuries and, while it contains some seemingly unique chants, it tends to follow certain liturgical conventions and to adopt widespread practices. Even the most distinctive aspects

52 On the cellaress, see Barratt, "Keeping Body and Soul Together," 235. See also Oliva, "The French of England," 90–91; Oliva, "Rendering Accounts," 51–54; O'Mara, "Female Scribal Ability," 103; Oliva, "The Convent and the Community," 142. Oliva believes that the kitcheners' account of Campsey Abbey was written by nuns, as were the Barking, Blackborough, Carrow, Markham, Bungay, and St Radegund's obedentiaries' accounts. On convent drama being written by a nun, see Robinson, "Chantilly, Musée Condé, Ms. 617," 95 (on the Carmelite convent of Huy).

53 Oliva, "Rendering Accounts," 67.

54 Jones, "*A Mirror for Recluses*," 427–28; *Ordinale and Customary*, ed. Tolhurst, 1:67.

55 A payment to a clerk is mentioned in the Barking cellaress' account. Oliva, "Rendering Account," 59. There is further evidence of women writing in England, but it tends to remain vague until the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century. More evidence of women copyists or *scriptrix* (scribes) comes from the Continent. See O'Mara, "The Late Medieval English Nun," 76–92; Green, *Women Readers in the Middle Ages*, 185–89; Meale, "'Alle the bokes,'" 134; Robinson, "A Twelfth Century *Scriptrix*," 86; Blanton, O'Mara, and Stoop, "Introduction," xxv, xxxii; O'Mara, "Female Scribal Ability," 91–95, 98–102.

56 On writing in the Middle Ages, see Green, *Women Readers in the Middle Ages*, 181; O'Mara, "Female Scribal Ability," 88–89; Smith, "*Scriba*, *Femina*," 29; Watt, *Medieval Women's Writing*, 2–7.

57 Boffey, "Women Authors and Women's Literacy," 160–62, 165; Coakley, "Women's Textual Authority," 90–95.

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of this liturgy may have been composed by priests and not by nuns: there is sixteenth-century evidence of chaplains creating chants for the feasts of local saints Hildelith and Wulfhilde.[58]

Yet the nuns of Barking are regularly presented by the Ordinal as having a significant say in the liturgy of the abbey. Their contribution is visible in a statement made at the beginning of the Ordinal, which claims that Abbess Sybil of Felton ordered its production:

> Memorandum quod Anno domini Millesimo quadringentesimo quarto domina Sibilla permissione diuina Abbatissa de Berkyng hunc librum ad usum Abbatissarum in dicta domo in futurum existencium concessit. et in librario eiusdem loci post mortem cuiuscumque in perpetuum commemoraturum ordinauit. donec eleccio inter moniales fiat. tunc predictus liber eidem electe in Abbatissam per superiores domus post stallactionem deliberator.
>
> It will be recorded that in the year of the Lord 1404, Dame Sibilla, by divine permission abbess of Barking, gave and ordered this book for the use of the future Abbesses living in the said house and as a perpetual reminder for them, [stipulating] that after the death of any abbess the book [should be kept] in the library of the same place until an election takes place among the nuns. At that point the aforesaid book is given over by senior nuns of the house to the nun who has been elected abbess, after her installation.[59]

Felton, with the assent of the conventual community, is further credited with various decisions affecting the liturgy of the house—she requested, for instance, that the *Salve festa dies* (Hail, great day) be sung on Trinity Sunday—and so is Abbess Katherine of Sutton.[60] The note preceding the *Elevatio* and the *Visitatio* moreover asserts that the ceremonies were moved and perhaps modified according to the will of Katherine of Sutton and with the unanimous consent of the sisters. Alterations to the liturgy were also made by the *cantrix* (the nun responsible "for the correct performance of the sung liturgy"), who could choose some of the chants sung during liturgical services.[61]

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58 *Ordinale and Customary*, ed. Tolhurst, 1:vi; Sturman, "Barking Abbey," 332.

59 *Ordinale and Customary*, ed. Tolhurst, 1:13; translation by Yardley in "Liturgy as the Site of Creative Engagement," 271.

60 *Ordinale and Customary*, ed. Tolhurst, 1:141 and 2:257, 346, 222; *Ordinale and Customary*, ed. Tolhurst; Yardley, "Liturgy as the Site of Creative Engagement," 271–74.

61 Yardley, *Performing Piety*, 52–60. See for example, *Ordinale and Customary*, ed. Tolhurst, 2:281.

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None of these references proves that nuns were the creative minds behind the *Elevatio* and *Visitatio*. However, they show their instrumental role in shaping some of the house's liturgical ceremonies and in initiating the composition of the Ordinal and Customary, which recorded an approved version of this liturgy. The nuns of Barking Abbey may therefore have participated in the composition of the *Elevatio* and *Visitatio*. They would at least have approved of their content and have influenced their performance. Performance itself can be understood as composition since it adds to and can change the written text.

Having considered the participation of the laity, nuns, and clergy of Barking in the *Visitatio* and *Elevatio*, I will now explore these ceremonies' potential effects on their spectators and performers. The *Elevatio* and *Visitatio* of Barking Abbey are carefully crafted: the liturgical ceremonies join gospel excerpts, liturgical chants, chants found only in these types of ceremonies, and (it appears) original material in a unique way to present a specific version of the scriptural events that they depict. Many of their themes would have been familiar to the nuns, clergy, and laity of Barking and seem to respond to the *Elevatio* and *Visitatio*'s context of creation: the ceremonies show an interest in exploring various forms of devotion, as well as in the experience of women religious and its ties with the nunnery of Barking. However, their dramatic features mark them as unusual—at least according to the extant documents on the nunnery and its surroundings. This mixture of familiar themes with unusual tools and its likely consequences on the ceremonies' spectators and participants will be discussed in the next section.

An Emphasis on Devotion

Medieval devotional practices provide an essential context for understanding the *Elevatio* and *Visitatio sepulchri*. Devotion informed many aspects of medieval life, even more so in the case of nuns and clerics who spent much of their day performing liturgical ceremonies and were valued for their prayers.[62] At Barking too, members of the abbey seem to have been keenly interested in the subject. Documents show, for instance, their sense of responsibility to cultivate the devotion of the laity: the nunnery repeatedly included the *populus* in liturgical ceremonies, and it was responsible for numerous churches, whose priests it chose and managed. The abbey further showed its care for the soul of its parishioners by providing a preacher on Rogation Days.[63]

62 See for example, Jones, "*A Mirror for Recluses*," 424–31.

63 *Ordinale and Customary*, ed. Tolhurst, 1:124–25.

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Such a sense of responsibility was common among the medieval clergy and religious institutions, even more so after Lateran IV (1215) and the Lambeth Council (1281), and their insistence on pastoral care. Parish priests were reminded by various treatises and manuals—such as *De informacione simplicium* (1281), the *Lay Folk's Catechism* (1357), John Mirk's *Instructions for Parish Priests* (fourteenth century), William of Pagula's *Oculus sacerdotis* (early fourteenth century), and the *Manipulus curatorum* (fourteenth century)—that they were bound to prepare the laity for the afterlife and to inform them of their religious and moral duties. At Barking, *The Clensyng of Mannes Soule*—although not clearly addressed to priests—belongs to this same tradition of "religious instructional manuals."[64]

In this context, the note recorded in the Ordinal before the *Visitatio* and *Elevatio* claiming that "the venerable lady, Lady Katherine of Sutton fulfilling her role of pastoral care, desir[ed] to eliminate completely the said apathy and provoke more greatly the devotion of the faithful towards such a renowned celebration," shows the abbey's concern for the state of their parishioners' devotion. The note's wording—its use of the word *torpor* (apathy) especially—may indicate what the abbey felt was amiss with the devotional life of the Barking laity. This word was associated with Sloth and recognized as one of its offspring. It was described in such a way, for instance, in the *Ancrene Wisse*, a rule or manual for anchoresses: "The Beore of hevi slawthe haveth theose hwelpes: torpor is the forme: thet is, wlech heorte - unlust to eni thing - the schulde leitin al o lei i luve of ure Laverd" (The Bear of sluggish sloth has these whelps (or, cubs): *torpor* is the first: that is, a lukewarm heart—lack of desire (or, disinclination) for anything—which should blaze completely in flame for love of our Lord).[65] Committing the Sin of Sloth generally meant failing in one's religious duties: delaying penance, arriving late or failing to come to church, and, if present, not engaging with the content of the liturgical services.[66] The *Visitatio* and *Elevatio* were performed early in the morning and the *populus* perhaps struggled to wake

64 Everett, "*The Clensyng Of Mannes Soule*," 266, 269–71; Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, 53–58.

65 We do not know whether the nuns of Barking had access to the *Ancrene Wisse*. This text, written between 1234 and 1250, seems to have been first destined to three sisters of noble birth who became anchoresses. However, many of its versions contain mentions not only of anchoresses as its readers but also of nuns, virgins, married women, and even men. *Ancrene Wisse*, ed. Hasenfratz. Translation by Hasenfratz.

66 Mirk, *Instructions for Parish Priests*, ed. Peacock, 36–37; Wenzel, "Sloth in Middle English Devotional Literature," 304–7, 314.

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up to witness them. Their lack of attendance may have been understood as a lack of devotion. The abbey's decision to postpone the ceremonies to a later point of Matins was then perhaps a way of addressing this issue and of ensuring that more parishioners would be in church at the time of their performance. It may also have been a way of maximizing the effect of the performance: the sun would be rising at the very moment the Resurrection was performed. The spectacular effect, as well as the symbolism of the *Elevatio* and *Visitatio*, would thus have been increased.

Barking Abbey's interest in devotion would also have been directed towards the religious community itself. Drawing on evidence from the houses of Barking, Godstow, and Wherwell, Katie Ann-Marie Bugyis explains that the duties of medieval abbesses and prioresses towards their nuns included "provisioning their houses with material goods for their sustenance and with books and texts for their liturgical observance and edification, and directing the spiritual progress of consorors both in and outside the hours of prayer."[67] The spiritual health of the community was therefore of paramount importance not only to the bishops visiting the house, but to the nuns themselves. This is also attested at Barking by the house's literary culture, which includes the creation and dissemination of texts meant to improve their readers' devotion. Clemence of Barking and the nun translating the *Life of St Edward* both claim that their translations were undertaken with the purpose of making Latin texts more accessible, and thus helping save those reading them. In two other Barking texts—Adgar's *Gracial* and Nicholas Love's *The Mirrour of the Blessed Lyf of Jesu Christ*—the composers frequently intervene in the narratives that they are presenting to guide their readers.[68] Saints' lives, as well as the *Mirrour*, are moreover punctuated with prayers which worshippers can easily adopt for themselves.[69] In these instances of didacticism, teaching is generally a moral act with moral benefits. It is an "act of devotion," but it is also a means to increase the devotion of readers, whether by explaining religious concepts to them, by presenting them with exemplary lives of saints, by showing them what the power of God can do, or, in the case of Nicholas Love, by increasing their compassion for Christ and his sacrifice.[70]

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67 Bugyis, *The Care of Nuns*, 10.

68 See for example, Benoit, *Le Gracial d'Adgar*, 209–13.

69 Love, *Mirrour of the Blessed Lyf*, ed. Hogg and Powell, 321, 323; *La vie d'Edouard*, ed. Bliss, 38; Benoit, *Le Gracial d'Adgar*, 60–65, 273.

70 Watt, *Medieval Women's Writing*, 72–75; Bugyis, *The Care of Nuns*, 119. At

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As I will explore in the next section of this chapter, the Barking *Elevatio* and *Visitatio sepulchri* may therefore have been part of the house's devotional efforts: they taught their lay and religious spectators and participants about Scripture and lives of saints, strengthened their compassionate devotion for Christ, helped them understand the liturgy, and educated them on the important subject of penance. These forms of devotion were both essential to the devotional culture of the nunnery and typical of the Late Middle Ages.

Scriptures and Lives of Saints

The *Elevatio* and *Visitatio* attest to the nunnery's interest in scriptural and hagiographical stories: the narrative they present derives from such texts, and some of their chants are direct scriptural citations.[71] This interest in Scriptures and lives of saints, as might be expected in a convent, was widespread at Barking, judging from the books owned by the house. These include commentaries on various scriptural extracts, the gospels in Latin, and manuscripts containing saints' lives.[72] As explored when discussing the nuns' literacy, two sisters even translated and adapted *vitae* in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries (the *Life of St Catherine* and the *Life of St Edward*), and the nuns practised the *lectio divina*, the reading of and meditating on Scriptures and lives of saints.[73]

Barking, see Love, *Mirrour of the Blessed Lyf*, ed. Hogg and Powell, 7–10; Benoit, *Le Gracial d'Adgar*, 209.

71 Scriptural citations are from Matthew (28:6, 9–10): *Non est hic surrexit* (He is not here; for he is risen), *Avete nolite timere* (Hail, do not fear); from Mark (16:3): *Quis revolvet nobis* (Who has rolled away for us); from Luke (24:5): *Quid queritis viventem cum mortuis* (Why do you seek the living one among the dead?); from John (20:13, 15–17): *Mulier quid ploras* (Woman, why do you weep)*, Quia tulerunt dominum meum* (Because they have taken away my lord), *Mulier quid ploras, quem queris* (Woman, why do you weep? Whom do you seek?), *Domine si tu sustulisti eum* (Lord, if you have taken him away), *Maria* (Mary), *Raboni* (Rabbi), and the *Noli me tangere* (Do not touch me).

72 A formula of the text of Matthew 5:22, a Latin commentary on Daniel 5, and a Latin commentary on Matthew 5:22; Defensor of Ligugé's *Scintillarium*; an extract from Peter Comestor's *Historica scholastica*; an extract from Augustine's *De doctrina christiana*; Jerome's prefaces to the gospels. William Powsnett's will further lists a Latin Bible, Jacob of Voragine's *Legenda aurea*, Dionysius the Carthusian's commentary on the psalms and commentary on the four gospels, a commentary on the canonical epistles, and a commentary on the Pauline Epistles. Bell, *What Nuns Read*, 117.

73 *Ordinale and Customary*, ed. Tolhurst, 1:67. The Ordinal refers to the Rule of St Benedict and describes the distribution of books at the beginning of Lent.

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The *lectio divina* was undertaken in monastic contexts in order that readers should come to understand and know scriptural stories, but it was to be followed by the *meditatio* during which the contents of the texts were memorized. This time of meditation led readers to absorb what had been read and to make it their own. By reading in such a way, they learned about scriptural and hagiographic stories, but they also absorbed the words of these stories and the examples set by their figures.[74] All knowledge, including moral knowledge, was thought to be gained through memorization: memorization was thus at once the basis of scholarly learning and a "moral obligation." Reading taught information, ways of conversing and composing well, but also built "character, judgment, citizenship, piety," and helped readers make moral judgements.[75]

Memorization could be undertaken when reading but also when looking at images. The actions of reading and of observing images were likened to each other by churchmen such as Gregory the Great or Abbot Albert Crispin (twelfth century). Liturgical commentators Beleth and Durandus (both probably read at Barking) argued that images could help the viewer remember: images were able to recall an "object, event, person, or narrative sequence."[76] According to medieval theories of memory, it was thus simpler for most people to remember what was visual. If what had to be remembered was not an image, it ought to be made into an image in one's mind. To facilitate the formation of such memory-images, texts at times attached images to more abstract concepts. For example, the Rule of St Benedict regularly uses visual meditational aids, such as Jacob's ladder, to help readers memorize the stages of humility. Readers were encouraged to form memory-images that were "striking and vivid, rare and unusual." Seeing already striking images helped this process of memorization considerably.[77]

The *Elevatio* and *Visitatio*, which mix text with images, therefore appear perfect for *lectio* but also for *meditatio*. They were moreover unusual and visually striking:[78] they displayed a spectacle—including processions, beau-

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The section of the Rule referring to the distribution of books (chapter forty-eight) is the one recommending careful reading and meditating (*lectio divina*) as part of the work of monks. *Règle de Saint-Benoît*, ed. Schmitz, 111.

74 Erler, "Private Reading," 145; Carruthers, *Book of Memory*, 10, 88, 118, 164.

75 Carruthers, *Book of Memory*, 9, 68–71, 106, 150, 168–69.

76 Kroesen and Schmidt, "Introduction," 9; Scherb, *Staging Faith*, 46; Carruthers, *Book of Memory*, 221–22. See also Salisbury, *Worship in Medieval England*, 54–55.

77 Carruthers, *Book of Memory*, 60, 22–27, 73, 139–41; Scherb, *Staging Faith*, 51–54.

78 While no other liturgical ceremonies at Barking are as close to drama as the

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tiful vestments and vessels, movements, and lights—in the impressive church of Barking Abbey, which, after the sombre period of Lent when its images and sculptures had been veiled or removed, was heavily decorated on Easter Day.[79] Some of the features of the ceremonies match medieval advice on forming memory-images even more closely. Albertus Magnus, for example, recommends his readers form memory-images that would not only be striking but also grouped in a scene "in which the order among them is expressed through physical action," and if possible, asks that these images come from a variety of sources. The Barking ceremonies offered such images to their spectators and participants: they ordered their moving images to tell a story, and the physical action of performers led from one image to the other. They also presented a variety of images, some performed by nuns and clerics, some part of the decoration of the church.

While images were felt to be easier to remember, other senses—when attached to images—were also considered useful for memorization. Mnemonic advice in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries "stresse[d] synaesthesia in making a memory-image": the memory-image would be more striking, surprising, and memorable if it was not just a picture but also possessed a sound, smell, taste, or involved the sense of touch.[80] The impression produced by the *Elevatio* and *Visitatio* had such a synesthetic quality. Spectators saw the ceremonies, but they also heard the chants sung by the participants and smelled the incense of the thuribles. Participants further experienced the ceremonies through their sense of touch and through the movements of their bodies.[81] For the nuns, watching the ceremonies may therefore have

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Elevatio and *Visitatio*, the other services attended by the laity according to the Ordinal share similarities with the two Easter ceremonies. Apart from the *Mandatum*, all included processions and the use of either a shrine, a tomb, or a sepulchre. See *Ordinale and Customary*, ed. Tolhurst, 1:94, 124–27, 96–101, 84–88, 127–130 and 2:257–59, 218–20, 319–20 for a description of these ceremonies.

79 Durand, *Rational ou manuel des divins offices*, ed. Barthélemy, 4: 202. The church of Barking Abbey was the largest recorded in Essex at the time with a length of 103 m [337 ft]. Clapham, "The Benedictine Abbey of Barking," 69–87.

80 Carruthers, *Book of Memory*, 78, 223–29, 245, 257; Scherb, *Staging Faith*, 50.

81 Yardley, *Performing Piety*, 229–31; Carruthers, *Book of Memory*, 179–82. Another woman religious, Hildegard of Bingen, spoke in her *Symphonia* of the act of singing as creating an "image" which then imprints itself on the *memoria* of singers and allows them to achieve contemplation. De Hemptinne and Gongora, "Introduction," xii; Gongora, "*Feminea forma* and *virga*," 24–26. Drama and images in general were already perceived in the Middle Ages as being conducive to the teaching and the strengthening of devotion. See Woolf, *English Mystery Plays*, 43; Lipton, "Images and their Uses," 254–66, 270–71, 281; *Touching, Devotional Practices*, ed. Carillo-Rangel,

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been close to a moment of *lectio divina* and *meditatio*. Yet, according to medieval theories on memory, the ceremonies' specific qualities would have helped all spectators and participants remember them—and the story that they told.

The *Elevatio* and *Visitatio*'s dramatic features would also have helped those watching—whether they were nuns, clerics, or lay people—understand the story itself. A linear narrative, but also various "props," "costumes," movement, light, as well as "actors," were helpful tools for clear and efficient storytelling. They would have been particularly valuable for those who might not have understood the content of the chants. Spectators were first cued to identify the scriptural story told by the *Elevatio* and *Visitatio* thanks to objects carried by the figures represented, which often referenced Scriptures or pictorial depictions—some of which were perhaps visible in the abbey church—of these scriptural passages. The *ampullae* used in the *Visitatio*, which were vessels generally containing water and wine for Mass or holy oil, recalled the ointments brought by the Marys to the tomb of Christ.[82] The *sudarium* taken from the sepulchre visually referenced the death and Resurrection of Christ. It was seen in John 20:5–7 by Simon Peter and the other disciple when they entered the empty sepulchre. Linen cloths are mentioned in a similar passage in Luke 24:12, and they were wrapped around the body of Christ after his death, according to Matthew 27:59, Luke 23:53, John 19:40, and Mark 16:46. As for the palms of the patriarchs and prophets in the *Elevatio*, they were generally understood to be a sign of joy and victory.[83] Christ, who was commonly associated with light (which was in turn associated with the joy, hope, and eternal life at the heart of Easter

Nieto-Isabel, Acosta-Gracia; Williamson, "Sensory Experience in Medieval Devotion"; Caseau, "The Senses in Religion," 90, 93. For examples of visual and synesthetic devotion in the books owned by the Barking nuns, and of their didactic purpose, see *Ordinale and Customary*, ed. Tolhurst, 2:189; Benoit, *Le Gracial d'Adgar*, 177–79, 209, 214–16, 271–72, 255, 280; Love, *Mirrour of the Blessed Lyf*, ed. Hogg and Powell, 9–10, 270–71, 285, 288.

82 See Mark 16: 1; Luke 23: 55–56, 24: 1. Doig, *Liturgy and Architecture*, 188.

83 "quolibet sacerdote et clerico palmam et / candelam extinctam manu deferentem intrent capellam sancte / marie magdalene. ffigurantes animas sanctorum patrum" (each priest and cleric carrying in his hand a palm and an unlit candle. They enter the chapel of St Mary Magdalen, representing the souls of the Holy Fathers). Palm branches were symbols of the victory of the spirit over the flesh and of the faithful over their enemies. They were associated with the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem (Matthew 21:1–11; Mark 11:1–11; John 12:12–19), as well as with Revelations 7:9. In the Middle Ages, martyrs were often represented carrying them. Palm branches thus became associated with triumphant martyrdom as well.

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Day), was recognizable in the *Elevatio* in part because he was surrounded *cum duobus pueris cereos deferentibus* (with two boys carrying candles).[84] The ties between light, Christ, renewal, and holiness were expressed during other feasts familiar to the laity—most significantly Candlemas—and would therefore probably have been understood by them, as well as by men and women religious.[85] The *Elevatio* also shows Christ carrying the Lord's standard, whose use here recalls iconographic depictions of the Harrowing of Hell.[86] As for the altar, behind which Christ appears to the Marys, its traditional association with death likely helped clarify for spectators and participants that it was the dead—and now resurrected—Christ who was returning at this moment of the ceremony.[87]

"Costumes"—such as the white stoles of the angels—also served to tell a clear story. In this case, they reminded spectators of the white garments worn by the angels in the gospels. Clothes further helped create visual groups and provide information about the characters. The Marys' *nitidissimis superpellicijs* (most beautiful surplices) and *niueis velis* (white veils), for instance, contrasted with the black worn by the other Benedictine nuns. They drew attention to these figures, positioning them as central in the *Visitatio*, and indicated these women's purity and innocence while also tying them to the joy of the Resurrection.[88] The use of *candelabris* (candelabra), carried around the nuns portraying the three Marys, had a similar effect. The Marys' shared connection with light simultaneously marked them as a

84 On the ties between light and Christ, see for example Durand, *Rational ou manuel des divins offices*, ed. Barthélemy, 4:136.

85 Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, 15–18.

86 "deinde superueniens sacerdos ebdomadarius ad dictam / capellam approprians alba indutus et capa cum duobus / diaconis. vno crucem deferente cum uexillo dominico desuper/ pendente" (afterwards, the officiating priest coming, dressed in an alb and cope, approaching the said chapel with two deacons—one bearing the cross with the Lord's standard hanging above it); "pul/set cum cruce ad predictum ostium. figurans dirupcionem / portarum inferni" (he [the priest representing Christ] strikes with the cross the door previously mentioned, representing the destruction of the gates of Hell).

87 "persona in dextera parte altaris tribus / simul occurrat mulieribus dicens" (the person [Christ] approaches the three women together from the right side of the altar). On the altar and death, see Durand, *Rational ou manuel des divins offices*, ed. Barthélemy, 1:35.

