The Liturgical Dramas for Holy Week at Barking Abbey

INTRODUCED, EDITED, AND TRANSLATED BY
Anne Bagnall Yardley and Jesse D. Mann

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Introduction

This first volume of Texts in Translation in the Society for Medieval Feminist Scholarship’s Subsidia series makes available to students and scholars for the first time a complete edition and English translation of the liturgical dramas included in the fifteenth-century ordinal and customary of the nuns of Barking Abbey.¹ Taken together, these three dramas—Depositio, Descensus/Elevatio, and Visitatio sepulchri—reveal the opportunities for nuns to assume a variety of identities in the performance of their special liturgies for Holy Week. The Barking dramas are unusual for the clear delineation of the roles of the nuns and the intermingling of men and women in the cast. While reading the text, it is helpful to remember that in some sense these performances are small operas; the text is primarily sung in plainchant, the monophonic, non-metered chant of the Middle Ages.

A liturgical drama, in the simplest sense, is a play that occurs within the context of worship (liturgy). It differs from liturgy because people act the part of someone else in the retelling of a biblical story. So, for example, in the Easter drama people act the parts of the women coming to the tomb, the part of Jesus appearing to the women, and the parts of the angels. As Dunbar H. Ogden suggests, the performers and the

¹ We are grateful to Mary Dockray-Miller for the invitation to submit this project and to Katie Bugyis for her generosity in reading and commenting upon it in draft form.
The presence of “stage directions” is one indication that the performers were aware of these sections of the manuscript as a play within the liturgy. At the same time, a liturgical drama partakes of the nature of the liturgy, and such dramas were seen as acts of worship, not of entertainment. The three liturgical dramas presented here are the Depositio (Removal from the Cross and Burial), the Descensus/Elevatio (Descent [into hell]/Raising from the Tomb), and the Visitatio sepulchri (Visitation at the Tomb). In each case nuns and/or priests play specific roles and there is a clear sense of theater.

The Barking dramas are hardly unknown; there are multiple Latin editions of the texts available, several full or partial translations, and a variety of commentary on the texts in scholarly publications. This clean, new transcription with complete, split-screen translation includes the expanded chant material to contribute to a fuller understanding of the richly dramatic liturgical life of the period and the roles played by women in that life.

The Manuscript and its Editions

The sole manuscript that contains the dramas is housed in the library of University College, Oxford (MS 169). Internal evidence dates it to 1404, when it was presented to the abbess, Sibille Felton. The manuscript is on vellum and measures 9.25 inches by 6.25 inches. There are now 224 leaves, but several have been excised from the original manuscript. There is no surviving evidence of the scriptorium at Barking Abbey and no indication of the scribe in the manuscript itself. So while it is probable that the MS was produced at Barking, we have no evidence to confirm this possibility.

In the medieval period there were several different types of manuscripts that recorded the texts and music for liturgical services. An

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ordinal compiled the liturgical practices of a specific place—in this case Barking Abbey—into one volume, giving a brief listing of the service components for the entire year and including just the incipit or first few words of each chant or prayer. A customary offered information on how those liturgies and other monastic observances were to be enacted. The Barking manuscript interweaves the material of the ordinal and customary. The entire manuscript was edited by J. B. L. Tolhurst and published by the Henry Bradshaw Society in 1927, making this portrait of liturgical life in an English Benedictine nunnery available to scholars.

Karl Young had published an early edition of the *Depositio, Descensus/ Elevatio, and Visitatio sepulchri* in a 1910 article, but then superseded it with the version in his seminal work *The Drama of the Medieval Church* (1933). More recent editions include those by Walther Lipphardt (1976) and Pamela Sheingorn (1987). Sheingorn’s edition also includes facsimile reproductions of the relevant pages of the manuscript. As the *apparatus criticus* indicates, our edition takes these previous editions into account in our own editorial decisions.

A complete but relatively inaccessible translation of the dramas is available in a 1983 publication edited by Peter Meredith and John E. Tailby. Translations of parts of the dramas also appeared in Anne Yardley’s 2006 publication *Performing Piety*. Previously, Charles W. Jones


6 Peter Meredith and John E. Tailby, *The Staging of Religious Drama in Europe in the Later Middle Ages: Texts and Documents in English Translation*, Early Drama, Art, and Music Monograph Series 4 (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, Western Michigan University, 1983). This translation is embedded in the chapter titled “Eye-Witness Accounts and Extended Descriptions”; since digital catalog information does not include reference to the Barking texts, this translation does not appear in search results.

had published a translation of the full text of the *Depositio* and *Elevatio*.\(^8\) The present work is the first full edition with translation of all three dramas; it is also the first translation to include the antiphonal incipits and the expanded chants.

Because these dramas are conveyed in an ordinal/customary, they are lacking certain elements that would allow us to understand them fully. The chants that are to be sung are given only with a chant incipit and no musical notation. In many instances, we can guess with a great degree of certainty what the chant text would be; unfortunately, in other instances we cannot. The chant texts have been expanded in order to give as full a sense of the drama as possible. There are seven chants in the *Visitatio* that appear to be unique to the Barking manuscript and may well represent the creative compositional activities of the nuns. The prefatory Prohemium to the Easter dramas credits Catherine of Sutton, abbess of Barking Abbey from 1358 to 1376, with moving the performance of the *Descensus/Elevatio* from before Matins to after the third responsory of Matins in order to increase devotion among the people. This change of place causes the *Descensus/Elevatio* to lead directly into the *Visitatio sepulchri* rather than have the lengthy service of Matins in between the two. Nancy Cotton credits Catherine as the author of this version of the dramas.\(^9\) Catherine’s biographer Santha Bhattacharji argues convincingly that this credit oversteps the evidence of the source, but comments “It can be said with confidence, however, that Katherine struck her contemporaries as a woman of notable energy and decisiveness, and that they associate her name, in whatever way, with an interesting and unusual piece of liturgical drama.”\(^10\) While the evidence does not demonstrate that Catherine composed the dramas, it is highly likely that nuns were


involved in the process of creating this particular version of the *Visitatio* through the use of pre-existing materials and through the composition of the unique chants for which we have only incipits.\textsuperscript{11}

**The Context of the Dramas**

Barking Abbey was a large, relatively wealthy nunnery located near London in the town of Barking. Founded in the seventh century as a double house of men and women, it became a women’s community from the tenth century until the dissolution of monastic communities in 1539. While the number of inhabitants varied over the centuries, the statutory number of nuns was thirty-seven.\textsuperscript{12} Because of the existence of the ordinal/customary, we know more about the liturgical practices at Barking Abbey than at any other English Benedictine house for women. In addition to the nuns, there were priests, deacons, and other clerics associated with the abbey.\textsuperscript{13} On important liturgical occasions the processions included clerics in minor orders carrying the cross, the candelabra, and the gospel book. Thus it was common