88 Braun, *Die liturgische Gewandung*, 749–52; Ogden, *The Staging of Drama*, 123–24. See Luke 24:4; Mark 16:5; Matthew 28:2–3; John 20:12.

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group, focused attention on them as the most visible "characters," and designated them as associates of Christ.

Interactions between figures, through gestures but also through dialogue and the expression of emotions, provided additional information about their relationships and status. The nuns portraying the three Marys were directed by the Ordinal to sing, at times together and at times separately: they formed audible as well as visible groups, who could come together in unison. Just before they arrive at the tomb, for instance: "Quartum uero uersum omnes simul concinant / scilicet. Iam iam ecce" (they all sing the fourth verse together, namely: Now, now, behold). They also ought to express the feelings of their "characters": the Marys sing "in an afflicted and humble voice" and, as Mary Magdalen tells the other Marys about having met the resurrected Christ, she does so "with a joyous voice." This provided further clarity as to the identity of these figures and their ties to each other, but it also had the benefit of charting the progression of the story from sadness towards the joy of the Resurrection. As for their kissing and prostration, they showed the sacredness of the figure of Christ, who also became recognizable to spectators.[89]

The gestures and movements of the performers continued to recall scriptural stories and their iconographic representations. The *Elevatio*, for instance, evoked the Gospel of Nicodemus and its mentions of "gates" and "doors" by enclosing those portraying the souls in Hell behind the door of the Magdalen chapel: "intrent capellam sancte / marie magdalene. ffigurantes animas sanctorum patrum ante / aduentum christi ad inferos descendentes et claudant sibi ostium / dicte capelle" (they enter the chapel of St Mary Magdalen, representing the souls of the Holy Fathers descending to Hell before the coming of Christ, and they close on themselves the door of the said chapel). As Christ had called out three times in this gospel for the doors to open, so the priest representing him at Barking sang three times. He accompanied each chant with a knock, visually and aurally expressing his desire to enter the gates: "pul/set cum cruce ad predictum ostium. figurans dirupcionem / portarum inferni" (he [Christ]strikes with the cross the door previously mentioned, representing the destruction of the gates of Hell). In the *Visitatio*, a cleric was sitting in front of the sepulchre: "illius angeli gerens / figuram qui ab ostio monumenti lapidem reuoluit. / et super

89 For example: "Tunc ille humi prostrate: teneant pedes eius et de/osculentur" (Then they, having prostrated themselves on the ground, hold his feet and kiss them). On kissing and prostration, see Durand, *Rational ou manuel des divins offices*, ed. Barthélemy, 2:244–51, 414, 368–69.

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eum sedit" (assuming the traits of this angel who rolled the stone from the entrance of the monument and sat upon it), and another sat inside the sepulchre: "Tunc alius clericus in specie alterius angeli in sepul/cro residens" (Then, another cleric, in the aspect of the second angel, sitting in the sepulchre). Both reminded spectators and participants of depictions of angels at the tomb.[90]

The space used by the performers was imbued with rich layers of symbolism. The *Elevatio* and *Visitatio* were mostly performed in the eastern section of the church. This visually and symbolically connected them to the Resurrection, which they were representing. According to the gospels, the Resurrection had taken place early in the morning, just before sunrise.[91] The space of performance, with its associations with sunrise and with the sacred, and also the time of the performance—at Matins, before and as the sun was rising—helped spectators understand the story that the ceremonies and their performers were telling.[92] Yet the performers of the *Elevatio* and *Visitatio* were not confined to the eastern section of the abbey church. The nuns portraying the Marys began the *Visitatio* in the west, and as they went towards the sepulchre, advanced in the choir. Their move west–east suggested their progress from ignorance to realization. By contrast with the eastern end of the church, the western side stood for the material, the non-spiritual, death, and sins.[93] In the *Elevatio*, as the clergy and nuns marched to Hell, they probably went out of the choir in the direction of the west and walked down a few steps. Choosing such a place to represent Hell fitted the symbolism of the church space: the place and time of performance thus contributed to interpretation of the events presented in the ceremonies.[94]

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90 See Matthew 28:2; John 20:12; Mark 16:5; Luke 24:4.

91 Matthew 28:1; Luke 24:1; Mark 16:2; John 20:1.

92 Harper, *Forms and Orders of Western Liturgy*, 74; Young, ed., *Drama of the Medieval Church*, 1:232.

93 The symbolism attached to the western and eastern sides of churches was probably understood by the laity present in the Barking Abbey church. Many churches had their main entrance built on their western end which became associated with the outside world. The high altar was usually placed on the opposite side of the church, marking it as the most sacred. This symbolism was moreover visible in church décor and architecture: scenes of the Last Judgement, for instance, which were regularly represented near a church's main entrance, often presented the damned souls on the western side of this entrance and the elected souls on its eastern side. See for example the Abbey Church of Payerne, Switzerland (wall paintings from about 1200).

94 Harris, *Medieval Theatre in Context*, 39–40.

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The first effect of the Barking *Elevatio* and *Visitatio* on their spectators and participants was therefore to present them with a recognizable and memorable version of the story of the Resurrection, referencing Scriptures and iconographic depictions. For those familiar with this story, the ceremonies may have complemented their pre-existing knowledge and impressed the events on the memory through a non-textual medium. For spectators less well versed in Scriptures, they provided cues—through their use of a familiar space, of liturgical "props," of liturgical or common iconographic gestures and "costumes," and through the expression of emotion—to help the viewers understand and keep in mind the story they told, the relationships between their main figures, and the feelings that these figures were experiencing.

Knowing and remembering such scriptural and hagiographical stories was fundamental to the devotional lives of medieval people. Such stories gave them examples to follow: the cult of saints and the writing of the lives of saints were valued largely for that reason.[95] In the Barking *Elevatio* and *Visitatio*, performers and spectators were presented with and even enacted examples of devotion—probably encouraging them to adopt a similar kind of piety. The scriptural and hagiographical story told by the ceremonies would have enabled those knowing and remembering it to pray with compassion for Christ, to direct their thoughts and efforts towards penance to ensure a peaceful afterlife, and to pray correctly during liturgical services. These significant strands of late medieval devotion are all addressed by the Barking *Elevatio* and *Visitatio sepulchri*, as will be explored in the rest of this chapter.

Compassionate Devotion

By the thirteenth century, "compassionate devotion to the suffering of Christ" had become widespread in England.[96] Such devotion focused on the image of the suffering Christ;[97] it stressed the importance of Christ's humanity, the magnitude his sacrifice when he had died for the sins of humankind, and thus the greatness of his love for the faithful. The faithful were urged to realize not only intellectually but also emotionally how important this sacrifice had been: they ought to have compassion with Christ. Only then would "all holy enflame and burn out [their] hearts in his love"; only then would they truly love Christ and therefore follow his example by keeping away

95 Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, 169.

96 Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, 234–35; McNamer, *Affective Meditation*, 2.

97 McNamer, *Affective Meditation*, 2.

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from sin.[98] For such a realization to happen, meditation on the life of Christ was encouraged. Many texts, some in Latin and some in the vernacular—the first of which seem to have emerged in the eleventh century—aimed to "teach their readers…how to feel" by guiding them in such meditations.[99] As described in Nicholas Love's influential *Mirrour*, a translation and adaptation of pseudo-Bonaventure's *Meditationes de vitae Christi*, those meditating should imagine themselves present at the Passion: "mak[e] hym self as present in all that byfelle aboute the passioun and crucifixioun and effectuously / besily / auisely / and perseuerantly."[100] They should visualize Christ and his suffering, but also try to imagine how the people witnessing these events—the Virgin Mary in particular—had felt and take them as examples of devotion.[101] Mary was also a reminder of Christ's humanity, since his human side came from her and her lineage. To help the faithful feel compassion during their meditations, medieval texts and iconographic representations regularly emphasized in an extreme manner her distress, as well as that of other figures present during the Passion, and described the suffering of Christ in graphic details.[102]

The nuns of Barking Abbey would have been familiar with this type of devotion. McNamer argues that "compassionate meditation originated as a practice among female religious," and it seems to have been especially important for nuns and recluses.[103] Women religious were *sponsae Christi* (Brides of Christ), and it was essential for them to love Christ "rightly." They would in this way prove their value to their husband and ensure the validity of the marriage. Loving him rightly meant loving him with compassion. Cultivating such compassion was thus essential for the nuns' performance and

98 Love, *Mirrour of the Blessed Lyf*, ed. Hogg and Powell, 218; see also 285–87. Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, 234–36; Aers, "The Humanity of Christ," 17.

99 McNamer, *Affective Meditation*, 1–2.

100 Love, *Mirrour of the Blessed Lyf*, ed. Hogg and Powell, 218, 237; see also 285, 288.

101 Love, *Mirrour of the Blessed Lyf*, ed. Hogg and Powell, 216–18, 227. See also Gilchrist, *Contemplation in Action,* 143; Johnson, "Marian Devotion," 392; McNamer, *Affective Meditation*, 1.

102 See Erler, "Private Reading," 146; Aers, "The Humanity of Christ," 20–21; Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, 302–8.

103 McNamer, *Affective Meditation*, 7. On women and affective devotion, see also Elliott, "Flesh and Spirit," 13–33; Normington, *Gender and Medieval Drama*, 84–86; Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption*; Newman, *Virile Women*.

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realization of their identity.[104] At Barking, interest in this kind of devotion is attested by Abbess Sybil of Felton, who purchased Love's *Mirrour*, one of the most popular proponents of such devotional practices. The *Mirrour*, while probably meant for lay and religious men and women, informs its readers that the text it adapts was addressed specifically to a poor Clare, thus stressing its importance for women religious.[105]

Apart from the *Mirrour*, many of the works associated with the abbey of Barking insist on love: either the love of Christ, the Virgin Mary, God, and the saints for the faithful, or the love of the faithful for them. They present such love—which is often expressed in extreme ways—as a gateway to salvation: Christ's love has resulted in his sacrifice for the faithful and the faithful's love deepens their devotion and leads them to redemption.[106] Christ's humanity and his Passion are also regularly referenced, in Adgar's *Gracial* for instance.[107]

In addition to these texts, the liturgy of Barking Abbey would have encouraged reflection on the sacrifice and love of Christ, as his Passion and Resurrection were celebrated during Holy Week through complex liturgical ceremonies. Every day of the week mirrored a day in the life of Christ. Easter Sunday—the day of his Resurrection—was a time of affective change, both for Christ and for his followers. In the liturgy, mourning was followed by joy, and all were encouraged to rejoice and to laud God.[108] This same change is urged in Love's *Mirrour*: only those who have true compassion for the Passion of Christ can feel true joy for his Resurrection. This joy should be felt every Sunday but more specifically on Easter day. Compassionate devotion thus encompassed more emotions than just grief and sorrow.[109]

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104 McNamer, *Affective Meditation*, 15–16.

105 McNamer, *Affective Meditation*, 128–30.

106 *St. Catherine*, ed. MacBain, lines 1357–64, 1449, 1482–83, 2560–63, 2662, 2677–78, 2687; Auslander, "Clemence and Catherine," 166. See also Love, *Mirrour of the Blessed Lyf*, ed. Hogg and Powell, 157; *La vie d'Edouard*, ed. Bliss, 191–92; Kirchberger, "The Cleansing of Man's Soul," 290–91.

107 Benoit, *Le Gracial d'Adgar*, 219–21, 281–82. See also *St. Catherine*, ed. MacBain, lines 1400, 1437, 2655–56; Love, *Mirrour of the Blessed Lyf*, ed. Hogg and Powell, 251–55.

108 *Ordinale and Customary*, ed. Tolhurst, 1:89–107; Durand, *Rational ou manuel des divins offices*, ed. Barthélemy, 2:84, 117–19; Durand, *Rational ou manuel des divins offices*, ed. Barthélemy, 4:199–200, 210–11.

109 Love, *Mirrour of the Blessed Lyf*, ed. Hogg and Powell, 278–79.

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Such liturgy would have been attended and performed by the nuns and clergy of Barking Abbey, but it would also have been—at times in the abbey church and at others in their parish church—witnessed by the laity of Barking. Compassionate devotion was also popular among the laity who, like men and women religious, were incited in the Late Middle Ages to imagine the salient moments of Christ's life either during worship or at home.[110] Visual representations were seen to be particularly conducive to such devotion. This was especially true in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries when numerous images were produced either in primers or for parish churches, where they were often maintained by the laity. The image of the crucifix dominated rood screens, standard in English churches at the time, and framed every view the parishioners could have of the chancel, thereby connecting liturgical services with devotions to the Passion. Images of the Lord rising out of the sepulchre and showing his wounds (called Our Lord's Pity or the Image of Pity) were also popular, as were those of Christ resurrected, of the *arma Christ* (weapons of Christ), and of the *pieta* (the Virgin Mary holding her son).[111]

Compassionate devotion therefore probably informed the spiritual practice of the spectators of and participants in the Barking *Elevatio* and *Visitatio*. The two ceremonies continued and expanded on this tradition through their content as well as their performative features. While the *Elevatio* and *Visitatio* do not depict Christ's Passion, they focus on the humanity of Christ, on his death and Resurrection, and on love and compassion.[112] The emphasis on his humanity is already visible in the *Visitatio*'s choice of characters: Mary mother of James and Mary Salome were widely considered to be the daughters of St Anne and the sisters of the Virgin Mary. They "provided a symbolic affirmation of the rootedness of the Incarnate Christ within a real human family," thus recalling Christ's humanity.[113] In the Barking ceremony, both these women and Christ were represented by human, fragile bodies,

110 Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars,* 19, 235–38.

111 Parker, "Architecture as Liturgical Setting," 269; Hamburger, "Art, Enclosure and the *Cura monialum*," 121–26; Lipton, "Images and their Uses," 277–78.

112 While the *Elevatio* focuses more on salvation than on the death of Christ, it ends with a prayer praising Christ's sacrifice: "Deus qui / pro nobis filium tuum <crucis patibulum subire voluisti, ut inimici a nobis expelleres potestatem>" (God, for us, you wanted to submit your son <to the yoke of the cross, to drive out the power of the enemy from us.>).

113 Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, 181.

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further emphasizing for spectators and participants Christ's Incarnation in all its "fleshly reality."[114]

The *Visitatio* also focuses on Christ's Passion and on the sorrow of those loving him. As the ceremony begins, the Marys weep and lament his terrible death. The Ordinal's rubrics indicate that the Marys sing "together these verses in an afflicted and humble voice," that they address each other "while lamenting," and that Mary Magdalen is "sighing." In addition to the rubrics, the chants also express their grief and mention Christ's suffering:

> Heu nobis internas men/tes <quanti pulsant gemitus pro nostro consolatore, quo privamur misere, quem crudelis Iudeorum morti dedit populus> (Alas, what great laments <beat our inner thoughts for our consoler, from whom we are miserably deprived, whom the cruel people of the Jews delivered to death.>)
>
> Heu / misere <cur contigit videre mortem salvatoris?> (Alas, miserably! <Why has it happened, [that we] see the death of the saviour?>)
>
> Heu consolacio nostra <ut quid mortem sustinuit> (Alas, our consolation, <that he endured such a death.>)
>
> Heu redempcio israel <ut quid taliter agere voluit> (Alas, redemption of Israel, <that he was willing to accomplish such a deed.>)

The Marys are here realizing emotionally and rationally the sacrifice of Christ. Like Mary Magdalen and her two companions in the *Mirrour*, who "toke in her mynde the peynes the turmentis of here dere maistre" when walking to the tomb, the Marys of the *Visitatio* are performing compassionate meditation by remembering the Passion and emotionally responding to it.[115]

Spectators and participants in this ceremony may have followed their example and felt the same compassion. Studies on spectatorship have regularly used cognitive theory to explain spectators' affective responses. This theory suggests that "human beings empathize with others and learn to share their actions, intentions, and emotions by spontaneously mirroring them in their own motor system."[116] In the case of drama, cognitive scholars believe that spectators constantly shift between being aware that they are watching a play, decoding what the play is attempting to do and to say to

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114 Robinson, "Chantilly, Musée Condé, Ms. 617," 114–18; Normington, *Gender and Medieval Drama*, 72–73.

115 Love, *Mirrour of the Blessed Lyf*, ed. Hogg and Powell, 265–68.

116 McGavin and Walker, *Imagining Spectatorship*, 44–48. See also McConachie, *Engaging Audiences*.

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them, and empathizing with "characters" as they would with other human beings.[117] Such empathy draws spectators into the story performed in front of them. In the case of the *Visitatio*, spectators and participants may have been especially prone to feel the sorrow and compassion expressed by the Marys because, as argued by Meg Twycross in her study of the York Resurrection pageant, these three women could serve as "embodiments of mourning" and channels for the spectators' own feelings: at Barking, as at York, the Marys do not lament their own specific fate but express instead common tropes of compassionate devotion. The spectators of the *Visitatio* were thus not presented with highly individualized responses to Christ's death, but rather with examples of devotion, which they could appropriate.[118] Performers—the nuns portraying the three Marys especially—were perhaps even more moved by the ceremonies. As will be explored in the next part of this chapter, nuns were incited to feel an association with the Marys. They may also have been aware of a belief, traced by Esther Meier to the beginning of the thirteenth century, which stated that outward gestures of prayer reflected or affected one's inner state of mind.[119] Performing the *Elevatio* and *Visitatio*, expressing the compassion and devotion of these three exemplary women, may have encouraged the nuns representing them to feel the same.

Watching and performing such affective reactions thus guided both spectators and participants towards the appropriate feelings that they should harbour about the death and Resurrection of Christ. The Marys expressed their feelings through their words and their behaviour, but their sorrow and joy may also have been tied to the—now lost—music of their chants. While most scholars agree that liturgical plainchant did not contribute to characterization or to the affective expression of "characters" in liturgical ceremonies, they recognize that it carried symbolic and liturgical layers.[120] Music in the *Elevatio* and *Visitatio* did not function as it would in an opera or in a modern musical, but I believe that it did possess the ability to stir feelings. Compositions specific to the ceremonies would have stood out to the nuns and clerics familiar with the liturgy of their house. These compositions were almost universally tied to affective situations, either to the laments of the

117 See McConachie, "Falsifiable Theories for Theatre," 555–68; Stevenson, *Performance, Cognitive Theory, and Devotional Culture*, 95.

118 Twycross, "Playing 'The Resurrection,'" 284–85, 294.

119 Meier, "Turning toward God."

120 Hughes, "Liturgical Drama," 52–53; Woolf, *English Mystery Plays*, 40; Ogden, *The Staging of Drama*, 180; Hiley, *Western Plainchant*, 263.

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Marys or to their joy at the Resurrection of Christ.[121] Music would therefore have brought attention to these passages. Differences in pitch and emphasis may even have caused affective responses for the spectators and performers.[122] In the Middle Ages, music was perceived by some as a trigger of feelings, which could then lead to prayer: Isidore of Seville, for instance, quotes Augustine in his description of music as helping souls to be moved and feel piety.[123] Music, as well as the enactment of feelings, thus perhaps facilitated for the Barking nuns, clergy, and parishioners their compassionate meditations on this scriptural passage.

Not only do the *Visitatio*'s Marys express their feelings, they also articulate their intense love for Christ and mention his dead body—two other important components of compassionate devotion. The reason they have woken up so early is, after all, to see this body: "Iam iam ecce <iam properemus ad tumulum, unguentes dilecti corpus sanctissimum>" (Now, now, behold <now, we must hasten towards the tomb, anointing the most sacred body of the beloved>). The Marys' inability to find Christ's body distresses them: when Mary Magdalen is asked by an angel why she is weeping (*Mulier, quid ploras?*), she says: "Quia tulerunt dominum meum <et nescio ubi posuerunt eum>" (Because they have taken away my Lord <and I don't know where they have put him>). The human, dead body of Christ, which has gone through torments and pains, is therefore the focal point around which the story of the Marys is articulated. It is him that they wish to honour, him that they are looking for, him that they weep for. Christ as a man rather than Christ as God is the object of their attention and affective reactions. The focus of these figures on the body of Christ is also expressed elsewhere in the *Visitatio*, when they touch either a substitute for this body or the body itself: the Marys "teneant pedes eius et de/osculentur" (they hold his [Christ's] feet and kiss them), then "deosculentur lo/cum ubi positus erat crucifixus" (they kiss effusively the place where the crucified one had

121 The seven chants seemingly unique to Barking Abbey are: *Quondam dei* (At a certain time, God's), *Appropinquans ergo sola* (Therefore, approaching alone), *Licet mihi vobiscum ire* (It is permitted for me to go with you), *Te suspiro et cetera* (I sigh to you et cetera), *Gratulari et letari et cetera* (Give thanks and rejoice et cetera), *Ihesus ille nazarenus et cetera* (Jesus of Nazareth et cetera), *O gens dira* (O cruel people).

122 Ogden, *The Staging of Drama*, 174, 178–80, 200.

123 Salisbury, *Worship in Medieval England*, 49. See also Durandus and Adgar: Durand, *Rational ou manuel des divins offices*, ed. Barthélemy, 1:169–76; Benoit, *Le Gracial d'Adgar*, 265–75.

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been put), and Mary Magdalen "sudarium prebeat il/lis ad deosculandum" (presents the *sudarium* for them [the disciples] to kiss).

Touching and kissing were regularly incorporated into late medieval devotional practices: images, but also liturgical vessels, were kissed and touched by the faithful. Tactile devotion was probably familiar to the nuns of Barking Abbey, although it was generally done in private in the monastery. It was perceived as an expression of worship and respect, but also love.[124] Touch was thus easily tied to compassionate devotion.[125] Such haptic love was often connected with the figure of Mary Magdalen. Durandus, for instance, when describing the Mass, states that the kissing of the chalice by the priest signifies that the priest is present "de toute l'affection de son cœur" (with all the affection of his heart), as had been Mary Magdalen when she wept at the tomb of Christ. Kissing the chalice also represents the kissing of Christ's feet by the Marys.[126] When performing the *Visitatio*, the participants publicly enacted these scenes of longing for and touching Christ. The three nuns therefore represented through their performance the experience of the exemplary Marys, but they also themselves touched an image of Christ, as they would probably have been used to doing during their private devotional time.

The emphasis on touch in the ceremonies seems to be contradicted by another type of devotion expressed during the *Visitatio* and tied to Mary Magdalen. While Mary Magdalen was associated with touch in the Middle Ages, she was just as much associated with unrealized touch. This was due to a passage in John (20:17), which the *Visitatio* depicts by extensively quoting from the Vulgate: after the Resurrection of Christ, when Mary Magdalen recognized him, she attempted to touch him but he said:

> Noli me tangere <nondum enim ascendi ad patrem meum. Vade autem fratres meos et dic eis: ascendo ad patrem meum et patrem vestrum, deum meum et deum vestrum>
>
> Do not touch me, <for I have not yet ascended to my father. But go to my brothers and tell them: I am ascending to my father and your father, to my God and your God>

124 See for example at Barking: Love, *Mirrour of the Blessed Lyf*, ed. Hogg and Powell, 118–20; *Ordinale and Customary*, ed. Tolhurst, 2:261.

125 Lipton, "Images and their Uses," 255, 280; Durand, *Rational ou manuel des divins offices*, ed. Barthélemy, 1:203; Durand, *Rational ou manuel des divins offices*, ed. Barthélemy, 2:149–50.

126 Durand, *Rational ou manuel des divins offices*, ed. Barthélemy, 2:368–69.

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The Mary Magdalen of the *Noli me tangere* was at times presented as an example for the faithful: they too ought to look "beyond corporeal sight" and believe in the Resurrection; they too ought to believe by watching rather than touching the body of Christ (the consecrated Host in this case); they too ought to turn from grief to joy, from death to life.[127] The *Visitatio* depicts this journey of Mary Magdalen: her focus on touch is challenged with the *Noli me tangere* when Christ directs her towards higher realities.[128] However, later in the *Visitatio*, all three Marys touch the feet of Christ. This second passage—taken from Matthew—seems to invalidate the first. Yet, the women do not need this touch to believe in the Resurrection: after her first meeting with Christ, Mary Magdalen already "communicates her joy to her companions with a joyous voice" and exhorts Mary mother of James and Mary Salome to rejoice.[129] The *Visitatio* thus first shows Christ teaching Mary Magdalen that he is more than a man. It is only when she has understood this that Christ—appearing from the right side of the altar, the side of joy, Heaven, and the Resurrection—allows her to touch him. This echoes the version of this scene found in the *Mirrour*.[130]

The performance of the Barking ceremonies thus presented a complex and contrasted version of exemplary devotion. It reminded spectators and participants that Christ was more than a man and invited them to follow the example of Mary Magdalen: to recognize him as the resurrected Son of God before worshipping him in an affective and tactile way. Yet it also focused—through its textual content and dramatic features—on fundamental elements of compassionate devotion: on Christ's body and humanity, on the suffering that this body had gone through, and on mapping the emotional journey of those who had loved Christ and witnessed his death.

The performance's dramatic features also probably facilitated for spectators and participants another component of compassionate devotion: the process of imagining themselves watching the life of Christ. The Barking *Elevatio* and *Visitatio* echo here textual meditations on Christ's Passion. As argued by McNamer, these "script-like texts...ask their readers to imagine

127 Eggert, "Textile Perspectives," 267; Baert, "An Odour, A Taste, a Touch," 125; Taschl-Erber, "Between Recognition and Testimony," 89–91. For more on medieval interpretations of this passage, see De Pril and Dupont, "The Four Latin Church Fathers," 112–15, 117; Love, *Mirrour of the Blessed Lyf*, ed. Hogg and Powell, 265–68; Beckwith, *Signifying God*, 84–85.

128 Dümpelmann, "Visual – Textile – Tactile," 243–45.

129 *Gratulari et letari et cetera* (Give thanks and rejoice et cetera).

130 Love, *Mirrour of the Blessed Lyf*, ed. Hogg and Powell, 269–70.

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themselves present at scenes of Christ's suffering and to perform compassion for that suffering victim in a private drama of the heart." Ties with drama are thus already present in these texts, which draw attention to the act of witnessing and often use the first-person singular to involve readers.[131] Yet the public performance of this "private drama of the heart" at Barking abbey may have helped spectators and participants in their imagination. While the experience would have differed from a private moment of devotion, which they might have experienced when reading meditative texts, it may have nourished such future moments.[132]

Like the images conducive to compassionate devotion found in medieval churches and manuscripts, the *Elevatio* and *Visitatio* had a visual quality. They presented a living tableau, and they also created ties with existing iconography: they took place in a church, filled with images—some of which probably depicted the death and Resurrection of Christ. The sepulchre used for their performance, for instance, may have recalled (and included) the Image of Pity, where the Lord rose out of the sepulchre with his wounds on display.[133] The two ceremonies thus helped their spectators and participants visualize the scenes of the life of Christ. The action of watching was then emphasized by the *Elevatio* and *Visitatio* through their performative nature. As explained by McGavin and Walker in their book *Imagining Spectatorship*, the lack of realism in medieval drama—also present in the *Visitatio* and *Elevatio*—led spectators to constantly adjust between being engaged in the story performed and being aware of the illusion. Awareness of the illusion was accompanied for spectators by an awareness of their part in it: they were watching this illusion; they were witnessing a performance.[134] The Barking spectators were thus made aware of the very thing that they ought to do when meditating on the life of Christ: imagine themselves *watching* this life. Furthermore, the figures of the Marys were witnesses to the Resurrection. Spectators watched these women witness Christ resurrected: this double act of witnessing would probably have heightened their awareness of it, but also emphasized the similarity between them and the exemplary Marys.

131 McNamer, *Affective Meditation*, 7, 12, 17–18.

132 On the differences between a private and collective experience of such compassionate devotion, see Lipton, "Witnessing and Legal Affect," 158.

133 Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, 108–9.

134 McGavin and Walker, *Imagining Spectatorship*, 37; McGavin, "Medieval Theatricality and Spectatorship," 489–90.

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While performance of the *Visitatio* demonstrated the importance of watching when it came to devotion, it was not merely a visual experience, but a synesthetic one. Although the senses were, as discussed earlier, important for memory, they could also be tied to compassionate meditation. This is expressed by Love in the *Mirrour* when he praises Mary Magdalen for "casting her eyes and her heart and her ears into hym [Christ] only."[135] When praying, both the heart and the senses should thus be focused on Christ. The dramatic features of the two Barking liturgical ceremonies may have served this purpose and have drawn the spectators towards Christ. As for the performers, the ceremonies engaged their senses even more extensively. Such participation was recommended by compassionate meditations, which asked the faithful not only to visualize scenes of the life of Christ, but to imagine themselves inside these scenes. This imaginative inclusion of the self was probably facilitated for the participants in the *Elevatio* and *Visitatio* who performed these Scriptural scenes with their own bodies and voices.[136]

Spectators may also have felt included in the ceremonies' scriptural narrative due their ties with the people and objects included in their performance. Nuns and clergy would have seen their sisters and brothers playing active parts in the *Elevatio* and *Visitatio*. The liturgical objects and vestments used for the ceremonies would have been familiar to them, as would have been the "set" (the church of Barking Abbey): they all belonged to "their" community. To a lesser extent, the local laity may have felt the same, especially if they knew some of the performers. Parishioners were moreover included in the ceremonies in two other ways. Firstly, they participated through their bequests made to the abbey church. An object that they had financed may have been used in these performative representations of Scriptures: Christ could have risen out of "their" sepulchre, the Marys carried "their" candles. The prestige of Barking Abbey attracted numerous donors external to the parochial territory: no recorded fourteenth- and fifteenth-century benefactors seem to have been parishioners. However, it is probable that some Barking parishioners also made—perhaps smaller—donations to the abbey. Even poorer people are frequently recorded as donating to churches: the endowments of light, in particular—generally made either for the sepulchre, for church images, or for altars—has been described by

135 Love, *Mirrour of the Blessed Lyf*, ed. Hogg and Powell, 156.

136 For more conventual multi-sensory practices in relation to "affective piety," see Rudy, *Virtual Pilgrimages in the Convent*, 19–37.

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Duffy as the "the single most popular expression of piety in the wills of the late medieval laity."[137]

The second instance of the laity's inclusion in the Barking Abbey *Elevatio* and *Visitatio* was of a more direct kind. The Ordinal records two addresses to the *populus* in the ceremonies: the first occurring at the end of the *Elevatio*, the other towards the end of the *Visitatio*. These addresses presented to spectators the Resurrection and its announcement:

> et interim asportabit cor/pus dominicum de sepulcro incipiendo antiphonam. Christus resurgens / coram altari verso uultu ad populum tenendo corpus domini/cum in manibus suis inclusum cristallo
>
> And in the meantime, he [the officiating priest] takes the Lord's body from the sepulchre, while beginning the antiphon: Christ rising...in front of the altar, his face turned towards the people, while holding the Lord's body enclosed in crystal in his hands
>
> Tunc marie stantes / super gradus ante altare uertentes se ad populum canant hoc / Responsorium. Alleluia surrexit dominus de sepulcro
>
> the Marys then, standing on the steps in front of the altar, turning themselves towards the people, sing this responsory: Alleluia the Lord has risen from the sepulchre.

These two moments modified the lay spectators' relation to the ceremonies and included them more clearly in the celebrations they had been witnessing. In the *Visitatio*, the laity found itself in the role of the first people who had heard of the Resurrection. The *Elevatio*'s instance of inclusion featured the Host—signifying Christ resurrected—presented by a priest to the *populus*. The use in this case of the Host as Christ, instead of a priest, had the benefit of transforming what had been in its first part a representation of scriptural events into a moment which, much like the Mass, made these events present once more. The Host did not look like Jesus, although it is possible it was encased in a wooden image of Christ. Yet using it in the *Elevatio* put the congregation in the Real Presence of Christ and allowed them to experience the event of his Resurrection alongside him.

The *Elevatio* and *Visitatio sepulchri* of Barking Abbey, through their content, their synesthetic and performative nature, and their various types of inclusion therefore had the effect of fostering compassionate meditation: they helped spectators and participants imagine themselves present at the scriptural scenes performed in the Barking Abbey church and feel compas-

137 Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, 34–35, 361–62.

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sion for Christ and for those who loved him. The use of the Host also encouraged such piety due to its connection to the Passion of Christ: the Host was linked to the narrative of Maundy Thursday and to the sacrifice of the Mass, and it effectively showed the "gift of grace" obtained through Christ's Passion. Those witnessing the *Elevatio* would have been reminded of the sufferings endured by Christ for their salvation.[138]

Penance

Compassionate meditation was thus intimately tied to salvation. This was due to its focus on Christ's sacrifice, but also because it was perceived to be efficient in making people follow his example. If they felt guilt and grief about his death as well as tremendous love for him, they would be keener to live a pious life.[139] Such an opinion was for instance expressed in William Flete's *De remediis contra temptationes*. This treatise, written in the same Barking manuscript as Love's *Mirrour*, presents "consolation and practical remedies for spiritual temptations" and advises readers to practise compassionate devotion. Flete insists on the wounds of Christ and on the importance of thinking about his Passion to escape evil: "and hyȝe þee to hym and hyde þee in þe pit of hys syde, þenkyng on hys passioun, and holde þee stille þere; and þe enemye schal not fynde þee."[140] The devotional focus on Christ's suffering was therefore accompanied at Barking—as well as more broadly in the Late Middle Ages—with a focus on keeping away from sin and on penance. Flete's *De remediis*, as well as other Barking texts such as *The Clensyng of Mannes Soule* and the *Chastising of God's Children*, are all directly concerned with this subject, and examples of penance appear in further works associated with the nunnery.[141]

138 Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, 108–9; Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, 9, 106, 296. Parishioners may have been particularly aware of such connections between the consecrated Host and Christ's Passion because certain sepulchres were used for the feast of Corpus Christi as well. Corpus Christi fraternities were also often those in charge of the maintenance of the Easter sepulchre. Aers, "The Humanity of Christ," 24.

139 Kieckhefer, "Major Currents in Late Medieval Devotion," 102–3.

140 Lamothe, "An Edition of the Latin and Four Middle English Versions," 64, 216–17.

141 Lamothe, "An Edition of the Latin and Four Middle English Versions," 1–2, 37, 64; Everett, "*The Clensyng Of Mannes Soule*," 265–71; Everett, "A Critical Edition," 29–31. See also Benoit, *Le Gracial d'Adgar*, 245–46; *La vie d'Edouard*, ed. Bliss, 166, 189; *La traduction champenoise de La vie des pères*, ed. Grossel, 382–86.

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This is unsurprising at a time when fears about the torments of Purgatory were prevalent.[142] To avoid such torments and reach Heaven rapidly, it was essential to know both how to avoid sins and how to do penance. Such knowledge was to be imparted to men and women religious but also to the laity. High to late medieval manuals for the instruction of the clergy insisted on the necessity of teaching parishioners the basis of the faith. A schema for the instruction of the laity and of the priests instructing them was established at Archbishop Peckham's 1281 Lambeth Council. It was recorded in the influential *De informacione simplicium*, more widely known under the name *Ignorantia sacerdotum*.[143] The *Clensyng*, found at Barking Abbey, shows the influence of these Councils. These texts' central catechetical concerns were the Creed, the Ten Commandments, the Seven Sacraments, the Seven Works of Mercy, the Seven Virtues, and the Seven Deadly Sins, all tied to the question of penance.

The nunnery of Barking therefore seems to have been concerned with the penance of its members, but also with that of its parishioners. The *Elevatio* and *Visitatio* appear to belong to the abbey's means of protecting its nuns, clergy, and laity and of directing them towards a happy afterlife. The two ceremonies took place on Easter Day, a day associated with salvation because it celebrated Christ's sacrifice and triumphant return, but also because it was the traditional day of confession before the annual communion of the laity.[144] Holy week in general was focused on penance and salvation. Penitents were usually expelled from the community on Ash Wednesday and reconciled by the bishop on Maundy Thursday. On Good Friday, parishioners were encouraged to kneel around the sepulchre and lament their sins. This paschal time was commonly understood to be a time of regeneration, during which the faithful were invited to return to the Lord, to ask for forgiveness, and to remember the benefits made possible for them by Christ's death and Resurrection.[145]

The *Elevatio* and *Visitatio* echo this Easter penitential focus and probably reminded spectators and participants of their salvation and of the pen-

142 Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, 338, 350; Rousseau, *Saving the Souls of Medieval London*, 2.

143 Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, 53–54.

144 Nuns generally received communion about once a month. McNamara, *Sisters in Arms*, 346.

145 Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, 36; Dudley, "Sacramental Liturgies in the Middle Ages," 229–30. See also Durand, *Rational ou manuel des divins offices*, ed. Barthélemy, 4:99–225; *Ordinale and Customary*, ed. Tolhurst, 1:89–101.

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ance they ought to do to attain it. First, they presented a scriptural story to them. As stated in Flete's *De remediis*, meditation on such stories was one of the best protections against sin.[146] This story is moreover that of the victory of Christ over sin and death. In the *Elevatio*, the souls of the prophets and the patriarchs praise this victory in their chants.[147] In the *Visitatio*, Christ's Resurrection and the hope that it represents for the salvation of believers are spoken of by various figures. The Marys, for instance, call Christ *salvatoris* (saviour) and *redempcio israel* (redemption of Israel). The disciples and the choir then beg the resurrected king for mercy: "Scimus christum <surrexisse a mortuis vere; tu nobis, victor rex, miserere>" (We know that Christ really <is resurrected from the dead; O you victorious king, have mercy on us>).

The *Visitatio* also features the figure of Mary Magdalen, who was considered "the example of perfect penance."[148] When she wept, kissed and washed the feet of Christ at the house of Simon the Leper—as recounted in the *Mirrour*, the *Gracial*, and the *Clensyng*—Christ praised her actions, her selflessness, her devotion, and her regret.[149] While the *Visitatio* did not include this famous scene of repentance, it showed Mary Magdalen kissing the feet of Christ at the tomb. The connection between these two moments is made by the *Mirrour*: after Mary Magdalen recognized Christ resurrected, "she ran to hym / and fallynge doun to the erthe wolde haue kissed his feet / as sche

146 Lamothe, "An Edition of the Latin and Four Middle English Versions," 64. It is also presented as a remedy against Sloth in *The Ancrene Riwle*, ed. Sharples. This translation is based on the Nero (London, British Library, MS Cotton Nero, A.xiv) manuscript, collated with parts from the Titus (London, British Library, MS Cotton Titus, D.xviii) and Cleopatra (London, British Library, MS Cotton Cleopatra, C.vi) manuscripts. Hasenfratz's edition is based on the Corpus version of the *Ancrene Wisse* (Cambridge, Corpus Christi College, MS 402).

147 *Cum rex glorie* (When the king of Glory), *Consurgit Christus tumulo* (Christ rises from the tomb), *Quesumus auctor* (We pray you, O source), *Gloria tibi domine* (Glory to you O Lord), *Christus resurgens ex mortuis* (Christ rising from the dead).

148 Jansen, *Making of the Magdalen*, 204. In Barking texts, as was the case for much of the Middle Ages since Gregory the Great (560–604), Mary Magdalen, the repentant sinner in Luke 7, and Mary of Bethany are seen to be the same woman. De Pril and Dupont, "The Four Latin Church Fathers," 119.

149 Jansen, *Making of the Magdalen*, 15; Dinkova-Bruun, "The *Noli me Tangere* Motif," 140. For more on Mary Magdalen and penance at Barking, see Love, *Mirrour of the Blessed Lyf*, ed. Hogg and Powell, 117–21, 157; Everett, "A Critical Edition," 26; Benoit, *Le Gracial d'Adgar*, 279. On the Feast of Mary Magdalen, the chants *Quoniam multum* and *O mirum et magnum* were sung at Barking. They refer to Luke 7:47–49 and to the woman washing the feet of Christ. *Ordinale and Customary*, ed. Tolhurst, 2:261.

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was wonted bifore."[150] The inclusion in the *Visitatio* of the prostration of Mary Magdalen, and later, of the three Marys before Christ could also, as discussed by Ogden in his study on gestures, convey repentance—perhaps here because the Marys had been mistakenly searching for his body.[151] As mentioned when discussing compassionate meditation, the *Visitatio* further presented to its spectators and participants the *Noli me tangere* scene, also significant to the perception of Mary Magdalen as an example of penance. It was believed to be an additional step in her journey from sin to perfection. According to various texts, including the *Legenda aurea* which may have been known at Barking according to Powsnett's list, Mary Magdalen continued after the Resurrection to move towards the spiritual life and even became a hermit in Sainte-Beaume.[152] This new role must be understood in the context of the "intensification of confession in everyday life as a personal path to salvation and perfection" in the thirteenth century, and it tied Mary Magdalen even more closely to penance.[153]

The *Elevatio* and *Visitatio* further contained penitential practices that converged around the figure of Mary Magdalen. The three women portraying the Magdalen and the other Marys had to be purified before the beginning of the *Visitatio*. This moment of purification included a confession with the *Confiteor* (I confess).[154] It also strongly recalled the descriptions of confession found in *The Clensyng of Mannes Soule*, which spoke of washing the soul and making it white.[155] The use of a white "costume" in the performance of the *Visitatio* visually depicted what the *Clensyng* stated was happening to the souls of those who confessed—in this case, to the souls of the three nuns. These nuns changed their clothes just as they were about to represent the three Marys: this change seems to have implied that the Marys, as well as the nuns, were pure. Moreover, the change of clothes and—it seems—the *Confiteo*r took place in the chapel of Mary Magdalen, binding her once more

150 See Love, *Mirrour of the Blessed Lyf*, ed. Hogg and Powell, 117–19, 250–51, 268–69.

151 Ogden, *The Staging of Drama*, 166.

152 See Jansen, *Making of the Magdalen*, 124–42. The legend of Magdalen as a hermit seems to have been circulating in Europe by the mid-ninth century already. By the thirteenth century, this idea had become widespread among preachers. The location of her grotto only appears in texts from the twelfth century onwards.

153 Baert, "An Odour, A Taste, a Touch," 118–24; Dinkova-Bruun, "The *Noli me Tangere* Motif," 140.

154 For other uses of the *Confiteor* in the Barking liturgy, see for instance *Ordinale and Customary*, ed. Tolhurst, 2:356.

155 Everett, "A Critical Edition," 1–2.

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with confession and penance. Through visual and audible means, as well as the use of familiar gestures and of the abbey church, the performance of the *Visitatio* therefore tied penance practices known to the nuns and clergy of Barking—and perhaps to members of the laity—to Mary Magdalen (and to a lesser extent the other two Marys).

After establishing the Marys as penitential figures, the *Visitatio* invited the three nuns representing them to follow their example. Like Mary Magdalen who had gone through penance before she could have her insight during the *Noli me tangere* and then lead a holy life, sisters had to confess and be purified first but could then perform part of her journey towards perfection. For the three nuns portraying the Marys, performing this ceremony which contained both effective purification rituals and the story of Mary Magdalen, would have shown them—and those watching them—the power granted by purification and penance.

The performance of penance continued in the *Elevatio*, which is even more focused than the *Visitatio* on the theme of the salvation of the soul. It is one of the rare extant *Elevationes* to dramatize the Harrowing of Hell.[156] In this ceremony, the clergy as well as the entire convent of Barking represented trapped souls asking Christ to release them and bring them to Heaven:

> quidam sacerdos in capella existente antiphonam A porta inferi / quam subinferat cantrix cum toto conuentu. Erue domine <animam meam>
>
> a certain priest being inside the chapel begins the antiphon: From the gate of Hell…To which the *cantrix* adds with the whole community: Bring out, O Lord, <my soul>

Their dramatic performance was also "real"; they played trapped souls that represented all those in need of salvation – including the performers. They thus enacted their own hope of going to Heaven after death. Christ's redemptive sacrifice, which had allowed for their salvation, must have been particularly present in the mind of the priest portraying Christ. During the *Elevatio*, he stood in for Christ, just as Christ at his death had stood in "for both God and humanity—in God's place and on behalf of humanity, making possible the founding atonement."[157]

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156 Ogden, *The Staging of Drama*, 149. Barking is the only known female religious house attached to a Harrowing of Hell ceremony.

157 *sacerdos representabit personam Christi* (the priest represents the person of Christ). See Beckwith, *Signifying God*, 71.

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For the clergy and nuns of Barking Abbey, active participation in the performance of the *Elevatio* and *Visitatio* therefore enabled them to witness but also to perform acts of penance and requests for salvation in a narrative depicting the Resurrection of Christ the saviour. They were reminded both of the importance of these events for the salvation not only of scriptural figures but of all humankind, and of their responsibility to honour Christ's sacrifice by following the examples of these figures (by repenting their sins and by living a pious life).

The laity present in the abbey church were not as directly involved in the ceremonies, but they were—as explored when discussing compassionate devotion—included in other ways. The parishioners' bequests to the religious house also may have led them to reflect on their own penance and redemption and may have emphasized for them the ties of Easter with salvation—essential to the understanding of this feast. This is because the *Elevatio* and *Visitatio* prominently featured two popular types of bequests associated with the Resurrection: the sepulchre and candles. While candles were relatively affordable, only someone wealthy could have afforded to donate a sepulchre. Yet the "middling and respectable poor" could also, as individuals or members of guilds, have funded sections of Christ's tomb, or participated in its maintenance.[158] According to Duffy, sepulchres were essential to the celebrations of Holy Week in England: every church was supposed to have one and churchwardens' accounts show expenses related to its acquisition. Little is known about the Barking Abbey sepulchre and its origin. It must have been large enough to allow a minimum of two people inside and was built, at least partly, on Good Friday by the sacristan.[159]

Both this sepulchre and the candles used in *Visitatio* and *Elevatio* were symbols of death. As the Marys approached the sepulchre and then kissed it, they lamented the death of their Lord. The Barking sepulchre may furthermore have been built on a tomb: this was common practice and, obviously, emphasized its identity as a place of the dead, while inviting comparison and contrast between Christ's death and that of individuals buried in Barking Abbey. As for candles, they were regularly used during death-related cel-

158 Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, 3, 122, 30–33, 134–35, 349.

159 *Ordinale and Customary*, ed. Tolhurst, 1:107–9, 98. In the *Visitatio*, an angel was seated inside, and the three Marys entered to kiss the place where Jesus had been laid. They might have taken turns to enter, and the sepulchre might then only have needed to accommodate two people. It might also have been large enough for four. For more on sepulchres, see Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, 32; Harris, *Medieval Theatre in Context*, 37–39; Sheingorn, *Easter Sepulchre*, 3–25.

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ebrations or near death-related objects, such as the Easter sepulchre. Those donated for the sepulchre by guild members were often burnt at the donor's funeral.[160] Candles thus played a similar role to sepulchre donations: both associated the members' death with Christ's, but—because of the significance of Christ's sacrifice and Resurrection—they also displayed hope for their salvation. There is a record at Barking of one candle which could have served this purpose. It was burnt in front of the sepulchre from Good Friday until Easter Sunday: "Et tunc abbatissa offerat cereum qui iugiter ardeat ante sepulcrum nec extinguatur" (And then the abbess presents a candle that should burn without interruption in front of the sepulchre and not be extinguished). Various other candles—possibly donated by the parishioners or other lay benefactors—were part of the *Elevatio* and *Visitatio*: they accompanied Jesus, his victory over death, figures who were saved by him (patriarchs and prophets), and figures essential to the narrative of the Resurrection (the Marys). They tied salvation to Christ's Resurrection and, as a proxy for their donors, might have reassured them as to their soul's fate.[161] The sepulchre also came to signify victory over death: in the *Elevatio*, the priest retrieved the Host from it to symbolize the Resurrection, and at the end of the *Visitatio*, the empty tomb was transformed into a symbol of life. Mary Magdalen pointed towards it when she announced the news of the Resurrection:

> Sepulcrum christi <viuentis, et gloriam vidi resurgentis>. Angelicos testes <sudarium et vestes>. digi/to indicet locum vbi angelus sedebat
>
> I have seen the sepulchre of the <living Christ and the glory of the resurrected one; the angelic witnesses, the *sudarium* and the clothes.> She indicates with her finger the place where the angel was sitting

Such bequests were further associated with salvation because they were perceived to be means to help one's soul exit Purgatory. In exchange for them, churches and religious communities prayed for their donors.[162] Patrons also hoped that those seeing their donations would pray for them. These prayers could even be recompensed by the intervention of the dead in favour of those praying.[163] Seeing the sepulchre and the lights in the *Elevatio*

160 Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, 34–37, 96, 361–62.

161 Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, 37.

162 Durand, *Rational ou manuel des divins offices*, ed. Barthélemy, 4:224; Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, 3, 122, 30–33, 134–35, 349.

163 Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, 115–16, 40, 349.

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and *Visitatio* may have encouraged lay spectators to pray for donors in the hope of helping these donors' and/or their own souls.

The second type of inclusion of the laity in the *Elevatio* and *Visitatio*—the display of the Host—may have stirred similar feelings. The Eucharist was considered helpful for the dead: Masses dedicated to them were perceived as effective in shortening their time in Purgatory. Seeing the Host could have reminded spectators of the importance of prayers for the souls of the deceased. If they had not yet confessed, the consecrated Host could moreover have inspired repentance. In the Late Middle Ages, there was an anxiety about taking the Host without being reconciled with God, a sense of fear before the Judge.[164] Seeing the Host may thus have helped the laity understand and prepare for the momentous and potentially dangerous event of communion.[165] The priest's gesture in the *Elevatio* differed however from the Elevation and display of the Host at Mass. During Mass, the priest turned his back to the people. He performed a "ritual re-enactment of the Last Supper" on behalf of those present in church. Through this "sacrifice of the Mass," "the world was renewed and the Church was constituted."[166] The Elevation was thus an act done for the community of the faithful yet performed without acknowledging them. In the *Elevatio*, on the other hand, the priest faced the *populus* and presented the Host *to* them: *verso uultu ad populum* (his face turned towards the people). Such a deliberate display—in a moment which is meant in the *Elevatio* to represent the Resurrection—may have shown, more clearly than the Elevation did, the people's inclusion in the benefits gained from Christ's death and his Resurrection: it was for their salvation that he had died.

This display of the Host, as well as the probable inclusion of bequests in the *Elevatio* and *Visitatio*, would therefore have encouraged the laity to think about penance and salvation. They would have been reminded of their death, but they would also have been given hope by seeing their death tied with Christ's Resurrection. Underlining the significance of the Resurrection for the laity's salvation, the *Elevatio* and *Visitatio* may have suggested

164 McCue, "Liturgy and the Eucharist," 433–37; Everett, "A Critical Edition," 4, 44–45.

165 It is specifically said, in a sermon from the late fourteenth-century Vernon Manuscript, to help counteract Sloth and its effects. Wenzel, "Sloth in Middle English Devotional Literature," 310–13; The Vernon Manuscript, in Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Eng. Poet. a. 1, fol. 196v. See also Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, 95–100; Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, 148–52, 155–56, 65–69.

166 Salisbury, *Worship in Medieval England*, 3, 5; Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, 91.

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to them that they too, like Christ, could gain victory over death. The ceremonies moreover invited parishioners to participate in their salvation by encouraging them to pray for the souls of others and to reflect on the afterlife in the hope that they would prepare for their own death.

Once they had repented, confessed, and atoned for their sins, the medieval faithful were urged to avoid further sinning. At Barking, Flete's *De remediis* and *The Clensyng of Mannes Soule* would have offered nuns and clergy guidelines to help the soul remain pure. These treatises encourage praying and reading Scriptures, but Flete also speaks of the importance of not spending too much time alone and of allowing some recreation. He further emphasizes the singing of psalms as helpful for devotion. While the *Elevatio* and *Visitatio* were perhaps not perceived as recreational, they had dramatic qualities and a communal aspect, they presented scriptural stories, featured liturgical chants, and invited prayer. They thus fit remarkably well Flete's recommendations for fighting against sin and strengthening the faith.[167] They also match the *Clensyng*'s emphasis on meditation: like the *Mirrour*, the *Clensyng* presents meditation as a moment of remembering and focusing on God and on Christ's Incarnation and Passion.[168] As was explored when discussing compassionate devotion and the reading of Scriptures—where such meditation was already encouraged—the performance of the *Visitatio* and *Elevatio* favoured a memorial, meditational focus on the life of Christ.

Through their dramatic features, their scriptural content, their inclusion of bequests, their display of the Host, their involvement of performers in penitential activities, and their presentation of the Marys as penitential examples, the Barking ceremonies may thus have had the effect of encouraging penance among their spectators and performers, and they may also have kept them away from sin after they had been cleansed.

Worship during the Liturgy

The *Elevatio* and *Visitatio* may further have fulfilled a devotional purpose due to their ties with liturgy. Like these two ceremonies, liturgy in general recalled the life and actions of Christ, although it did so through a symbolism that was not necessarily clear to uninitiated observers.[169] Yet it was essential for those performing and watching liturgy to understand it,

167 Lamothe, "An Edition of the Latin and Four Middle English Versions," 1–2, 27, 209.

168 Kirchberger, "The Cleansing of Man's Soul," 294.

169 Young, ed., *Drama of the Medieval Church*, 1:83–84; Carruthers, *Book of Memory*, 48–60, 222.

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because they were meant to respond to it with prayer and, as expressed by the *Clensyng of Mannes Soule*, such prayer was considered to be especially important.[170] Barking Abbey seems to have been keen to facilitate a better understanding of liturgy and thus, to make such prayer possible. In addition to texts about the Eucharist, the nunnery possessed a Latin commentary on the *Pater Noster* (*Olim* Foyle, MS), an anonymous *De sacramento altaris* (?Cardiff, Public Library, 3.833), John Beleth's influential *Summa de ecclasiasticis officiis*, *L'assomption de Notre Dame* (Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale, Fr. 1038), and Durandus' *Rationale*, a foundational treatise on the liturgy, its meaning, and its symbolism. Powsnett's will further reports two collections of sermons.[171]

While the abbey's nuns and clergy were thus encouraged to understand their liturgy, this was also probably the case for the lay people living in their surroundings. Liturgy was a different experience for the laity than it was for nuns and clerics. During the services, parishioners were confined to the nave; they were not involved in calls and responses and were rarely addressed.[172] Yet, for them, as well as for those in religious orders, the recommended behaviour was participation through prayer. From the fourteenth and early fifteenth century, manuals and treatises—such as the *Lay Folk's Mass Book* or John Lydgate's *The Noble History of the Exposition of the Mass*—increasingly recommended that the laity use prayers during the liturgy which either paraphrased what happened in the various moments of the Mass or explained these moments according to the Passion and to Christian doctrine. Developments in late medieval devotion continued to

170 Kirchberger, "The Cleansing of Man's Soul," 292.

171 Bell, *What Nuns Read*, 117.

172 Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, 111–13. There were some exceptions during which the laity could participate more fully. In parish churches, parishioners could at times go through the Rood Screen and the clergy sometimes went into the nave. Parish Sunday Mass was neither the only, nor the most common way for the laity to attend Mass. Many lay people did so on weekdays, when shorter ceremonies were generally celebrated at side altars, which they could approach more closely. Salisbury, *Worship in Medieval England*, 44. Some of the Barking Ordinal ceremonies seem to have been quite inclusive. On the *feria secunda* (Monday) after the fourth Sunday after Easter, the people were called for a procession which went through the nave of the church. On that day, a priest also provided a preacher to preach to the people. On Palm Sunday, two deacons turned towards the people to sing. On the feast of St Mark, the people took part in the procession which went through the nave. If the weather was bad, the procession stopped there, and the Mass was said in the nave. If the weather was good, the procession moved towards the cemetery and therefore included the dead of the parish. *Ordinale and Customary*, ed. Tolhurst, 1:125, 86 and 2:219.

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display a growing interest in understanding the events made present during liturgical services. The sixteenth century *Meditatyons for Goostely Exercise, in the Tyme of the Masse*, for instance, interpreted the gestures of the priest and related them to the Passion. For many parishioners, liturgy thus found itself intimately linked to the events of Christ's life, death, and Resurrection. Knowledge of these events was acquired either through direct teaching (via confessions and the clergy's sermons) or by indirect means: via prayers, images, poems, primers, carols, or even drama.[173] The Barking ceremonies constitute another example of these indirect means.

The *Elevatio* and *Visitatio*'s first contribution to devotion during liturgical services is thus, as explored when discussing Scriptures, its clear presentation of a scriptural story essential for the understanding of the liturgy. Their dramatic features in particular helped participants and spectators—even those poorly acquainted with the scriptural narrative the ceremonies presented—understand the nature of the actions and emotions of scriptural figures, as well as the feelings that they should harbour towards them. The two Barking ceremonies further directed their spectators and participants to realize and remember that the scriptural events they presented were essential for the understanding not just of these ceremonies but of liturgy in general. By depicting recognizable scriptural events, the *Elevatio* and *Visitatio* contextualized certain common liturgical features. Nuns, clerics, and lay people who may not have known all the meanings and symbolism of these features but who recognized the scriptural story told by the ceremonies were given clues to understand this symbolism. In the *Visitatio*, for instance, Christ appears behind the altar. The common association between altar and Christ was here visually expressed.[174] Moreover, Christ's interactions with the altar in the *Visitatio*—the priest representing Christ appeared first on the left side of the altar and then on its right ("Then a person appears from the left side of the altar, saying to her [Mary Magdalen]"; "These verses finished, the person approaches the three women together from the right side of the altar")—echoed the movement from left to right of the priest during Mass. According to Durandus' interpretation of the Mass, this movement recalled the passage of Christ from death to eternal life, as well as the arrival

173 Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, 19, 63–69, 118–20; Salisbury, *Worship in Medieval England*, 65.

174 On the altar, see for instance Durand, *Rational ou manuel des divins offices*, ed. Barthélemy, 1:33–41.

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of the time of victory. By including this liturgical movement in a representation of the Resurrection, the *Visitatio* explained the meaning behind it.[175]

The symbolism attached to the space of the church, evoked above, may also have been better understood because of the *Elevatio* and *Visitatio*. The ceremonies show the Resurrection of Christ happening on the eastern side of the church, visually associating the place with this event. They may additionally have helped explain the symbolism commonly attached to the time of the ceremonies' performance, the office of Matins. This office signified, according to writers such as Durandus, the shift from sadness to joy and the deliverance of the faithful from sin, darkness, and the devil through the Resurrection.[176] By performing a representation of the Resurrection of Christ during that office, the ceremonies made this symbolism apparent.

The broader symbolism of the liturgical year was perhaps also clarified by the *Elevatio* and *Visitatio*. They were performed on Easter Day, at the end of the rather "theatrical" Holy Week. That week featured several ceremonies containing dramatic features and at times presenting a linear narrative. On Palm Sunday, a procession signified the entry of Christ into Jerusalem; on Maundy Thursday, the feet of paupers and of nuns were washed to remember Christ washing the feet of his disciples. On Good Friday, the death and the entombment of Christ were represented through the *Depositio* ceremony during which priests acted like Nicodemus and Joseph and placed an image of Christ in the sepulchre.[177] These ceremonies culminated, in the case of Barking, with the *Elevatio* and *Visitatio*, the house's most dramatic liturgical ceremonies. The abbey therefore depicted the last days of Christ's life and his Resurrection using dramatic features. By doing so, it helped spectators and participants understand that liturgical feasts were organized—in part—around the events of Christ's life.[178] It also explained the significance of Holy Week ceremonies and of Easter Day. For both Christ and his followers, Easter Day was a time of passage from one state to another: through his Resurrection, they were now saved. Performed early in the morning, the two ceremonies allowed their spectators and participants to understand the meaning of the day's liturgies and fostered their ideal devotional behaviour

175 Durand, *Rational ou manuel des divins offices*, ed. Barthélemy, 2:69–74; Scherb, *Staging Faith*, 42.

176 Durand, *Rational ou manuel des divins offices*, ed. Barthélemy, 3:3–5, 52, 74–77.

177 *Ordinale and Customary*, ed. Tolhurst, 1:84–101.

178 Heffernan and Matter, "Introduction to the Liturgy of the Medieval Church," 6–8.

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during these liturgical celebrations. Like the Marys, they were encouraged to replace their laments with joy.[179]

The *Elevatio* and *Visitatio* also contextualized liturgical gestures. They clarified the meaning of kissing and prostration by depicting pious figures such as the Marys performing these gestures towards Christ in moments of worship, love, and respect. They showed the celebrant turn towards the people, perhaps explaining in this way the significance of the priest's turns towards the people during Mass. According to Durandus, these recalled Christ greeting Mary Magdalen, the women, and the apostles after his Resurrection—some of the scenes depicted in the *Visitatio*.[180] The meaning of certain liturgical objects was also illuminated by the ceremonies. For instance, the display of the *sudarium* in the *Visitatio* may have recalled the folding of the corporal at the end of the Eucharistic celebration. The corporal represented, according to Durandus, the linen cloths in which Christ had been buried and the *sudarium*. The *Visitatio* helped spectators and participants understand the symbolic ties between corporal and *sudarium*.[181] Finally, the liturgical chants sung and heard during the *Elevatio* and *Visitatio* were placed by the ceremonies in their scriptural context, making their content plainer.

Such content was even in some cases explained through performance: when, after having seen Christ, Mary Magdalen announces the news of the Resurrection to the disciples, her gestures visually express the content of her message both to the disciples and to the spectators and participants present in the abbey church of Barking. She "indicates with her finger the place where the angel was sitting, and she presents the *sudarium* for them [the disciples] to kiss" as she says: "Sepulcrum christi <viuentis, et gloriam vidi resurgentis>. Angelicos testes <sudarium et vestes>" (I have seen the sepulchre of the <living Christ and the glory of the resurrected one; the angelic witnesses, the *sudarium*, and the clothes>). Many of the *Elevatio* and *Visitatio* chants were sung on less representational liturgical occasions at Barking Abbey, especially around Easter.[182] Those which do not feature in

179 Durand, *Rational ou manuel des divins offices*, ed. Barthélemy, 4:199–200, 211.

180 Durand, *Rational ou manuel des divins offices*, ed. Barthélemy, 2:79, 86–87.

181 Durand, *Rational ou manuel des divins offices*, ed. Barthélemy, 2:175–78, 370, 399–400; Bourgeault, "Liturgical Dramaturgy," 128.

182 The *Elevatio* chants *A porta inferi* (From the gate of Hell) and *Domine abstraxisti* (O Lord you have removed) were antiphons sung in the Barking Holy Saturday liturgy. The *Consurgit*, *Quesumus auctor*, and *Gloria tibi domine* were all parts of the hymn *Ad coenam agni* (The Lamb's banquet) sung during Easter Week, the Easter Octave,

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other parts of the Ordinal are taken for the most part from the gospels. From Matthew come the *Non est hic surrexit* (28:6) and the *Avete nolite timere* (28:9–10). This exact passage was read in the Barking Abbey church on Holy Saturday.[183] The gospel heard on the following day has as *incipit*: *Maria Magdalene*, which makes it difficult to recognize. What is certain is that it would also have told the story of the Marys at the tomb of Christ.[184] From Mark comes the *Quis revolvet* (16:3) and from Luke the *Quid queritis viventem cum mortuis* (24:5–7). The Gospel of John contains the *Mulier quid ploras* and the *Quia tulerunt dominum meum* (20:13), the chants *Mulier quid ploras, quem queris* and *Domine si tu sustulisti eum* (20:15), *Maria* and *Raboni* (20:16), and the *Noli me tangere* (20:17). This passage from the gospel was sung again on the *feria quinta* (Maundy Thursday) during Easter Week. On the Sunday of Easter Week, the gospel *Una sabbati* (On the first day of the week)—either from Luke or John—showed the Marys at the sepulchre.[185]

The *Elevatio* and *Visitatio*'s chants, as well as the altars, the space of the church, the gestures, and the objects used in the ceremonies, were thus regular components of the liturgy at Barking, cuing spectators and participants to connect them to other liturgical celebrations. It then seems that the *Visitatio* and *Elevatio*, with their striking visual and synesthetic features, served as support to the comprehension of other ceremonies—especially

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and until the Ascension. Both the *Christus resurgens* (also found in the *Visitatio*) and the *Dicant nunc* (The Jews should now say) were Easter Day antiphons, which reoccurred until four days after the Pentecost. The *Tollite portas* (Break down your gates) was sung during Advent and on certain feasts celebrating the Virgin Mary. The *Dicite in nacionibus* (Tell in all nations) was used on Easter Day and during Easter Week, and the *Deus qui pro nobis filium tuum* (God, for us, you wanted to submit your son) was a collect for Holy Wednesday also used during Easter Week. The *Visitatio sepulchri* ceremony contains fewer chants found in other Barking Abbey liturgical celebrations. The ones I could trace were the *Surrexit dominus de sepulchro* (The Lord rises from the sepulchre), which was frequently sung from Holy Saturday until the Ascension, and the Easter Sequence *Victimae paschali laudes*, which was sung during Vespers on Easter Day, during Easter Week, and for the Magna Missa on all Sundays until Ascension Sunday. *Surrexit christus* formed part of the *Victimae paschali laudes* but was sung on its own from Easter Day until the Easter Octave. *Ordinale and Customary*, ed. Tolhurst, 1:21, 89–90, 102, 106–7, 110–24, 126, 128, 131, 134–36; 2:169, 211.

183 *Ordinale and Customary*, ed. Tolhurst, 1:105.

184 *Ordinale and Customary*, ed. Tolhurst, 1:107, 111. John seems to me to be the most likely possibility here. The name Maria Magdalena occurs towards the beginning of John 20.

185 *Ordinale and Customary*, ed. Tolhurst, 1:114–15.

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those performed around Easter. The faithful could remember their experience during Easter Matins and could reflect in their prayers upon the stories they had seen presented, upon their meaning, and upon the emotions they had felt or witnessed. They would thus have been able to understand that the scriptural events told by the *Elevatio* and *Visitatio* were also made present during less representational liturgical ceremonies.

The nature of liturgy itself—this re-living of past scriptural events in the present—may have been made easier to understand because of the *Elevatio* and *Visitatio*. Because the two ceremonies represented such events in a recognizable way, performing them came much closer to re-living scriptural events than most liturgical ceremonies did. Yet, as mentioned when discussing inclusion and compassionate devotion, performers represented these events using their own familiar and liturgical means. They were nuns and clerics of the abbey, not figures from Scriptures. Their "costumes" and "props" were liturgical: palms were most notably present during the Palm Sunday celebrations;[186] thuribles, the monstrance, candelabra, as well as the cross were especially important in processions.[187] The *Visitatio*'s *ampullae* were used at Mass or for chrism, unction, or coronation ceremonies. As for the *sudarium*, taken by the Marys from the sepulchre, it was perhaps a liturgical object as well. *Sudarium* designates the cloth used to wrap the head of Christ, but Durandus also calls two pieces of cloth by this name: the small corporal covering the chalice before the sacrifice and the maniple.[188] The clothes used in the *Elevatio* and *Visitatio* were also regularly featured in the Barking liturgy. When performing the *Elevatio*, priests wore *capis* or *capa* (copes), which were the standard vestments for liturgical occasions other than Mass, and nuns seem to have been in their usual black Benedictine habits.[189] In the *Visitatio*, the clerics portraying the angels were attired in a white stole and the three nuns representing the Marys wore white surplices.[190] While nuns are not said to wear white surplices and veils elsewhere in the Barking liturgy, they did change out of their standard habits on great

186 *Ordinale and Customary*, ed. Tolhurst, 1:85–87.

187 McLachlan, "Liturgical Vessels and Implements," 362–63, 368–80.

188 Doig, *Liturgy and Architecture*, 188; Durand, *Rational ou manuel des divins offices*, ed. Barthélemy, 2:175–77, 189–90, 235.

189 Koslin warns against the use of the term "habit" because it is both imprecise and designated a specific set of outer garments for Benedictines in the Middle Ages. Koslin, "Robe of Simplicity," 269. See also Eggert, "Edification with Thread and Needle," 59; Elliott, "Dressing and Undressing the Clergy," 58.

190 The second cleric portraying the angel is presumably dressed in the same way

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feasts. At times (Feast of the Apostles Peter and Paul, Day of the Dedication of the Church, Feast of St Laurence) they were even vested in white, which is unusual among Benedictines.[191] The surplice itself is a liturgical vestment, indispensable to clerics. The performance space was the abbey church of Barking in which performers prayed daily among images of the scenes and of the people that they were now representing. Their dialogues were partly taken from Scriptures, but they also featured non-scriptural texts and were all sung to a music closely tied to religious life: liturgical plainchant.

The performance of the *Elevatio* and *Visitatio* was therefore not a realistic re-enactment of scriptural times. Instead, it mixed past and present, the scriptural and the liturgical. This mixture of time was not as visible in more "usual" liturgy, which was performed in the same space as the *Elevatio* and *Visitatio* and with similar music but was less representational. The mixing of time was, however, a standard feature of medieval drama, where contemporaneous language, references, and props were used when depicting scriptural stories.[192] The *Elevatio* and *Visitatio*, amplifying and adding to the features of "standard" liturgy through their dramatic elements, thus presented in a visual and tangible way what liturgy was believed to accomplish. Watching and participating in such a performance may have helped spectators and participants understand the nature of liturgy itself.[193]

The ceremonies' visible fusion of past and present may also have facilitated the understanding of another aspect of liturgy, central to the celebration of the Mass: the consecration of the Host. With Lateran IV and its official approval of transubstantiation, a "new Eucharistic theology" was consolidated. Eucharistic devotional practices grew, as did the belief that looking at the Host was potentially miraculous. The Elevation of the Host became the high point of the Mass, and its consecration the most impor-

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as the first, since he is said to be *in specie alterius angeli* (in the aspect of the second angel).

191 *Ordinale and Customary*, ed. Tolhurst, 1:27, 85 and 2:246, 257, 258, 274, 372, 374, 384, 385, 386. The Barking *Visitatio* is not the only *Visitatio* during which nuns wore special clothes: the Marys in Gernrode wore white wimples and veils with red crosses on each side and, in Regensburg, they wore a special habit with wide sleeves. White was also worn at Troyes, Wilton, and Origny. Ogden, *The Staging of Drama*, 149, 151.

192 Dillon, *Cambridge Introduction to Early English Theatre*, 99; Tydeman, "Introduction," 27.

193 McGavin, "Medieval Theatricality and Spectatorship," 480–81. See also Mecham, "A Northern Jerusalem," 154–55.

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tant moment of the ceremony.[194] As indicated by instructional manuals, the understanding of the nature of the Host was essential for people to respond to it during liturgical celebrations but also to receive it in an appropriate manner.[195] At Barking, the Host appears in the *Elevatio*, where it was carried by a priest. This same priest began the ceremony by portraying Christ: *sacerdos representabit personam Christi* (The priest indeed represents the person of Christ). Yet, when the Resurrection was shown, the priest did not seem to represent Christ but only to carry the Host, which *was* Christ: "interim asportabit cor/pus dominicum de sepulcro incipiendo antiphonam. Christus resurgens" (he [the officiating priest] takes the Lord's body from the sepulchre, while beginning the antiphon: Christ rising…). It is intriguing to note that, during the *Elevatio*, the body of Christ taken out of the sepulchre was *inclusum cristallo* (enclosed in crystal), whereas during the Good Friday *Depositio* ceremony, an image of Christ was "buried" in this same sepulchre: *deponentes ymaginem […] crucifixi* (taking down the image from the cross). The abbey may have replaced the image with a Host in a monstrance before the beginning of the *Elevatio*. Alternatively, it perhaps used an image of Christ with a hollow space in its breast which contained the Host enclosed in crystal. In either case, the variety in the representations of Christ and the lack of a clear separation between them, between the Host (perhaps set in a human-like container) and the human priest, would have highlighted the role of the priest as the vicar of Christ on earth. It would also, I believe, have helped explain the nature of the Eucharistic Host.[196] The consecrated Host was understood to be not a piece of bread but the body of Christ. Its unusual nature, as described by Miri Rubin in her book *Corpus Christi*, was expounded in many medieval texts. The books held at Barking also contain various Eucharistic miracles connecting body and Host.[197] Similarly, the performance of the *Elevatio* and *Visitatio* tied the Host to Christ as a person, perhaps facilitating the understanding of transubstantiation. During transubstantiation, Christ was present in the Host, although he did not visibly appear to be. By including

194 Parker, "Architecture as Liturgical Setting," 310; Kieckhefer, "Major Currents in Late Medieval Devotion," 96–100.

195 Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, 107, 294–95.

196 For more on drama and the Eucharist, see Zyk, *Shadow and Substance*.

197 Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, 106–16; Rubin, "The Eucharist and the Construction of Medieval Identities," 45–50. At Barking, see Love, *Mirrour of the Blessed Lyf*, ed. Hogg and Powell, 301–24; *La vie d'Edouard*, ed. Bliss, 120–21, 192–93.

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the Host in the story of the three Marys looking for Christ, the Barking ceremonies also showed that although the faithful—much like the Marys—might not see Christ, he was present with them.

The *Elevatio* and *Visitatio* thus had the effect of guiding their performers and participants in their understanding of the liturgy: they informed them as to the liturgy and the Host's nature, they fostered their knowledge of liturgical symbolism, explained the ties of liturgy with Scriptures, and encouraged them to pray appropriately during liturgical services.

Through their dramatic features and their performative nature, the Barking Abbey *Elevatio* and *Visitatio* were therefore able to contribute to the devotional concerns and interests of this religious house in their own, unique ways. They proposed a mixture of the visual, the narrative, the aural, and the haptic, which guided their spectators and participants in their quest for salvation, both by educating them to improve their devotional practices and by being themselves an intense moment of devotion. After having watched and performed them, the Barking nuns, clergy, and laity, would have expanded their knowledge and memory of certain scriptural stories, would have been cued in their compassionate devotion for Christ, would have felt urged to do penance and keep away from sin, and would have gained a better understanding of liturgy.

An Emphasis on Women

In addition to devotion, the Barking Abbey *Elevatio* and *Visitatio* had other potential effects on their spectators and participants. Many of these seem tied to a noticeable element of the abbey's literary and material culture, also echoed in the *Elevatio* and *Visitatio*: an interest in women. Although the books of the abbey explore the life of many important men—the *Life of Edward* is concerned with a male saint, as are some of the texts by Goscelin de Saint-Bertin, most of *La vie des pères*, and Guerne's *Life of St Thomas Becket*—they also largely focus on women's experiences, actions, and on their place in the history of Christianity. Several *vitae* make female saints—either local or early Christian saints—their subject. The *vitae* translated and adapted by the nuns of Barking moreover tend to increase the role of women in these stories.[198] Clemence's *Life of Catherine*, for example, expands Catherine's speeches and the role of the Empress, and makes numerous mentions of the

198 See Wogan-Browne, "'Clerc u lai, muïne u dame,'" 68–70; Fenster, "'Ce qu'ens li trovat, eut en sei,'" 135–37, 143.

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Virgin Mary and of a heavenly choir of Virgins.[199] The Virgin Mary features prominently in other Barking texts: among them Adgar's *Gracial*, which is entirely dedicated to her miracles, and Love's *Mirrour*, which grants more attention to Mary and to Mary Magdalen than scriptural texts do.[200] While little material culture survives from Barking Abbey, the three extant conventual seals of the house all depict women: Saints Ethelburga, Hildelith, the Virgin Mary, and abbesses (see Figure 1.1).[201]

Women are also very much present in the liturgy of Barking Abbey. The Ordinal's *Kalendarium* (Calendar) records an impressive number of feasts associated with female saints. Mary—the patron of the abbey and of its church—is especially revered. Anglo-Saxon and early Christian saints, as well as virgin martyrs, are highly celebrated too.[202] Eighteen of these feasts are *principale* or *duplex*, the two highest levels of religious festivals. The feast of Mary Magdalen, for example, holds the rank of principal feast, reflecting the importance of the devotion to the saint at Barking.[203] Women could also be associated with spatial features of the Barking Abbey church, where most of this liturgy took place. The Virgin Mary was the dedicatee of two altars, one in the nave and one in the Salve chapel. The high altar was dedicated to the Assumption of the Virgin and to St Ethelburga. The altar of the Resurrection shared its dedication with Saints Mary Magdalen and John the Evangelist.[204] Two chapels at least were dedicated to women: the chapel of St Mary Magdalen and the Lady Chapel—also called the Salve Chapel. The prominence of women in liturgy was intensified by the presence at Barking of the relics of St Anne and St Mary Magdalen. These were processed around the choir on their feast day and on the day of the presentation of the relics. Even more prominent were the feretry of Saints Ethelburga, Hildelith, and

199 *St. Catherine*, ed. MacBain, lines 581, 902–16, 960, 1755, 1779–82, 1847–48, 2588–89, 2600.

200 Mary is again the subject of interest in *L'assomption de Notre Dame*, a translation of Pseudo-Melito of Sardis' *Transitus beatae Mariae Virginis* purchased by Sybil of Felton. Love, *Mirrour of the Blessed Lyf*, ed. Hogg and Powell, 250–51, 263, 277, 281, 287.

201 Chettle and Loftus, *History of Barking Abbey*, 32, 67; Fowler, "Some Essex Monastic Seals," 166.

202 Yardley, *Performing Piety*, 197–200; Yardley, "Chants for the Holy Trinity"; Sturman, "Barking Abbey," 318–20, 343. See *Ordinale and Customary*, ed. Tolhurst, 1:1–12 for a list of saints.

203 *Ordinale and Customary*, ed. Tolhurst, 2:261, 381–83.

204 *Ordinale and Customary*, ed. Tolhurst, 1:1–12, 26, 108 and 2:282, 298, 376, 385–87.

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Wulfhilde, which stood in the Saints' Chapel and were also incorporated in liturgical ceremonies.[205]

Although it is unclear whether the Ordinal presents an accurate depiction of the performance of liturgy at Barking Abbey, it at least suggests that women held important roles within worship. The *cantrix*, the sacristan, the prioress, and the abbess, especially, are frequently mentioned in the manuscript as active participants in services.[206] While the abbess remained the bishop's hierarchical inferior and did not appear to command priests during liturgical ceremonies, her presence there was prominent, chiefly on great feast days. For instance, she marked the beginning of the procession on certain principal feasts, such as the Ascension, by starting the *Salve festa dies*: "ordinata processione sicut decet in tali solennitate. Abatissa incipiat Salue festa dies" (The procession having been appointed as it is fitting in such solemnity, may the abbess begin the *Salve festa dies*). The abbess then closed the procession—an honour usually reserved for the clergy.[207] The abbess of Barking also at times gave abbatial absolution and blessing to other nuns, which was unusual and generally not recommended in the Late Middle Ages.[208]

205 *Ordinale and Customary*, ed. Tolhurst, 2:288, 383; Clapham, "The Benedictine Abbey of Barking."

206 See the Ordinal's description of the Purification of Mary (*Ordinale and Customary*, ed. Tolhurst, 2:188–90) or of the Ascension (*Ordinale and Customary*, ed. Tolhurst, 1:127–30) for examples of these women participating in the liturgy. For moments when the convent sings without the presence of the clergy, see Christmas (*Ordinale and Customary*, ed. Tolhurst, 1:28). Nuns singing the Divine Office on their own was likely not problematic in the Middle Ages when their status was the same as that of unordained monks. Black, "The Divine Office," 45–46; Yardley, *Performing Piety*, 50–71, 186–87. For more on nuns reading the gospels, see Bugyis, *The Care of Nuns*, 133–72.

207 For examples at Barking, see *Ordinale and Customary*, ed. Tolhurst, 1:27, 127–30, 134–36 and 2:189, 319–22. See also Yardley, *Performing Piety*, 50–58, 185–87; Durand, *Rational ou manuel des divins offices*, ed. Barthélemy, 2:47–52 on processions.

208 *Ordinale and Customary*, ed. Tolhurst, 2:356–57. According to Durand, *Rational ou manuel des divins offices*, ed. Barthélemy, 2:153, an abbess cannot bless her nuns, hear their sins at confession, read the gospels, or preach publicly. See also Harper, *Forms and Orders of Western Liturgy*, 40. Bugyis provides and discusses evidence that confession within the conventual community and without the presence of priests happened in England during the Anglo-Saxon period and the central Middle Ages. It seems to have been increasingly discouraged in the later medieval period, although it continued—as is the case at Barking—in certain houses. Bugyis, *The Care of Nuns*, 173–224.

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The *Elevatio* and *Visitatio* echo this interest in women. The *Visitatio* presents Mary Magdalen and the sisters of the Virgin Mary as its protagonists.[209] Moreover, most of the ceremonies' performers were women. Not only were they more numerous, but they also sang more chants than the clergy (counting the repetition of the *Tollite Portas* (Break down your gates), men sang around twenty-six chants and women thirty-one). They thus would have made a greater visual and aural impression on spectators. While the priests began many of the chants, the *cantrix* often continued and expanded what they had started. The abbess held a leading role in the ceremonies as well. She gave the signal to begin and end them:

> In primis eat domina / abbatissa cum toto conuentu et quibusdam sacerdotibus et cle/ricis capis indutis quolibet sacerdote et clerico palmam et / candelam extinctam manu deferentem (First, the lady abbess goes with the whole convent and with certain priests and clerics dressed in copes, each priest and cleric carrying in his hand a palm and an unlit candle); tunc redeant in stacionem suam usque abbatissa / eas iubeat exire ad quiescendum. (Then, they return to their place until the abbess orders them to go out to rest).

She also changed the clothes of the women portraying the three Marys, and absolved them:

> nitidissimis superpellicijs induantur / niueis velis a domina abbatissa capitibus earum superpositis (they are dressed in most beautiful surplices, snow-white veils having been placed on their heads by the lady abbess); dicant. Confiteor ad abbatissam et ab ea absolute… (they say to the abbess: I confess. Once absolved by her…).[210]

The Depiction of Women at Barking Abbey

In addition to emphasizing the presence of women, the *Visitatio* and *Elevatio* echo the depiction of women at Barking Abbey, presenting their spectators and participants with a multifaceted and specific image of women which would have influenced their perception of the ceremonies. The *Visitatio*'s Marys, although they first doubt the truth of the Resurrection, later parallel the behaviour displayed by St Catherine in her *Life*, by Mary in the *Gracial* and the *Mirrour*, and by Mary Magdalen in the *Mirrour*: they show meekness,

209 This is not unusual, but convent *Visitatio* tend to make the roles of the Marys, especially that of Mary Magdalen, more central than men's do.

210 *Ordinale and Customary*, ed. Tolhurst, 1:107–9.

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obedience, and submission to the will of God and of Christ.[211] Yet, women's obedience did not prevent them from playing an important role in the history of Christianity.[212] Two women, in particular, have been celebrated as central to this history and feature directly and indirectly in the *Visitatio*: the Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalen.

The Virgin was understood, through her chaste motherhood, as instrumental for the Resurrection and the salvation of humanity. The *Gracial* and the *Mirrour*—among many other medieval texts—present her as the new Eve who repairs the fault of her female predecessor by giving birth to the saviour.[213] The *Mirrour* further compares the Resurrection of Christ to his birth "as he went first oute of his moderes wombe / clene virgyne in his natiuite / withoute sorwe or wemme of synne."[214] Mary Magdalen too was strongly connected to the Resurrection. As I will explore below, she is a witness to and transmitter of the event. At Barking, the altar in the abbey church dedicated at once to her, to St John, and to the Resurrection, reinforced the perception of her importance in this episode.[215] The *Visitatio*'s use of the chapel of Mary Magdalen further underlines this importance. While Mary Magdalen is central to the *Visitatio*'s depiction of the Resurrection, the Virgin Mary is not featured in the ceremony. However, the presence of her half-sisters—Mary Salome and Mary mother of James—is a reminder of her role in the life of Christ. She—and by extension her family—is the source of his humanity, which enabled him to be sacrificed for the sins of Humanity. This connection to her lineage was emphasized in the nunnery on Marian feasts: on the feast of the Annunciation, for example, the chant *Egredietur* (There shall come forth), speaking of the root of Jesse from which Christ was born, was sung.[216] At Barking, women were thus presented as central participants in the Resurrection, one of the most important events of Christianity.

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211 *La traduction champenoise de La vie des pères*, ed. Grossel, 363; Love, *Mirrour of the Blessed Lyf*, ed. Hogg and Powell, 20–22, 34, 119, 164, 255, 277. See also chants sung on Marian feasts: *Ordinale and Customary*, ed. Tolhurst, 2:295–97.

212 See Borgehammar, "A Monastic Conception of the Liturgical Year," 18–22.

213 Love, *Mirrour of the Blessed Lyf*, ed. Hogg and Powell, 33; Benoit, *Le Gracial d'Adgar*, 230. See *Ordinale and Customary*, ed. Tolhurst, 2:170–72, 188–90, 209–12, 279–82, 295–97, 340–41, for chants expressing this. See Sticca, "The Literary Genesis of the Latin Passion Play," 56–58 for more on this tradition.

214 Love, *Mirrour of the Blessed Lyf*, ed. Hogg and Powell, 262.

215 *Ordinale and Customary*, ed. Tolhurst, 2:282.

216 See Isaiah 11:1. Mary's mother Anne was at times used to represent the lineage of Christ. She could be depicted as the centre of the Holy Kinship. Robinson,

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Women celebrated in Barking texts were also depicted as especially close to God and to Christ. This closeness was due to their love, which was regularly expressed—often through tears, laments, sighs, and the kissing of Christ's body.[217] This is the case in the *Visitatio*, as mentioned when discussing compassionate devotion, as well as in the *Mirrour*. When the Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalen help anoint the body of Christ, for instance:

> Maudeleyn saide: I pray ȝow suffer me diȝte these feete / at the whiche I fonde so moche grace. And thay suffrynge her askynge / sche helde the feet and loked vppon hem wepynge and almost faillynge for sorwe: and riȝt as sche byfore in his lif wische hem with teres of compunccioun / now moche more sche wascheth hem with teres of grete sorwe and inward compassioun: for as he verray sothfastnesse witnessith of her /sche loued Mykel and therefore sche wepte mykel.

In addition to the tears and the laments, Magdalen touches Christ's feet here. She does so multiple times in the *Mirrour* and in Barking liturgical chants.[218] Touch was certainly an important part of the devotion of the Middle Ages, as testified by numerous manuscripts containing devotional images which were repeatedly touched and kissed. However, the faithful were encouraged to harbour a spiritual rather than a physical love for Christ and God. Women were also generally forbidden—apart from communion—to touch the body of Christ. The emphasis put in the Late Middle Ages on the sacrament of the Eucharist led this sacramental right to be reserved for priests.[219] While the Barking liturgical and literary culture does not depict women handling the consecrated Host, it contains numerous examples of women touching and kissing either Jesus' body or a substitute for it. In the *Mirrour*, Mary Magdalen kisses the sepulchre, a gesture that mirrors the Marys kissing

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"Chantilly, Musée Condé, Ms. 617," 113–18; Warren, *Spiritual Economies*, 123–28; *Ordinale and Customary*, ed. Tolhurst, 2:209–12. See also *Ordinale and Customary*, ed. Tolhurst, 2:279–82, 295–97, 340–41, 170–72, for more chants and readings about Mary's—and thus Christ's—lineage.

217 See for example, the chant *Dilectus meus* (My beloved), sung on the feast of St Mary Magdalen. *Ordinale and Customary*, ed. Tolhurst, 2:264. For more examples, see *Ordinale and Customary* 2:207–9, 297–98, 319–22; 1:134–36. See also Newman, *Virile Women*, 138.

218 Love, *Mirrour of the Blessed Lyf*, ed. Hogg and Powell, 185, 234, 243, 246–48, 251–52, 259, 263–64, 265, 267–70, 277, 288, 297; *Ordinale and Customary*, ed. Tolhurst, 2:261, 264. See also Love, *Mirrour of the Blessed Lyf*, 249 for Mary sighing with grief, 260 and 264 for the Marys sighing and weeping, 287 for the Virgin sighing and resting her head on her son's chest.

219 Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, 12–13.

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"effusively the place where the crucified one had been put" in the *Visitatio*.[220] In this ceremony, when Christ appears to the Marys, they "hold his feet and kiss them." The same gestures are found in the *Mirrour*, as the Virgin, Mary Magdalen, and later the three Marys touch and kiss Christ resurrected.[221] The white clothes of the *Visitatio*'s Marys, as well as the lights accompanying them denote their purity and chastity and would have emphasized the non-sexual aspect of this touch.[222]

The presence of such tactile devotion in *Visitatio* ceremonies is rare. The scriptural passage describing the Marys kissing the feet of Christ is taken from Matthew and occurs in six extant *Visitatio* ceremonies, three of which come from women's houses. The Barking *Visitatio* is the only one where touch seems to have occurred in performance. Furthermore, while the Gospel of Matthew (Matt. 28:9) describes the Marys touching the feet of Christ—"tenuerunt pedes ejus, et adoraverunt eum" (they took hold of his feet, and adored him), the Barking Ordinal increases the intensity of their touch by instructing the nuns not only to hold his feet but also to kiss them: "teneant pedes eius et de/osculentur" (they should hold his feet and kiss them). This passage from Matthew had been frequently used in the earlier Middle Ages to describe the relationship between nuns and God. However, as women's access to liturgical practices decreased, it was often omitted from re-tellings of the Resurrection in favour of the *Noli me tangere*.[223] Barking Abbey seems to have gone against this trend and to have emphasized the importance of touch between Christ and the women following him as a non-problematic and significant part of their devotion. The abbey's *Visitatio* thus expressed in a visual and haptic way the words of the *Mirrour*, which assert that touching Christ and showing strong emotions are a worthy expression of deep love. According to the *Mirrour*, touch can also denote the love of Christ for the people whom he allows to come near him.[224]

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220 Love, *Mirrour of the Blessed Lyf*, ed. Hogg and Powell, 118–19, 248–54.

221 Love, *Mirrour of the Blessed Lyf*, ed. Hogg and Powell, 264, 267–70, 277, 285. The disciples do as well.

222 Both light and the colour white were associated with chastity and purity in the Middle Ages and at Barking: see for example *La vie d'Edouard*, ed. Bliss, 126–27, 135, 150, 168, 185; Benoit, *Le Gracial d'Adgar*, 93, 144, 189, 191; *Ordinale and Customary*, ed. Tolhurst, 2:209–12, 188–90, 279–82, 295–97, 340–41, 170–72; 1:134–36; Durand, *Rational ou manuel des divins offices*, ed. Barthélemy, 1:168–72.

223 Pappano, "Sister Acts: Conventual Performance," 45–48.

224 Love, *Mirrour of the Blessed Lyf*, ed. Hogg and Powell, 118–20. See also *Ordinale and Customary*, ed. Tolhurst, 2:261. Touching and weeping are not entirely gendered

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Not only are the Virgin and Mary Magdalen therefore repeatedly described at Barking as loving Christ better than most, they are also said to be especially loved by him. In the *Mirrour*, Mary Magdalen is even named "his special byloued."[225] After his Resurrection, it is to women that he chooses to appear first, as emphasized by the *Mirrour*, by the liturgical chant *Mane prima* (Early the first day) sung on the feast and octave of Mary Magdalen, and by the *Visitatio*.[226] In that ceremony, spectators and participants were able to witness a representative of Christ appear to the Marys—although they were aware that it was only a representation. As indicated in the Ordinal, the appearances and disappearances of Christ in the *Visitatio* are choreographed. By moving in front of and behind the altar at specific times, he alternates between being visible and invisible to the Marys:

> Tunc in sinistra parte altaris appareat per/sona (Then a person appears from the left side of the altar); Cum perso/na disparuerit (When the person has disappeared); persona in dextera parte altaris tribus / simul occurrat mulieribus (the person approaches the three women together from the right side of the altar).

Because the performance of the *Visitatio* was a highly visual medium, it drew attention to these moments of seeing Christ.

However, women did more than witness these events. The Barking literary and liturgical culture repeatedly shows women, through their love for Christ, as mediators between him and others. They can act as intercessors, but they can also, as depicted in the *Mirrour*, the *Gracial*, Clemence's *Life of St Catherine*, and in the *Visitatio* and *Elevatio*, be tasked to spread the words of Christ.[227] The *Gracial* and the *Life of Catherine* show women convert-

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expressions of love. The *Mirrour*, for instance, does describe men mourning and expressing penance through tears and touch. See Love, *Mirrour of the Blessed Lyf*, 248, 257, 272, 280–81. However, these men tend not to express their emotions as extremely and frequently as women do. This is perhaps because of the tradition of women as leading mourning in the biblical world. See Sautter, "Women, Dance, Death, and Lament," 93, 97.

225 Love, *Mirrour of the Blessed Lyf*, ed. Hogg and Powell, 118, 157, 176, 189, 196, 237–40, 248, 267, 268–70, 277, 284, 287. See also Jansen, *Making of the Magdalen*, 49, 150–51.

226 Love, *Mirrour of the Blessed Lyf,* ed. Hogg and Powell, 263, 268; *Ordinale and Customary*, ed. Tolhurst, 2:261, 264.

227 A depiction which was common in the Middle Ages: see for example Johnson, "Marian Devotion," 400–409; *Ordinale and Customary*, ed. Tolhurst, 1:134–36 and 2:264, 261, 279–82, 308–10, 319–22; Love, *Mirrour of the Blessed Lyf*, ed. Hogg and Powell, 33–36; Benoit, *Le Gracial d'Adgar*, 113–20, 228, 232–33, 241; Lamothe, "An

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ing pagans and redressing a lack of faith in Christians through their public speech.[228] These texts do not devalue the Virgin and Catherine's words because of their gender, nor are the women presented as completely passive beings through which the voice of God speaks—a frequent justification for female public speech. While Clemence says that the rhetorical feats accomplished by St Catherine are due to God's intervention, she also makes it clear that Catherine can argue against any *dialeticien* (dialectician) even before her trials with the emperor.[229]

In the *Visitatio*, three sisters stood in for the Marys who were transmitters of the good news of the Resurrection. To do so, they changed into clothes that further signalled these figures' mediating characteristic. While the sisters' white garments have been discussed in the context of confession and purification, they also recall the clothes worn by the angels and suggest a kinship between them. Such kinship is present in the Barking literary and liturgical culture as well, where some holy women are surrounded by and interact with angels. Angels comfort St Catherine in her cell and take her to Heaven; they follow the Virgin in the *Gracial* and appear to the Marys at the tomb in the *Mirrour*.[230] In Scriptures, as well as in the Barking texts, angels act as the messengers of the divine.[231] The perception of the Marys as messengers may have been further strengthened by the connection between the white clothes they wore and some of the saints in the Barking literary and liturgical culture. In the *Gracial*, saints are depicted as processing together dressed in white and accompanied by singing and light, as are the Marys in

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Edition of the Latin and Four Middle English Versions," 218. See also Euphresine in *La traduction champenoise de La vie des pères*, ed. Grossel, 375. Even the seal of Barking Abbey shows women as intercessors. Bugyis, *The Care of Nuns*, 234–37.

228 Benoit, *Le Gracial d'Adgar*, 216–18, 269–71; *St. Catherine*, ed. MacBain, lines 201–308, 367–68, 425, 643–1099.

229 *St. Catherine*, ed. MacBain, lines 14–44, 379–80, 543–68. On Clemence and female public speech, see Watt, *Medieval Women's Writing*, 73–80; Foster, "Clemence of Barking," 13–14; Auslander, "Clemence and Catherine," 164, 175; Wogan-Browne, *Saints' Lives and Women's Literary Culture*, 223–28; Ferrante, *To the Glory of Her Sex*, 187–88.

230 Love, *Mirrour of the Blessed Lyf*, ed. Hogg and Powell, 23, 266, 291; *St. Catherine*, ed. MacBain, lines 1487, 2588–89, 2592–610. Angels are not only connected to women: they act as messengers and companion to Christ and to male saints in Heaven as well. See for example *La vie d'Edouard*, ed. Bliss, 174, 168, 111; Benoit, *Le Gracial d'Adgar*, 170, 189.

231 Love, *Mirrour of the Blessed Lyf*, ed. Hogg and Powell, 266, 272; Benoit, *Le Gracial d'Adgar*, 186.

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the *Visitatio*. The Marys are thus tied to this saintly group whose main task, according to the *Gracial*, is to act as mediators. They intercede in favour of souls and fulfil missions given to them by God. Another connection between saints and white clothes can perhaps be found in the Barking liturgy, when nuns wear white on the Feast of the Apostles Peter and Paul and on the Feast of St Laurence.[232]

The use of light in the performance of the *Visitatio* continues to reinforce this perception of the Marys as messengers. Candelabra are mentioned in the *Visitatio*, where they follow the nuns portraying the Marys: "dicant. Confiteor ad abbatissam, et ab ea absolute. in loco / statuto cum candelabris consistant" (they [the Marys] say to the abbess: I confess. Once they have been absolved by her, they position themselves with the candelabra in the place appointed earlier). It remains unclear whether the candelabra accompanied the Marys during the entire ceremony or not, but a second mention is made of them at the end of the *Visitatio*:

> cum candelabris per / chorum transeuntes orandi gracia sepulcrum adeant: et ibi brevem / oracionem faciant. tunc redeant in stacionem suam usque abbatissa /eas iubeat exire ad quiescendum.
>
> crossing with the candelabra through the choir, they go towards the sepulchre in order to pray. And there, they make a short prayer. Then, they return to their place until the abbess orders them to go out to rest.

Candelabra were widely used lighting sources in medieval churches. They would have carried one or more candles and their size varied depending on their use.[233] Those featured in the Barking *Visitatio* were handheld and, according to the Ordinal, were carried by six *iuuencule* (schoolgirls).[234] Their use there may have recalled the scriptural image of the disciples—most famously found in the Gospel of Matthew, as well as in Mark and Luke—as a lit candle on a *candelabrum*:

> You are the light of the world. A city seated on a mountain cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but upon a candlestick, that it may shine to all that are in the house. So let your light shine before

232 Benoit, *Le Gracial d'Adgar*, 190–91.

233 Vincent, *Fiat lux*, 98–103.

234 According to notes by Dame Laurentia McLachlan, in *Ordinale and Customary*, ed. Tolhurst, 2:369, the *iuuencule* were probably receiving their education in the nunnery. They are not novices, who are called *scolares* at Barking. See also Yardley, "Musical Education of Young Girls," 52–54. She believes that the *iuuencule* were probably aged eight to fourteen.

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> men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in Heaven.[235]

Liturgical commentators explained that the disciples' lights existed because they had been lit by Christ's true light. They were meant to guide others towards this true light and to transmit the Lord's teachings.[236] This image can recall Pentecost when the disciples received the Holy Spirit in the form of tongues of fire—as seen in the *Mirrour*, for example.[237] At Barking, the light under the bushel was also tied to Mary Magdalen, for instance in the chant *O mundi lampas*, sung on the octave of her feast:

> O mundi lampas et margarita praefulgida quae resurrectionem Christi nuntiando apostolorum apostola fieri meruisti Maria Magdalena semper pia exoratrix pro nobis adsis ad deum qui te elegit.
>
> O shining light of the world and radiant pearl, you who proclaimed the Resurrection of Christ to the apostles and thus became an apostle yourself, Mary Magdalene, intercede for us always with God as a gracious intercessor, who has chosen you.[238]

The chant associates her both with light and with the apostles. This echoes the tradition of Mary Magdalen as the *apostola apostolorum* (apostle of the apostles), which emphasized her function as witness and transmitter.[239] This tradition did not necessarily imply that she was a preacher like the disciples: according to some churchmen, her transmission of the good news of the Resurrection was a private affair rather than a public preaching.[240]

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235 Matthew 5:14–16. See also Mark 4:21–23; Luke 8:16, 11:23.

236 Bührer-Thierry, "Lumière et pouvoir," 527–37. See for instance Durand, *Rational ou manuel des divins offices*, ed. Barthélemy, 2:37, 45.

237 Love, *Mirrour of the Blessed Lyf*, ed. Hogg and Powell, 298. A few of the chants sung at Barking on the Pentecost also refer to light. *Ordinale and Customary*, ed. Tolhurst, 1:134–36.

238 *Ordinale and Customary,* ed. Tolhurst, 2:264.

239 See Love, *Mirrour of the Blessed Lyf*, ed. Hogg and Powell, 277. According to Jansen, it is impossible to find the exact origins of this phrase. She finds no reference to it before the twelfth century and, by then, it had "already passed into common currency." Jansen, *Making of the Magdalen*, 62–63. A decree published on June 3, 2016, by the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacrament, and "expressly wished" by Pope Francis, cites Rabanus Maurus' *De vita beatae Mariae Magdalenae, XXVII* (ninth century) as an earlier source for this phrase. See Holy See Press Office "Bulletin: Mary Magdalene, Apostle of the Apostles"; Roche, "Apostle of the Apostles."

240 Minnis, "Religious Roles," 54–56; Jansen, *Making of the Magdalen*, 56–57.

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Yet, the tradition also at times extended into presenting Mary Magdalen as a fully-fledged disciple who went on to preach in Marseilles. Such a narrative was most famously told in the *Legenda aurea*, which is listed at Barking in Powsnett's list.[241] In this context, the candelabra surrounding the Marys in the *Visitatio* enhanced the perception of their roles as messengers, as guiding lights.

The ceremony moreover seems to have emphasized Mary Magdalen and the other Marys' nearly disciple-like status by showing them spreading the news of the Resurrection to the disciples—"Tunc vnus illorum / accedat et dicat marie magdalene. Dixit nobis maria et cetera / Illa autem respondeat. Sepulcrum christi <viuentis, et gloriam vidi resurgentis>" (Then one of them [the disciples] approaches and tells Mary Magdalen: Tell us, Mary et cetera… Now, she replies: I have seen the sepulchre of the <living Christ and the glory of the resurrected one>), to the nuns—"Choro eis respondente" (the choir answering them), but also to the *populus*—"Tunc marie stantes / super gradus ante altare uertentes se ad populum canant hoc / Responsorium. Alleluia surrexit dominus de sepulcro" (the Marys then, standing on the steps in front of the altar, turning themselves towards the people, sing this responsory: Alleluia the Lord has risen from the sepulchre). At a time when preaching was associated with Christ, his disciples, and their successors, it was generally seen as unfit for women.[242] St Paul equated women speaking in public on religious matters with "teaching and usurpation of authority over men, to whom they should instead be obedient and from whom they should learn at home."[243] Women were usually advised in the Middle Ages to be a converting example through their actions rather than their speech.[244] The *Visitatio*, however, presents women who speak publicly to a mixed "audience," transmit the words of Christ, and convince others to follow these words: they effectively preach. In contrast with some *Visitationes*—such as

241 Bell, *What Nuns Read*, 119–21; Blanton, "The Devotional Reading of Nuns," 188; Baert, "An Odour, A Taste, a Touch," 123.

242 Love, *Mirrour of the Blessed Lyf*, ed. Hogg and Powell, 122, 125, 158–60; Everett, "A Critical Edition," 7–8; Durand, *Rational ou manuel des divins offices*, ed. Barthélemy, 2:131.

243 Green, *Women Readers in the Middle Ages*, 229–30; Minnis, "Religious Roles," 47–51.

244 Durand, *Rational ou manuel des divins offices*, ed. Barthélemy, 1:28, 168–72; *Ordinale and Customary*, ed. Tolhurst, 1:134 and 2:350–55.

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the Fleury ceremony, the disciples neither question their words nor check themselves that they are indeed true.[245]

In performance, the *Visitatio* further emphasized these traits attributed to the Marys at Barking Abbey—as well as in some broader medieval trends—through their dramatic features. The three nuns portraying the Marys had to sing and "act" this transmission of scriptural words with their voices and bodies. They did not perform it in a vacuum but in public, in front of lay and religious spectators. Their announcement was repeated by the conventual choir. Female voices were thus dominant in proclaiming—and perhaps preaching—the announcement of the Resurrection. This is highly unusual in medieval performative events. When female scriptural or hagiographic preachers were depicted in public plays or performances, they were generally represented by men, which suggests that the "female performance of feminine sanctity was potentially subversive." Such figures moreover tended to be presented as models of private devotion rather than as examples because of their public acts.[246]

Women in the Barking literary and liturgical culture—*Elevatio* and *Visitatio* included—can thus perform actions usually reserved for men, but they are even at times more explicitly associated with male behaviour. Both Marine and Euphresine in *La vie des pères* dress as men and serve as monks in a monastery. They are just as devout as their brothers, if not more so, and their "disguise" is never treated as an issue. On the contrary, it is a way for them to be close to Christ without attracting attention. Euphresine loves nothing more than reading in a manner resembling the *lectio divina*. She is so skilled at remembering what she read that "ele fu bone clergesse, si que tuit s'en mervoilloient" (she was a good clergy woman, and all marvelled at it).[247] A similar female command of liturgy appears in the *Gracial*, where Mary teaches a monk how to sing compline.[248] Female figures at Barking could even be connected to Christ himself. The Barking *Life of Saint Catherine*, for example, emphasizes her resemblance to the Son of God. Her suffering as she walks to her death accompanied by lamenting women recalls Christ's walk to Calvary. She dies on a Friday, "A l'ore que Deu la suffri, /

245 At Fleury, the women arrived at the tomb first but did not understand what was happening and the disciples were the ones who interpreted the empty sepulchre as the sign of the Resurrection. Pappano, "Sister Acts: Conventual Performance," 53.

246 Sanok, "Performing Feminine Sanctity," 285–88.

247 *La traduction champenoise de La vie des pères*, ed. Grossel, 360–75, 377.

248 Benoit, *Le Gracial d'Adgar*, 268–69.

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Ki par sa mort nus ad salve" (At the time that God suffered it, / He who saved us by his death). She is also granted by God—in a moment reminiscent of Christ's sacrifice for the salvation of mankind—that all those who love her, mourn for her, and remember her be received in Heaven *en gloire* (in glory).[249] The preaching and the mentions of light attached to many of the Barking women—those in the *Visitatio* as well—further create a link between them, the disciples, and Christ.

There therefore seems to be a tradition at Barking Abbey of depicting women as meek and obedient, but also as central to the history of Christianity and as especially close to God and Christ. Some of them are even preachers who, while they are the instruments of God, are themselves capable, learned, and efficient. The Marys of the *Visitatio* echo but also reinforce this tradition. What would have been the effect of presenting the ceremony's spectators and participants with such a depiction of women? The answer to this question emerges when we consider the ways in which the nunnery's literary and liturgical culture, and the two ceremonies, encourage an association between the three holy women, the sisters portraying them, and the nuns of Barking Abbey in general.

Associating Performers with Scriptural Figures

Nuns were commonly seen to share traits with holy women—the Marys included. They certainly had much in common, according to the Barking manuscripts. Like nuns, women in these texts are frequently accompanied by or associated with other women: a choir of virgins, for instance, visits St Catherine in Clemence's text and follows the Virgin Mary in the *Gracial* and in some of the liturgical chants dedicated to her.[250] In the *Visitatio* too, the Marys behave like a small community: they move together, sing, and interact with each other, as seen in these examples:

> incedentes flebili uoce et sub/missa hos pariter canant versus (they sing together these verses in an afflicted and humble voice); Jacobi respondeat ([Mary mother of] James replies [to Mary Magdalen]); marie exeuntes a choro: simul dicant (the Maries, leaving the choir, say together); plangendo dicant ad inuicem (say to one another, while lamenting); maria gaudium

249 *St. Catherine*, ed. MacBain, lines 2508–50, 2643–45, 2568–610.

250 *Ordinale and Customary*, ed. Tolhurst, 2:279–82. See also *Ordinale and Customary*, ed. Tolhurst, 2:182, 353–55; Benoit, *Le Gracial d'Adgar*, 38, 171–72; *St. Catherine*, ed. MacBain, line 1847; Love, *Mirrour of the Blessed Lyf*, ed. Hogg and Powell, 228, 240, 246, 250–55, 262.

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suum consociabus communicet (Mary communicates her joy to her companions).

Their community further mirrors that of the nuns. Mary Magdalen acts like an abbess, leading the other women and speaking in their name: she is the first to encounter Christ and it is she who announces his Resurrection to the Marys and to the disciples. The disciples listen to her announcement and follow her lead when singing the *Christus resurgens*, as the priests followed the abbess' lead during the *Elevatio* and *Visitatio* ceremonies.

Both nuns and holy women were also attached to the rhetoric of love and chastity and called Brides of Christ.[251] The love that holy women show Christ in Barking texts—also shown by the Marys in the *Visitatio*—triumphs over the love they might have for worldly things and for people. This same detachment was recommended to nuns.[252] The nunnery of Barking moreover boasted some of its own saints, whose lives it valorized and publicized by commissioning Goscelin de Saint-Bertin to write the *vitae* of abbesses St Ethelburga and St Hildelith, by commemorating them in its liturgy, and by composing chants and devotional prayers in their honour.[253] The local miracles that these women had accomplished during their lives, or that had occurred after their deaths, were emphasized in this material. Yardley notes the "personal connection" that the nuns of Barking had with these saints: they were members of the same community, prayed at their shrines in the abbey church, and regularly sang chants presenting them as their intercessors and predecessors.[254] The holy abbesses of Barking—Ethelburga in particular—were moreover repeatedly described, like the Virgin Mary, as

251 See, among many other examples, some of the chants sung on the Consecration of a Virgin ceremony at Barking, *Ordinale and Customary*, ed. Tolhurst, 2:353–55. See also Durand, *Rational ou manuel des divins offices*, ed. Barthélemy, 1:168–72; Benoit, *Le Gracial d'Adgar*, 228, 240; Love, *Mirrour of the Blessed Lyf*, ed. Hogg and Powell, 32, 165; *La traduction champenoise de La vie des pères*, ed. Grossel, 367, 376; *St. Catherine*, ed. MacBain, lines 582, 1357–60, 1629, 1761, 1903, 2503, 2544, 2560–63, 2662. Religious men swore chastity, but this trait was more often emphasized as essential for women. Warren, *Spiritual Economies*, 4–7, 17–18, 27; McNamara, *Sisters in Arms*, 323.

252 Love, *Mirrour of the Blessed Lyf*, ed. Hogg and Powell, 161, 190; *Ordinale and Customary*, ed. Tolhurst, 2:261, 308–10, 193, 262–63.

253 *Ordinale and Customary*, ed. Tolhurst, 1:3, 9, 10 and 2:207–9, 297–98, 319–22. See also Yardley, *Performing Piety*, 179–180, 200; Yardley, "Chants for the Holy Trinity."

254 Yardley, "Chants for the Holy Trinity," 185–86; Bugyis, *The Care of Nuns*, 27.

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"mothers."[255] The name of "mother" was also attributed to the abbesses who succeeded them.[256] The seal of the abbey—which would have been visible not only to the conventual community but to outsiders as well—continued to present the nuns of Barking in close proximity to their holy abbesses and saints, including the Virgin Mary (see Figure 1.1). The placement of the figures on the seal appears to depict previous abbesses as intercessors between a praying sister and the figures of saints and Christ. There therefore seems to be a network of connections tying together holy women, the early and holy abbesses of Barking, and the house's later abbesses.[257] The nunnery itself was dedicated to both Ethelburga and Mary.[258] Such a network encouraged an association between the medieval nuns of Barking and the holy.

Both the Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalen were moreover often presented in medieval texts as particular models for consecrated women.[259] The *Mirrour*, for example, explicitly directs virgins and maidens to follow Mary's example of solitary prayer and silence. As for Mary Magdalen, she was seen as a model of contemplative life—as explained by St Bernard—due to her fervent love of and devotion to Christ, as well as her meekness, patience, and silence.[260] Yet the association encouraged between nuns and Mary Magdalen because of her contemplative qualities may have led the nuns of Barking to connect with her other qualities, such as her role as a preacher. This is certainly what Goscelin does in his *Vita sanctae Wulfhildis* (Life of St Wulfhilde), where he emphasizes these women's roles as witnesses and transmitters: "The faithful testimony of this kind [from the nuns of Barking about Wulfhilde] is not to be disdained: we learn from the angelic first messenger

255 *Ordinale and Customary*, ed. Tolhurst, 2:170–72, 188–90, 200–202, 207–12, 279–82, 295–98, 319–22, 340–41; Benoit, *Le Gracial d'Adgar*, 175–76, 230; Love, *Mirrour of the Blessed Lyf*, ed. Hogg and Powell, 32, 196, 281. On this subject, see Yardley, "Chants for the Holy Trinity," 180–81, 187–89. Goscelin de Saint-Bertin explicitly compares the holy abbesses of Barking Abbey with the Virgin Mary and with the women at the tomb of Christ. Bugyis, *The Care of Nuns*, 28.

256 *Ordinale and Customary*, ed. Tolhurst, 2:351–53. On abbesses and prioresses as mothers, see Bugyis, *The Care of Nuns*, 78–132.

257 Bugyis, *The Care of Nuns*, 234–40.

258 Gilchrist and Oliva, *Religious Women in Medieval East Anglia*, 28–29.

259 Rice, "Temples to Christ's Indwelling," 122–23; Hamburger and Suckale, "Between this World and the Next," 85–96; Shanks, "Introduction," 1–9; Baert, "The Pact between Space and Gaze," 203.

260 Love, *Mirrour of the Blessed Lyf*, ed. Hogg and Powell, 27, 156–59, 299. See Davidson, "On the Use of Iconographic Study," 47–50.

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of our Lord's Resurrection Mary, and from the crown of women saints and prophetesses."[261] The example of Mary Magdalen was therefore a complex one, exhorting nuns to follow her qualities in their contemplative life, but also perhaps showing them that they could participate to some degree in the active life—although it was usually closed to monastic men and women. The inclusion of the chant *Fidelis discipula* (faithful disciple) on the feast of Abbess St Ethelburga, the use of the *Veni creator spiritus* (Come, Creator Spirit) both on the feast of Pentecost and on celebrations essential to the nuns' identity, as well as the nuns' involvement with the surrounding laity, may indicate that they had integrated this multifaceted view of their duties as women religious.[262]

The *Visitatio* continues to show the nuns of Barking in this light and to encourage their association with the holy women that they were representing. These nuns, unlike the laity who stood in the nave behind a *pulpitum*, were the privileged witnesses of the events of the Resurrection represented in the *Visitatio*. Their experience of this performance mirrored the Mary's experience of witnessing the Resurrection. When the Marys announced the Resurrection, they were echoed first by the choir of nuns. Nuns thus publicly positioned themselves as the Marys' successors and followers. Their roles as transmitters were already suggested in the *Elevatio* where, while priests led the chants, the *cantrix* completed their *incipit*s. Her actions here presaged those of the Marys in the *Visitatio*: this nun transmitted and commentated upon the words spoken by someone of greater spiritual authority. By performing, but also by having devised or at least approved of these ceremonies, the nuns showed themselves as women transmitting the story of other women transmitters.

The *Visitatio* also had the effect of associating nuns with the three Marys and their specific depictions in this ceremony because three nuns publicly embodied these scriptural figures. They were instructed by the Ordinal to move as they might have moved, speak the words that they had spoken, carry objects resembling those they had carried, dress in clothes reminiscent of their clothes, and copy their behaviour and emotions, as attested by multiple rubrics. For example: "the one showing the outward appearance of Mary Magdalen; the second one, who represents Mary [mother] of James;

261 O'Donnell, "'The Ladies Have Me Quite Fat,'" 99–100.

262 Love, *Mirrour of the Blessed Lyf*, ed. Hogg and Powell, 158–65; *Ordinale and Customary*, ed. Tolhurst, 2:261, 319–22. The *Veni creator spiritus* was sung on the Consecration of a Virgin, the Blessing of the Abbess, and the Profession of the Moniales. *Ordinale and Customary*, ed. Tolhurst, 2:350–55.

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the third Mary taking on the role of Salome." These three sisters thus followed in the footsteps of the Marys when performing. While this may have had a devotional effect on performers and participants, as explored earlier, it also facilitated an association between performers and the figures that they publicly embodied. This was also the case for the priests and clerics of the house. While they were already commonly associated with Christ, his disciples, and angels, performing the Barking *Elevatio* and *Visitatio* strengthened this connection.[263]

The ceremonies continued to tie scriptural figures to their participants through their use of liturgical clothes, objects, and music. As performers were singing during the *Elevatio* and *Visitatio*, they were uttering some of the scriptural words that had been spoken by such figures. Yet they were also setting their words to a kind of music extremely familiar to them and to the ceremonies' spectators. For the nuns and clergy of Barking, this music was so central to their daily life that they may have associated its sound and by extension, the story of the Resurrection presented with such means, with themselves. But this type of music was also, as explained by the *Gracial* and the *Mirrour*, present in Heaven. There, it was sung by the same scriptural figures that the nuns and clergy of Barking were representing (such as the prophets and patriarchs, the Virgin Mary and her choir of virgins, and the angels).[264] Holy figures and religious men and women were thus unified through their shared singing of liturgical chant. Like music, the objects handled by the participants and the clothes they wore in the *Elevatio* and *Visitatio* were liturgical and familiar to them. These vestments and habits were also essential in establishing and representing the identity of religious men and women: during the ceremonies of Ordination (for priests) and of Consecration (for nuns), the change into these clothes was understood as the moment when they became a new man or a new woman—and, in the case of the sisters a *sponsa Christi*.[265]

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263 Durand, *Rational ou manuel des divins offices*, ed. Barthélemy, 1:199–205, 73–74, 42–44, 76, 81, 179; Ogden, *The Staging of Drama*, 141–42. See also at Barking: in the *Life of St Edward*, in Adgar's *Gracial* and in Love's *Mirrour*, angels and saints are described in a manner recalling clerics. *La vie d'Edouard*, ed. Bliss, 111–12; Benoit, *Le Gracial d'Adgar*, 186–90; Love, *Mirrour of the Blessed Lyf*, ed. Hogg and Powell, 289; *St. Catherine*, ed. MacBain, lines 1771–72.

264 Benoit, *Le Gracial d'Adgar*, 269–71; Love, *Mirrour of the Blessed Lyf*, ed. Hogg and Powell, 289. See Slim, "Music and Dancing," 141; McNamara, *Sisters in Arms*, 327.

265 Durand, *Rational ou manuel des divins offices*, ed. Barthélemy, 1:219; Koslin, "Robe of Simplicity," 268; Elliott, "Dressing and Undressing the Clergy," 57.

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For the clergy, the clothes that they wore during the liturgy and during the *Elevatio* and *Visitatio* were also perceived in the Middle Ages to have descended from the vestments worn in early Christian times. Furthermore, according to writers such as Durandus, each blessed item of clothing worn by the clergy had a specific significance related to the life of Christ.[266] Yet vestments did more than merely refer to the life of Christ, they blended past and present, the body of the wearer with that of Christ, the apostles, or the saints.[267] Wearing such clothes to represent early Christian figures—and particularly Christ himself—must have seemed appropriate to the clergy of Barking Abbey. The decoration of their vestments may have further affected this view. Extant priestly vestments from the time of the Ordinal are frequently embroidered with images of the life of Christ, while the tunicles and dalmatics of deacons and subdeacons feature depictions of saints and apostles. Some of them, such as two copes from St Mary Gdansk, are even decorated with the *Noli me tangere* scene, depicted in the *Visitatio*.[268] Had the Barking priest representing Christ worn such vestments, he would have carried with him the scenes of the Resurrection that he was mirroring with his performance. This juxtaposition of Christ's actions with their representation by the priest would have made the connection between Jesus and the celebrant more explicit.

Clothes, music, and objects all helped spectators and participants identify the "characters" of the *Elevatio* and *Visitatio* but, because these features of the ceremonies were also liturgical, they did not visually separate these "characters" from the religious performers portraying them. The representation of scriptural figures and stories with medieval monastic liturgical means, the superposition of the past and the familiar, may have had a devotional effect on spectators and participants, as explored earlier in this chapter, yet it also probably reinforced for spectators and participants the association that they may have felt existed between these figures and religious men and women. It may furthermore have tied these figures to the nunnery of Barking in general.

An additional means for encouraging such an association with that nunnery was space. The Barking Abbey church, in which the two ceremonies

266 Elliott, "Dressing and Undressing the Clergy," 55–56, 59; Durand, *Rational ou manuel des divins offices*, ed. Barthélemy, 1:212–23, 223–99.

267 Eggert, "Edification with Thread and Needle," 62.

268 The copes are from the fourteenth and fifteenth century. Eggert, "Edification with Thread and Needle," 53, 57, 61; Eggert, "Textile Perspectives," 256–61.

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were performed, had replaced a previous church in the twelfth century.[269] It contained and united layers of memory of and from past and present sisters, as well as of former and current events which took and had taken place there.[270] As a church, it was also a sacred place symbolically tied to the life of Christ, to his sacrifice for humanity, to his Resurrection, to the spread of Christianity, and to the Christian Church.[271] It was therefore linked both to the nunnery and to the story of salvation—joining local and scriptural history. The Barking abbey church was moreover associated with saints and miracles, increasing its sacral prestige. While the miracles were said to have taken place in the previous church, they nevertheless tied the most sacred space of the Barking community to the holy.[272] The church's decorations continued to combine the local with the scriptural: although these often showed scriptural scenes, they were likely commissioned by or donated to the abbey and were perhaps made in its surroundings.[273] The liturgical chants sung during the *Elevatio*, such as the *Tollite portas*, further connected the church with scriptural events: this chant occurred during both the Harrowing of Hell scene in the *Elevatio* and the ceremony of the Dedication of the Church.[274] For the nuns and clergy of the nunnery, and perhaps for the local laity, performing the *Elevatio* and *Visitatio sepulchri* in this space must therefore have contributed to their feeling of a connection existing between this community and sacred history.

Finally, the lack of a clear limit between performers and their "role" in the *Elevatio* and, at times, in the *Visitatio* possibly worked to reinforce this

269 Pevsner and Radcliffe, *Essex: The Buildings of England,* 68.

270 On abbesses buried in the church, see Findlay, *Playing Spaces in Early Women's Drama*, 151; *Ordinale and Customary*, ed. Tolhurst, 2:361–62. For more on monastic spaces, see Gilchrist, *Contemplation in Action*.

271 Palazzo, *Liturgie et société*, 124–25, 147. See also Parker, "Architecture as Liturgical Setting"; Spice and Hamilton, "Defining the Holy," 1–23; Doig, *Liturgy and Architecture*, xxi–xxii, 169; Durand, *Rational ou manuel des divins offices*, ed. Barthélemy, 1:11–40, 73–74.

272 Weston, "The Saintly Female Body," 19–20; *Ordinale and Customary*, ed. Tolhurst, 2:207–9.

273 In 1911, archeologist Alfred Clapham undertook a dig of the site. Unfortunately, because the conventual buildings had been previously dug for gravel, it was not possible for him and his team to find much evidence either of what the internal layout of the church had been or of its medieval décor. Clapham, "The Benedictine Abbey of Barking."

274 Durand, *Rational ou manuel des divins offices*, ed. Barthélemy, 1:84–85; *Ordinale and Customary*, ed. Tolhurst, 2:257–58.

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sense of association between religious performers and scriptural figures. In the *Visitatio*, performers are often referred to by the name of the figure they represent ("Mary Magdalen sighing," for instance). In the *Elevatio*, the abbess is still called abbess by the Ordinal even though she is part of a group meant to represent the *priores*. As for the celebrant, he begins the ceremony by portraying Christ but later reverts to being a priest who carries the Host (which IS Christ). Fluctuations in representation continue to abound in the *Elevatio*: nuns, priests, and clerics at times clearly represent a personage and, at others, seem to celebrate the liturgical ceremony as themselves. Transitions between these different stages of representation are usually not marked by the Ordinal, perhaps leading performers and spectators to conflate more easily the inhabitants of Barking Abbey with scriptural figures.

This is not the case, however, with the beginning of the *Visitatio*. According to the Ordinal, the *Visitatio* began with the nuns portraying the Marys changing their clothes—from their black habits into white surplices and veils—and confessing to the abbess: "dicant. Confiteor ad abbatissam et ab ea absolute" (they say *I confess* to the abbess. Once absolved by her…).[275] As explored when discussing penance, both these actions can be perceived as purifying: the colour white and the surplices themselves were associated at the time with innocence, purity, and chastity, and confession was meant to wash away one's sins.[276] Purification perhaps gave nuns a greater closeness with the scriptural figures that they were representing: once purified, they were permitted to physically and audibly re-enact their journey. Yet, by changing their outward appearance and their inner selves, it also distanced them from the roles that they were about to portray. While identification probably did not happen, I would argue that the multiple elements tying scriptural figures and performers together at Barking ensured that an association could have been made between them.

There is a final—unusual—type of association which I have not yet discussed: the one between the Barking nuns and the *priores* and disciples of the *Elevatio*. In the Middle Ages, women were at times depicted among the *priores*—the people who had died before Christ and deserved to be saved—but the main *priores* tended to be men. In the *Mirrour*, for instance, only "Adam and his progenie / and after Noe / and Abraham / and Moyses / and

275 This confession is not the sacrament of penance, which is done in private by a priest. No comparable change of clothes is recorded in the Barking liturgy. Everett, "A Critical Edition," 3.

276 Durand, *Rational ou manuel des divins offices*, ed. Barthélemy, 1:219–20, 278–80.

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Dauid / with alle othere holy fadres and prophetes" are explicitly named.[277] The words *priores* and *sanctorum partum* (Holy Fathers) used in the Ordinal are moreover masculine. This representation by women of male scriptural figures is unusual; the only other extant example of this practice comes from the Benedictine nunnery of Origny-Sainte-Benoîte, where a nun appears to have represented God during Easter Week.[278] At Barking, this representation is neither discussed nor presented as problematic. On the contrary, in a later part of the *Elevatio*, the female community goes on to portray the disciples going to Galilee:

> conuentus sequatur cantando predictam / antiphonam cum versu Dicant nunc et versiculo: Dicite in nacionibus Oratio Deus qui / pro nobis filium tuum. et hec processio figuratur per hoc quomodo christus pro/cedit post resurexionem in galileam. Sequentibus disci/pulis
>
> The convent follows, singing the aforementioned antiphon with the verse: the Jews should now say..., and the versicle: Tell in all nations... The prayer: God, for us, you wanted to submit your son. And by these means, this procession represents how Christ proceeded after his Resurrection into Galilee, the disciples following.

The performance of the dramatic liturgical ceremonies thus seems to reinforce a sense of connection between the Barking sisters and holy men. This is not a first at Barking, as was revealed when exploring the depiction of women in the house's literary culture. This performance also perhaps suggests an association between religious women and men of the Church in general. The liturgy of Barking already blurs boundaries between the tasks of the clergy and those of religious women. While the significance given to the Eucharist usually forbade women to enter the sacred space around the altar, the nuns of Barking frequently approached this space during the liturgy.[279] In the *Visitatio* too, the Marys come near the altar behind which the figure of Christ appears: "Tunc marie stantes / super gradus ante altare"

277 Love, *Mirrour of the Blessed Lyf*, ed. Hogg and Powell, 262. See also 30, 289–90.

278 *celle qui fait Deus* (the one who makes/does [performs] God). Livre de la Trésorerie d'Origny-Sainte-Benoîte, in Saint-Quentin, Médiathèque municipale, MS 86, p. 301. The plays from the Carmelite Convent of the White Ladies of Huy do not specify whether their performers were men or women, and it is possible that women played male roles. However, none of their plays are specifically Easter ceremonies.

279 See for example *Ordinale and Customary*, ed. Tolhurst, 2:188–90. See also McLaughlin, "Women and Men," 189; Durand, *Rational ou manuel des divins offices*, ed. Barthélemy, 2:177–78. On the evolution of the role of women within the Church, see Palazzo, *Liturgie et société*, 93–96.

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(the Marys then, standing on the steps in front of the altar). As discussed when examining the prominent place of women in the abbey, the religious confidence of the nuns of Barking continued to be displayed in the behaviour adopted by the abbess and *cantrix* during the house's liturgy. In the *Visitatio*, the abbess' actions were reminiscent of the bishop's duties during the Consecration of a Virgin ceremony and of the priest's during the nuns' profession. As for the absolution, while it was not entirely unknown for an abbess to offer it in the central and late Middle Ages, it was more usually reserved to priests.[280] The attribution of traditionally male and often clerical responsibilities to women thus does not seem to have been entirely out of the ordinary at Barking Abbey.

The purification, which took place before the *Visitatio*, may also have contributed to this association between religious women and the clergy. Similar acts of purifications can be found in other *Visitationes*, all of them featuring women.[281] This suggests that these rituals were meant to appease anxieties connected to performance by women in the Middle Ages. By cleansing the bodies of three nuns portraying the Marys, purification may have been a means of reminding spectators and participants that these were bodies dedicated to God and removed from the World: their thoughts towards them ought therefore to remain pure. It may also have been a means of protecting liturgical clothes and objects from impure touch.[282] Yet purification also recalled the Last Supper, and by association, the priests' purification before and during Mass: Christ washed the feet of his disciples before the Last Supper—"the firste messe" as the *Mirrour* describes it—as a way of forgiving their sins and inciting them to forgive others.[283] The priests' purification included a washing of the hands, saying the *Confiteor*, and a change of clothes. Unlike religious women, priests did not purify to protect those watching them, but they did undertake it to prepare themselves for their

280 *Ordinale and Customary*, ed. Tolhurst, 2:351, 353–55; Koslin, "Robe of Simplicity," 266–69; Findlay, *Playing Spaces in Early Women's Drama*, 155.

281 Acts of purification were performed at Origny, Barking, Troyes, and Wilton. They involved saying the *Confiteor*, washing the hands of the three nuns, and/or changing their clothes. Ogden, *The Staging of Drama*, 145–46.

282 Normington, *Gender and Medieval Drama*, 52–54; Stevenson, "Rhythmic Liturgy, Embodiment, and Female Authority," 255–56. On anxieties around women and their bodies, see McLaughlin, "Women and Men," 192; Elliott, "Flesh and Spirit," 12–36; Minnis, "Religious Roles," 47–52; McLaughlin, "Equality of Souls," 220, 236, 254.

283 Love, *Mirrour of the Blessed Lyf*, ed. Hogg and Powell, 203. See Harper, *Forms and Orders of Western Liturgy*, 141–43; Bugyis, "Women Priests at Barking Abbey," 327.

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role—here as vicar of Christ.[284] In the case of Mass, as in the *Visitatio*, purification took place before the start of a liturgical ceremony and allowed the individual to perform such a ceremony.

The clothes worn during the *Visitatio* by the three nuns were also tied to the clergy. *Superpellicijs* (surplices) were the most common clerical vestments, shared by all orders of clerics, and worn during their ordination ceremony.[285] At Barking, they are mentioned two other times in the Ordinal—on the Feast of the Ascension and on the Feast of the Annunciation—and were in both cases worn by priests.[286] Later in the *Visitatio*, after the Marys had been purified, they carried *ampullae* with them and were flanked by candelabra. *Ampullae* were used by priests during Mass. According to Durandus, their symbolism tied them closely to men of the Church: the *ampulla* containing wine represented the preachers passionately transmitting their knowledge; the *ampulla* containing water stood for the doctors who drank the science of salvation.[287] As for the candelabra, they were usually carried by clerics in the Barking liturgy, particularly during processions.[288]

Purification may thus have been the first step in a series of actions associating the nuns portraying the Marys with the clergy. Suddenly, they were dressed like them, carried items usually attributed to them, and were even allowed to perform acts otherwise reserved for them. The Marys were the ones who saw and touched Christ, whereas the (human) male figures only saw and held a substitute for his body—the *sudarium*—given to them by Mary Magdalen. Mary Magdalen handed this "relic" to the disciples who kissed it, in a moment recalling communion.[289] Furthermore, the Marys touching the priest portraying Christ may have reminded spectators and

284 Durand, *Rational ou manuel des divins offices*, ed. Barthélemy, 1:212–14, 223, 29–32, 42, 56–58, 401–2.

285 Harper, *Forms and Orders of Western Liturgy*, 27–29; Elliott, "Dressing and Undressing the Clergy," 58–59.

286 Bugyis, "Women Priests at Barking Abbey," 325. See *Ordinale and Customary*, ed. Tolhurst, 1:129 and 2:210.

287 Durand, *Rational ou manuel des divins offices*, ed. Barthélemy, 2:190. See also Bugyis, "Women Priests at Barking Abbey," 325–26. Bugyis discusses the possible contents of the *ampullae* at Barking and compares them with the containers used in other *Visitatio* ceremonies.

288 *Ordinale and Customary*, ed. Tolhurst, 1:22–23, 29, 84–88, 96–107, 124–27, 129 and 2:188–90, 209–12, 218–20.

289 Kissing was associated with communion at Sunday Mass, according to Duffy, when the kissing of the Pax worked as a substitute for communion. Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, 125.

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participants of the events that they had just witnessed during the *Elevatio*, when the priest alone had been authorized to touch the consecrated body of Christ. The act of kissing, as the nuns did with the feet of Christ and with the sepulchre during the *Vistiatio*, was also repeatedly performed by the celebrant priest during Mass, when he kissed the gospel book, the paten, the chalice, and the altar multiple times.[290] The purification undertaken by the sisters of Barking was therefore an ambivalent process: it drew attention to their impurity but also showed that they were able to gain, much like priests, extensive liturgical powers once they had been purified.[291] Performing the *Elevatio* and *Visitatio* probably continued to strengthen the existing association between the nuns of Barking and holy and/or clerical men. As Anne Bagnall Yardley suggests, this perhaps led to the three nuns representing the Marys being called *sacerdotes* (priests) at the end of the *Visitatio* and being "in some sense seen as clerics or priests."[292]

The ties existing at Barking between scriptural figures, nuns, and clergy were thus reinforced through the performance of the Barking *Elevatio* and *Visitatio*. This performance is likely to have encouraged the ceremonies' spectators and participants to think of the *priores*, the Marys, the angels, the disciples, and of Christ as examples for and perhaps as close to the nuns and clergy. The ceremonies moreover presented their own version of such scriptural figures. The Barking *Visitatio* and *Elevatio*, while resembling other ceremonies of this kind, appear to be unique: this combination of scriptural texts in this specific order and of additional chants is not found elsewhere. The ceremonies also contain rare or distinctive elements: they depict the Harrowing of Hell in connection with the Resurrection, emphasize the Marys' individuality and emotions, show the Marys touching Christ and the disciples as immediately convinced by the women's testimony.[293] As is the case in the rest of the abbey's literary, liturgical, and even material culture, they increase the focus on women and present a specific depiction of

290 Findlay, *Playing Spaces in Early Women's Drama*, 154; Durand, *Rational ou manuel des divins offices*, ed. Barthélemy, 2:147–60, 244–51, 319, 366–69, 405, 414.

291 Durand, *Rational ou manuel des divins offices*, ed. Barthélemy, 2:402.

292 "The Liturgical Dramas for Holy Week," ed. Yardley and Mann, 10–12. See also Bugyis, "Women Priests at Barking Abbey."

293 The ceremonies contain a unique rubric acknowledging the doubts of the women (*dubitantes*), and the Barking *Visitatio* seems to be the only one where the three Marys kissed the feet of Christ in performance. Mary Magdalene's *suspirando* (sighing) is found only in this *Visitatio* and in the one from Coutances. Ogden, *The Staging of Drama*, 149.

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them. This depiction is further highlighted through performance: preaching and teaching, for instance, were physically enacted by participants in front of the spectators. The convent of Barking—who had if not written, at least approved of the ceremonies—was therefore able to tell this story publicly in a way that aligned with its ideas and ideals.

The Effects of Performance: Community and Identity

Both the *Elevatio* and *Visitatio*'s depiction of scriptural figures and their emphasis on the closeness existing between these figures and the members of Barking Abbey would have influenced the perception of the ceremonies and may have started, for spectators and participants, a reflection on their identity as individuals and as a community. For the nuns, performing the Barking ceremonies may have strengthened their sense of community. Community was an essential component of Benedictine monastic life according to the Rule of St Benedict and, later, to the frequent reports of episcopal visitors.[294] As mentioned earlier, the *Visitatio* reflects on this question by emphasizing the communal aspect of the Marys' relationship. When watching and performing this ceremony, the nuns of Barking may have realized how exemplary this female community was. They may even have been brought closer together through performance: the sisters portraying the Marys had to be constantly aware of each other to coordinate their singing and their movements. If successful in their coordination, they would have mirrored each other as though they were one body, one voice.

However, the *Visitatio*'s depiction of community is more complex than these moments of unison suggest. The Marys are given a certain individuality: they have names (Mary Magdalen, Mary mother of James, Mary Salome), which is far from standard in *Visitatio* ceremonies, and they sing their own chants.[295] Their individual singing features mostly at the beginning of the ceremony, hinting that this behaviour is perhaps less desirable than the united singing of the later part of the *Visitatio*. Yet all three Marys also make their individual voices heard when they sing to the resurrected Christ *Ihesus ille nazarenus* (Jesus of Nazareth) one after the other (*alternis*).

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294 See Gilchrist, *Contemplation in Action*, 108; Theisen, "Community and the Shape of Christian Salvation," 1–8; Clark, "Introduction," 3–13.

295 Mary Magdalen sings the *Quondam dei, Heu misere* (Alas, miserably), *Quia tulerunt dominum meum, Domine si tu sustulisti eum, Raboni, Gratulari et letari et cetera, Sepulcrum christi*, and starts the final *Christus resurgens*. The chants *Appropinquans ergo sola*, *Heu consolacio nostra* and *Licet mihi vobiscum ire, Heu redempcio israel* are attributed, respectively, to Mary mother of James, and Mary Salome.

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Like the conventual community, the community presented in the *Visitatio* is made of sisters and led by one woman but it also at times operates as a unit, and at others allows its members to have unique, equally important voices. When the Marys sing their laments for instance, none of them emerges as dominant. While performing the *Visitatio* may thus have served as a way of strengthening the communal feeling at Barking, it may also have contributed to a reflection on the inner workings of the monastic community and on the place of the individual within such a community. In the Late Middle Ages, nunneries began to be less focused on constant communal life. Nuns were often divided into small groups (or *familiae*) to eat, and they created cells for themselves with curtains.[296] The *Visitatio* perhaps commented on this issue by presenting the Barking spectators and participants with a distinctive depiction of a harmonious female community. Such a community tends towards the communal without erasing the individual.

Ideas about community and identity may further have been influenced by the emphasis put by the ceremonies on the ties between the nuns of Barking and holy and/or religious men. Such ties may have led spectators and participants to reflect on the liturgical powers of nuns and to perhaps believe that these could exceed the standard functions attributed to religious women. We do not know how such assertions of power were perceived by the clergy of the house. While, according to Eric Palazzo in *Liturgie et société*, rituals "contribuent à réduire les antagonismes d'une société en exprimant les hiérarchies nécessaires à l'intérieur d'elle" (contribute to reduce the antagonisms in a society by expressing the necessary hierarchies within such a society), liturgy fails here to respect these hierarchies, perhaps leading instead to *antagonismes*.[297] The performance of the *Visitatio* and *Elevatio* probably made both sisters and clergy reflect on the role of women and men within liturgy but also perhaps within society, within the Church, and within the history of Christianity. Such reflections would have been further fuelled by the extensive role given to women in the Barking ceremonies—both as performers and as figures in the narrative that they told. While women did not play the most sacred roles of Christ and the angels, while they did not fully subvert traditional hierarchy, their performance suggests that they were fully part of the Church and were (and had been) able to perform key roles within it. The *Elevatio* and *Visitatio* may therefore have unsettled the clergy of Barking Abbey, but they may also have had the opposite effect.

296 Erler, "Private Reading," 134–46.

297 Palazzo, *Liturgie et société*, 14. See also Hiley, *Western Plainchant*, 2–3.

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They depicted men and women as equals in fulfilling some of the roles in the *Elevatio* and, rather than keeping them apart, had them process and sing together.[298] The performance of the ceremonies thus perhaps strengthened the sense of community existing between the male and female residents of the abbey, encouraging them to work together as the followers of the *priores* and of the disciples.

This performance may have caused further reflections about identity through its inclusion of light, white garments, and of a change of clothes. Seeing and carrying these objects and performing these actions would have brought nuns back to their involvement in another ceremony performed in their abbey church: the Consecration of a Virgin (and Widow). In this ceremony, nuns were confirmed into their community. They were first *induta uestibus albis* (dressed in white clothes) and were then given new habits and new veils, which were blessed by the bishop. Once changed into these clothes, the virgins came back into the church with a lit candle, and they officially became Brides of Christ.[299] During the *Visitatio*, nuns mirrored some of the actions performed in this foundational ceremony for their identity as women religious. This may have encouraged them to recall their monastic vows and their role as Brides of Christ. It perhaps led them to think of the *Visitatio* as another important moment in the definition of their identity and to integrate some of the features displayed by the Marys to this definition. Nuns were to be obedient, chaste, and to leave all property behind, but they could also be mediators, be physically close to Christ, and have an important place in the liturgy.

This interpretation may also have affected the six *iuuencule* who carried candelabra near the Marys. They had not gone through the Consecration ceremony and were most likely schoolgirls.[300] By accompanying the figures of the Marys, the *iuuencule* perhaps created a more specific association between themselves and the Marys. While these girls may not necessarily have pursued a religious life, there seems to have been a strong presumption, in most medieval abbeys, that they would.[301] As some of these future nuns would during the Consecration ceremony, the Marys were dressed in

298 On the importance of procession for community, see Palazzo, *Liturgie et société*, 59–64.

299 Yardley, *Performing Piety*, 169–71, 182–84; *Ordinale and Customary*, ed. Tolhurst, 2:353–55.

300 They were chosen on Holy Saturday by the abbess to perform this task. *Ordinale and Customary*, ed. Tolhurst, 1:103 and 2:369.

301 See Yardley, "Musical Education of Young Girls," 52.

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white and carried candles, and both groups of women had much to learn.[302] Indeed, although the Marys begin the *Visitatio* with good intentions, they do not trust in the Resurrection. However, they end the ceremony triumphantly: they encounter Christ himself and announce his Resurrection to both spectators and disciples. Their journey is therefore physical, emotional, but also religious: they learn to trust in Christ unconditionally, they gain a better understanding of his miracles and sacrifice, and they grow in their religious authority.

By following the Marys during the ceremonies' performance, the girls may have perceived these women and their journey as models to follow in their future either as novices or as professed nuns. It was customary for novices to learn by doing rather than through theory only. They followed more experienced nuns and gradually took on responsibilities.[303] This is what the *iuuencule* were tasked to do in the *Visitatio*: as they walked alongside the Marys, they learned what their behaviour ought to be in imitation both of their senior nuns and of the three Marys. Yet the *iuuencule* did more than accompany the Marys: they held the candelabra. This act had the benefit of materializing two scriptural mentions of light, essential to their understanding of the role of nuns. The first was the passage from Matthew mentioned earlier about the *candelabrum* and the disciples. In the *Visitatio*, the *iuuencule* actually held up this guiding light for all to see. However, while transmission of light was deemed important, liturgical writers such as Beleth or Durandus advised that one should remember to tend to one's own light. They used the parable of the wise virgins—sung on several feasts at Barking Abbey, during the Consecration of a Virgin ceremony, and often seen as a model for consecrated women—to illustrate this idea.[304] When performing the *Visitatio*, the *iuuencule* repeated the actions of the wise virgins and of previous holy women, while looking forward to their roles as novices and consecrated virgins. Holding the candelabra demanded focus and such focus was also to be dedicated to maintaining their inner light, their faith, and their purity. The parable of the wise virgins was perhaps echoed by the *ampullae* carried by the three Marys as well. These containers were at times used to carry oil and could be tied to the oil that the wise virgins remem-

302 *Ordinale and Customary*, ed. Tolhurst, 2:353–55; Koslin, "Robe of Simplicity," 266.

303 Stevenson, "Rhythmic Liturgy, Embodiment, and Female Authority," 265–66.

304 The chants *Audivi vocem* and *Media autem*. *Ordinale and Customary*, ed. Tolhurst, 2:353–55; Sheingorn, *Easter Sepulchre*, 57. The parable was further associated with Easter and the wait for the Resurrection of Christ.

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bered to bring for their lamps. The *ampullae*, the candelabra surrounding the Marys, and the *Visitatio*'s change of clothes were therefore a reminder of and an instruction in the promises made during the transformative ceremony of the Consecration of a Virgin. They recalled the events of this ceremony, materialized light metaphors essential to the understanding of the role of women religious, and connected nuns and *iuuencule* with prestigious scriptural female role models.

Through their depiction of women and their association of scriptural figures with their performers, the Barking dramatic liturgical ceremonies may thus have affected their religious spectators and participants in their understanding of both their community and identity. Performing the *Elevatio* and *Visitatio* taught younger girls about their future responsibilities, reminded experienced women religious of their duties, and presented them with perhaps less common definitions of their roles; it also showed them an ideal female community, stressed their power as women religious, and encouraged collaboration between them and their male counterparts.[305]

The Effects of Performance: Power and Prestige

In addition to redefining the identity and community of the members of the abbey to direct them towards their ideal behaviour, the *Elevatio* and *Visitatio* of Barking Abbey bestowed a certain prestige and power onto them. Witnessing and representing the story of the Resurrection in this space, with this music, these clothes, and "props" probably gave the Barking nuns and clergy a greater sense of the sacredness of their community and of its inclusion in the history of Christianity. The ceremonies' portrayal of women and the connection they created between scriptural figures and religious participants would also have affected the laity. The clergy was associated with holy figures, while the nuns' performance suggested that they were the successors of significant male and female saints. The sisters of Barking were even vested with nearly sacramental powers, which was highly unusual at the time. This was probably known to the laity watching the *Elevatio* and *Visitatio*. High and late medieval focus on the sanctity of the Host was expressed in a multitude of texts in the vernacular, such as "the *Lay Folk's Mass Book*, poems, carols, exempla, and sermons."[306] It positioned priests as

305 On drama and identity, see Sponsler, *Drama and Resistance*, 33.

306 Blanc, "Performing Female Authority," 81.

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the privileged and necessary mediators between the divine and the rest of the congregation.[307]

In addition to the roles performed by nuns and clergy during the ceremonies, the parishioners' own "role" in the *Elevatio* and *Visitatio* further communicated to them the authority of the Barking nunnery. As established earlier, the performance of the ceremonies physically excluded parishioners: they did not stand in, nor perhaps did they have a clear view of, the performance space. Access—and the lack of access—created a hierarchy, at the bottom of which was the laity. Unlike the nuns and clergy of Barking, they were not allowed to come too close to the scriptural events depicted by the dramatic liturgical ceremonies.[308] However, there are two moments of inclusion attested in the manuscript.[309] Such inclusions positioned the monastic community as transmitters (here, of the news of the Resurrection), but they simultaneously gave lay spectators the silent role of those receiving this news. The *Elevatio* and *Visitatio* thus revealed the response expected from them by Barking Abbey and reminded them of the appropriate behaviour that they should adopt.[310] This selective inclusion might have made the parishioners realize both the efforts of the religious house to transmit sacred texts and narratives to them and the house's exclusive access to such sacred material.

The *Elevatio* and *Visitatio sepulchri* of Barking Abbey therefore had the effect of reinforcing the abbey and the nuns' authority. This strengthened authority was tied to the sacred and, as such, spiritual. Yet, the performance of the *Elevatio* and the *Visitatio* encouraged the formation of connections between the abbey's spiritual and temporal authorities—inviting spectators and participants to amalgamate the two. It did so through the position of lay spectators in the church, the wealth of the spectacle presented, and the role given to the abbess. When the amalgamation had successfully been achieved, the abbey could now emphasize its spiritual authority—which was easier to do during liturgical services and harder to challenge—and simultaneously strengthen its temporal authority.

307 Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, 9, 13, 104–28, 297–99; Rubin, "The Eucharist," 44–59.

308 Bevington, "Fleury Playbook," 103.

309 Perhaps three according to Ogden and Findlay who place the altar of the Holy Trinity in the nave. Ogden, *The Staging of Drama*, 226; Findlay, *Playing Spaces in Early Women's Drama*, 150–52.

310 See McGavin and Walker, *Imagining Spectatorship*, 112, 179, 181.

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During the performance of the *Elevatio* and *Visitatio*, the first cue leading spectators to amalgamate the nunnery's spiritual and temporal powers was the performance space. The effects of this space on the nuns and clergy have already been discussed; what was its effect on lay witnesses to these ceremonies? The abbey church of Barking was the largest in Essex according to extant records; it stood both as a representative of the Church and as a display of the abbey's wealth and prestige.[311] On Easter Day, it would have been decorated with its richest furniture and decoration. For spectators making their way inside, the sight must have been impressive and perhaps intimidating. The performance further showed off the nunnery's wealth, by including dazzling liturgical vestments and vessels, as well as incense. These costly items were often gifted or sponsored by wealthy patrons, such as the nuns' relatives (who were mostly members of the nobility or the gentry) or the royal family. Such patrons tended to leave a mark on their donations: family or individual emblems are frequently recorded on stained-glass windows, draperies, or in private chapels.[312] It seems to have been customary in late medieval England for lay benefactors who could afford it to own private chapels and altars in monastic churches: there were at least several chantries in the Barking abbey church.[313] As lay spectators entered the space to watch the *Elevatio* and *Visitatio*, they would therefore have been exposed to these visible ties between the Barking abbey church and the nobility, such ties associating temporal authority with a respect for the nunnery's spiritual authority.[314]

This same space continued to associate temporal and spiritual authority through the position of the spectators and performers. While the laity was confined to their own space in the nave, that space itself was divided:

311 It had an impressive length of 103 m [337 ft]. Clapham, "The Benedictine Abbey of Barking," 69–87.

312 There is no specific record of private chapels at Barking, but "chantries" (either a chapel or a private altar) are listed. The first known chantry was founded around 1398 at the tomb of St Ethelburga by Dame Joan of Felton (mother of Abbess Sybil). The second was at the altar of the Resurrection. The third was dedicated to St Edward and placed in the graveyard. "Abbeys and Churches," ed. Powell; "Houses of Benedictine Nuns: Abbey of Barking," ed. Page and Round. On commemoration and patronage, see *Memory and Commemoration*, ed. Barron and Burgess.

313 Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, 114–16, 139–41, 370.

314 Bradley Warren discusses wealth at Barking: "the symbolic capital available to the Benedictine brides of Christ works in concert with the aristocratic origins of the Barking nuns to enhance their ability to command social and spiritual respect." Warren, *Spiritual Economies*, 58.

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men would have stood either in front of the women or north of them. There was also the possibility for some noble men to sit in the choir next to nuns and priests of a similar social class. These divisions of a sacred space based on social hierarchy seem to imply that social rank directly relates to one's access to the sacred.[315]

The last cue encouraging the amalgamation of the nunnery's temporal and spiritual authorities during the performance of the *Elevatio* and *Visitatio* was the role of the abbess. Although her role was not as extensive as that of the Marys or of Christ, it clearly expressed her significant power. It was she who supervised the beginning and end of the ceremonies, which—the Ordinal states—had been arranged by her. She held a similar decision-making role when dealing with the house's temporal affairs, handling income, and overseeing the management of lands.[316] Although she delegated authority onto conventual sisters and clergy (in the case of the ceremonies) or officials (in the case of her temporal power), she could reclaim it when needed—as she did at the end of the *Visitatio*. The ceremonies' performance further demonstrated to the laity the right behaviour to adopt towards the abbess by showing the nuns and clergy of Barking's obedience towards her.

For the nuns and clergy of Barking and for their parishioners, the ties between the abbey's temporal and spiritual authorities did not start with the performance of these dramatic liturgical ceremonies. These ties were developed gradually, based on their spiritual and temporal relationships with one another, their perception of their roles, and "their understanding of the abbey's connections with great patrons and local high-ranking families."[317] This nunnery was not only a religious authority but also a temporal lord, and it required obedience from its parishioners under both statuses. Because the abbey's two statuses were not always clearly distinct, they could be understood as one, or at least, as related to each other. Religious feasts celebrated both with parishioners and members of the abbey, for instance, mixed the spiritual and the temporal. They displayed Barking's religious authority by rewarding parishioners with indulgences (on the Day of the Dedication of the Church and on the Feast of St Ethelburga) but promising them excommunication if they did not attend liturgical services (on that same Day of

315 Palazzo, *Liturgie et société*, 125; McLaughlin, "Women and Men," 188–89. See also Wiles, *Short History of Western Performance Space*, 45 on sacred space.

316 On the role of abbesses and prioresses in English medieval nunneries, see Bugyis, *The Care of Nuns*, 78–132.

317 Blanc, "Performing Female Authority," 78.

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the Dedication of the Church).[318] Yet, as shows of wealth and prestige, these same feasts displayed Barking's temporal authority. On Rogation Days, the procession through the abbey's land and the agrarian content of the prayers further reminded the parishioners of the house's temporal role towards them. While Barking Abbey was important for their spiritual life, it was also involved in their working life: the nunnery acted as their landowner, protector, and the recipient of some of the product of their labour.[319] Rogation Days' liturgy, and medieval liturgy in general, can moreover be tied to the temporal, because it was a way of regulating social relations. This was especially true during feasts celebrating the Eucharist, which had a particular focus on community.[320] The Feast of Corpus Christi, for example, generally included a procession making clear the social rank of its participants and the power of the civic authorities in a "sacral embodiment of social reality."[321] Sunday Mass too, was a time when social hierarchies could be displayed and reinforced by establishing the dominance or the power of certain groups of people. The order in which the pax was passed around the church, for example, or in which the portions of the holy loaf were distributed, could create tensions precisely because it was understood to reflect the social order.[322] At Barking Abbey, the house's royal patronage, as well as the nuns' social status, further contributed to this amalgamation between temporal and spiritual power. Abbesses—some royal and many noble—were remembered every year by the nunnery, thus providing a regular reminder of the long-standing ties between holiness and rank at Barking Abbey.[323]

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318 *Ordinale and Customary*, ed. Tolhurst, 2:257–59.

319 *Ordinale and Customary*, ed. Tolhurst, 1:124–27.

320 Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, 49, 12, 93; Palazzo, *Liturgie et société*, 103–11.

321 Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, 11–12, 26, 43–44. Corpus Christi was celebrated in England from 1318 "and was conceived and presented in late medieval communities as a celebration of the corporate life of the body social, created and ordered by the presence of the body of Christ."

322 Flanigan, Ashley, and Sheingorn, "Liturgy as Social Performance," 712–14. Both the holy loaf and the pax can be understood as substitutes for communion, according to Rubin. The pax was given by the officiating priest to the rest of the clergy. After having kissed it, they handed it to the congregation, who kissed it in turns. It was supposed to encourage prayers for peace and thus stood as a symbol of harmony. As for the holy loaf, it was brought to church by a different household every Sunday. After having been blessed at the end of the service, it was given to the parishioners. Rubin, *Corpus Christi*, 73–76; Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, 125–27.

323 Records list Maud, the illegitimate daughter of King Henry I (abbess 1175–about 1200), and Maud, the illegitimate daughter of King John (abbess 1247–1252),

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Even before the *Elevatio* and *Visitatio* were performed, connections between the temporal and spiritual authorities of the abbey had therefore already been instituted at Barking. Such connections were re-established and perhaps reinforced during the two ceremonies. Performing the Barking *Elevatio* and *Visitatio* would thus have affected the perception of the religious house by investing it with and reminding spectators and participants of its multifaceted power and prestige. For the nuns, this performance may have given them a greater confidence in their spiritual and temporal authority. As for the parishioners present in the abbey church, they too may have seen their perception of the nunnery of Barking, but also of themselves, altered.

This may have been intentional on the part of Barking Abbey, which specifically targeted the laity with these two liturgical ceremonies, according to the note preceding them. While the *Elevatio* and *Visitatio* seem to have been intended to improve the *populus*' devotion, their performance was not undertaken in a context of perfect harmony between Barking Abbey and its parishioners. In the late fourteenth and early fifteenth century, various troubles afflicted Essex and complicated this relationship. Around the time the ceremonies were apparently modified (1358–1377 under Abbess Katherine of Sutton) and recorded (1404 under Abbess Sybil of Felton), tensions were rising between the Barking tenants and their monastic lord. Records from the 1320s already show that some tenants refused to perform customary work and others left their manors without license. In the 1350s, 1370s, and 1380s, they were accused of "overloading the common," cutting trees without permission, and letting their sheep trespass. In 1346, documents report that the tenants of the Ingatestone manor were avoiding the "suit of mill" they owed the abbey. The year 1379 saw the tenants of this same manor request that their labour services be replaced by a sum of money.[324]

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as abbesses of Barking. Queens Maud, the wife of Henry I, and Maud, the wife of Stephen, were given the custody of the abbey. It is not clear what this custody entailed. "Houses of Benedictine Nuns: Abbey of Barking," ed. Page and Round; Sturman, "Barking Abbey," 400–402; Chettle and Loftus, *History of Barking Abbey*, 54. For more information on the nuns' social background, see Oliva, "The Convent and the Community," 346, 108. Some abbesses were moreover appointed by royal authority: Aelfgifu, for example, became an abbess "by both divine and royal blessings." Bugyis, *The Care of Nuns*, 5.

324 Records mention that tenants refused to work at the manors of Ingatestone (1322, 1394) and Bulphan (1395). Eight Ingatestone tenants were moreover reported missing (1399). The term "suit of mill" refers here to the requirement for tenants to use their lord's mill to grind their corn. Another incident, which took

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Their defiance of the abbey's authority may have been encouraged by the house's spiritual reputation at the end of the thirteenth and in the fourteenth century. Some of the reports made at the time by visiting bishops are not kind towards the nunnery and its inhabitants. In 1279, Archbishop Peckham reprimanded the sisters for their performance of the liturgy, their inappropriate behaviour, and their disregard for the enclosure.[325] The fourteenth-century reports of the bishop of London continued to find faults with the sisters' behaviour. In 1397, he reproached the abbess of Barking her private use of funds taken from the house's lepers' hospital. In spite of these problems, the abbey of Barking must not have been considered an entirely disreputable religious house: it continued to receive bequests from the laity.[326] However, and although evidence is fragmentary, such bequests mostly came from inhabitants of London or from nuns' families rather than from local parishioners.

If parishioners had doubts or harboured negative feelings towards the nunnery, these would only have been exacerbated by the house's financial issues. Successive epidemic outbreaks—including the Black Death—plagued the abbatial lands. This already difficult situation took a turn for the worse when floods of salted water repeatedly damaged the abbey's lands in 1361 and in 1376–1377 (under Abbess Katherine of Sutton).[327] Not only did the floods create a financial burden for the nunnery, but they also caused problems for its marshland tenants, who were supposed to participate in the repairs. They were pressed multiple times to maintain the sea walls and dikes on their tenements.[328] Tensions caused by these financial issues were

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place in or before 1363, may indicate dissent and disrespect toward the nunnery's authority: habits, books, and other belongings of two nuns and one servant were stolen. Poos, *Rural Society after the Black Death*, 240–42, 247; Dyer, "Social and Economic Background to the Rural Revolt of 1381," 30; Sturman, "Barking Abbey," 83–87, 102, 248–52; Chettle and Loftus, *History of Barking Abbey*, 40–45.

325 "Houses of Benedictine Nuns: Abbey of Barking," ed. Page and Round.

326 Moreover, in 1345, 1350, and 1398, abbesses Maud of Montagu and Sybil of Felton were granted papal indults *de plenaria remissione* (plenary remission). Chettle and Loftus, *History of Barking Abbey*, 40–45; "Houses of Benedictine Nuns: Abbey of Barking," ed. Page and Round.

327 Chettle and Loftus, *History of Barking Abbey*, 38–39, 42–43; Knowles, *Religious Orders in England*, 48.

328 The state of the abbey's land does not seem to have improved quickly: the floods still left it looking like a "broad like or pond" in 1380 and they had reduced the house's income to four hundred marks a year by 1382. Barking's financial issues deprived the nunnery of its manors of Marks, Valence, and East Hall, among

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already high by 1384 and, in 1395, they had risen to such a degree that the bishop of London had to exhort the house to stop its "strife and debate" with its parishioners. This "strife and debate" is the most overt confrontation recorded between the abbey and the parishioners of Barking. Because of temporal problems—financial issues—the nunnery amalgamated the two vicarages in Barking. This affected the parishioners in their spiritual life and seems to have been at the root of the open "strife."[329]

Lay resentment against monastic landlords was also visible during the 1381 rising, which was especially widespread in South Essex. Many religious houses were targeted by the insurgents: buildings were destroyed, charters burnt, and goods stolen at the abbeys of Hatfield Regis, Waltham, and Stratford Langthorne—all neighbours of Barking Abbey.[330] Barking itself does not seem to have experienced such acts of violence during the rising. However, records describe the burning of documents at its manor of Ingatestone and they report the murder of its former steward, John Bampton, whose house was then pillaged. Bampton was Essex Justice of the Peace and therefore represented both seigneurial and royal authority.[331]

There is no evidence that those rising against monastic landlords or rejecting Barking Abbey's authority were part of the *populus* who attended the Barking *Elevatio* and *Visitatio sepulchri*. Yet, the local tensions between

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others. The crown attempted to help the house by granting it the appropriation of the churches of Hockley (1382) and Lidlington (1410), liberties in the Hundred of Becontree (1392), and by exempting it for ten years from payment of tenth up to fifty pounds a year (1409). "Borough of Barking," ed. Powell; "Houses of Benedictine Nuns: Abbey of Barking," ed. Page and Round; Chettle and Loftus, *History of Barking Abbey*, 43–44; Sturman, "Barking Abbey," 61, 70.

329 "Houses of Benedictine Nuns: Abbey of Barking," ed. Page and Round; "Borough of Barking," ed. Powell; Sturman, "Barking Abbey," 70–74, 133.

330 "Priory of Hatfield Regis or Broadoak," ed. Page and Round; "Hundred of Becontree," ed. Powell; "The Abbey of Stratford Langthorne," ed. Page and Round; "Abbey of Waltham Holy Cross," ed. Page and Round; Dyer, "Social and Economic Background to the Rural Revolt of 1381," 10–12.

331 John Bampton had been both steward of Barking Abbey from 1356 to 1368 and an official responsible for carrying out the collection of the unpopular poll-tax. The identity of the rebels remains unknown, although they appear to have mostly been tenants and not members of the gentry. Village officials, however, also seem to have participated in the rebellion. Dyer describes these rebels as having emerged from a "wide spectrum of rural society." Dyer, "Social and Economic Background to the Rural Revolt of 1381," 12–15, 30–34, 38–39, 40–41; Hilton, "Introduction," 1–3. See also Poos, *Rural Society after the Black Death*, 232–37; Chettle and Loftus, *History of Barking Abbey*, 43, 53. 69.

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landlords and laity, especially when added to the financial issues and transgressive behaviour of the nunnery, must have affected the lay spectators present in the abbey church on Easter morning. These men and women may have agreed with the prevalent anger against landlords and their privileges; they may alternatively have felt anxious in this climate of uncertainty.

Extant documents do not record the actions Barking Abbey may have taken against the 1381 rising. However, they contain evidence that the abbey responded to the laity's disobedience: fines were issued for their refusal to work, to use the mill, or for trespassing. In 1380 and again in 1384, the nunnery created commissions to force labourers to repair sea walls. If they refused, they were liable to being arrested and imprisoned.[332] Between 1399 and 1401, there was even an incident involving Abbess Sybil of Felton and others, who, in a quarrel with John Hooke of Blackmore, Essex, were convicted of armed trespass.[333] Such contests to the abbey's authority (it was also simultaneously contested by neighbouring lords) seem to have encouraged Barking Abbey to take action to reinforce and maintain its interests (especially under Abbesses Maud (ii) de Montagu and Sybil of Felton). The abbey received, for instance, royal grants upholding its privileges, and both abbesses obtained confirmations of the house's charters.[334] Sybil of Felton also probably engineered the creation of the Ordinal and Customary, recording and therefore granting more weight and prestige to the saints, customs, and liturgical peculiarities of Barking Abbey.[335] This was apparently done without requiring the assent of the bishop of London, further demonstrating the independence and power of the religious house, which possessed worthwhile traditions that ought to be recorded.

Considering these practices and the general context of dissent in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Essex, I believe that the note preceding the Barking *Elevatio* and *Visitatio* and its claim that the ceremonies were modified to improve the *populus*' devotion should be re-examined. Medieval devo-

332 Sturman, "Barking Abbey," 73, 113, 180, 251.

333 Hooke was perhaps a villein, freed by clerk William Sapy without the permission of Barking Abbey. Chettle and Loftus, *History of Barking Abbey*, 45, 53; Kew, The National Archives, SC 8/335/15842 (petition of Sybil de Felton).

334 Chettle and Loftus, *History of Barking Abbey*, 43–45, 53; "Hundred of Becontree," ed. Powell.

335 *Ordinale and Customary*, ed. Tolhurst, 1:13. A short text written towards the beginning of the Ordinal claims that Sybil of Felton was made abbess through divine permission. A bishop is mentioned neither there nor in relation with the composition of the Ordinal and Customary. Readers are not told whether his authorization was given or required in that matter.

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tion—or the lack of it—was at times tied to the temporal. This is the case in Mirk's *Festial*, which not only states that failing to attend liturgical ceremonies could be, as discussed earlier, linked to Sloth, but also that it could imply Pride—a lack of respect for and attention to God.[336] And although the sin of Sloth was often associated with religious duties, it could be related in certain texts (such as *Piers Plowman* or the Barking text *The Clensyng of Mannes Soule*) to more temporal failings. Among them is listed, for instance, noncompliance with work duties.[337]

Medieval devotion was understood to consist not only of private or shared prayers, but also of actions such as charitable deeds, bequests to churches and religious houses, pilgrimages to shrines and holy places, and the funding of structures such as bridges or roads.[338] These all had substantial effects both on the soul of the person performing them and on the lay and religious communities which benefitted from them. It thus seems possible that devotional acts of this kind may have been perceived at Barking as signs of respect for the house. These devotional acts were moreover tied to temporal business. They were regularly recorded in wills, with the hope that they would reduce time spent in Purgatory and mend the testators' offences against the Church (religious houses included). Such offences are described in Mirk's *Instructions for Parish Priests*, the most serious of them being punishable by excommunication. These include:

> breaking or disturbing the peace of the Church; taking away or withholding her lands, rents, or freedoms; withholding, destroying, bearing away tithes or consenting to it; burning a church or any other place or consenting to it; destroying the Church's goods; and disturbing the peace of England and betraying the realm.[339]

Considering this complex understanding of devotion, it is possible that the behaviour of the Barking parishioners, tenants, and insurgents in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries was perceived as a lack of devotion and even as a sin: they avoided work, acted against the interests of the Church and the Crown, burned buildings and documents, and failed to respect the peace.

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336 Mirk's *Festial* was a fifteenth-century vernacular collection of homilies, written mostly for the benefit of priests. Mirk, *Mirk's Festial*, ed. Erbe, 149.

337 Wenzel, "Sloth in Middle English Devotional Literature," 316–17; Langland, *Piers Plowman*, ed. Schmidt; Everett, "A Critical Edition," 51–52.

338 Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, 355–56, 367; Kieckhefer, "Major Currents in Late Medieval Devotion," 77–82.

339 Blanc, "Performing Female Authority," 73. See Duffy, *Stripping of the Altars*, 126–29, 355–57; Mirk, *Instructions for Parish Priests*, ed. Peacock, 21–24.

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If the Abbey of Barking felt that its parishioners had failed in their devotion, as the Ordinal states, it thus perhaps associated such failure with a lack of respect for the general authority of the house. Furthermore, the Barking Ordinal and Customary was composed at a time when offences against the Church could be understood as devotional failures even if they concerned temporal matters. In such a context, the note preceding the *Elevatio* and *Visitatio* seems to reference the fraught relationship between the nunnery and its parishioners—both under Abbess Katherine of Sutton and Abbess Sybil of Felton—and to reflect the house's desire to improve the situation. Its solution seems to have been to move a temporal problem into the spiritual sphere: if the note's reference to devotion was tied at least in part to temporal disobedience, encouraging such devotion would have counteracted such disobedience. I am not suggesting here that the abbey believed that their liturgical dramatic ceremonies would prevent all dissent among their parishioners, but by moving them to an earlier time of Matins, the house made them more accessible to what seems to have been its target audience. The *Elevatio*, the *Visitatio*, and their depiction of the nunnery's power, would thus have reached their troublesome spectators.

Populus, nuns, and clergy all took part in and were all affected by the medieval performances of the Barking Abbey *Elevatio* and *Visitatio* in various ways. Although these ceremonies were part of liturgy, the abbey shaped this liturgy, using codes belonging to drama. This concoction seems to have encouraged the devotion of spectators and participants, to have helped nuns, clergy, and laity define their identity, and to have impressed onto the laity—and perhaps the clergy—the authority held by the nunnery. To explore these effects of the two liturgical ceremonies, I have based myself in this chapter on the Barking Ordinal, on historical documents, and on the literary and liturgical culture of the house. However, there is much about the ceremonies that remains elusive today. When analysing performative events, scholars must grapple with the ephemeral nature of the experience of performance. While much of this experience will never be known, one of the ways in which scholarly focus can be brought to performance is by staging medieval performative events. I chose—working within the larger frame of the Medieval Convent Project—to experiment with such a method and, in 2018, staged the Barking *Visitatio* and *Elevatio* ceremonies. The following chapter will focus on the modern spectators of and participants in this production and on their perceptions of the Barking ceremonies to further improve the understanding of their medieval predecessors and of the ways in which the performance of the Barking ceremonies affected them.

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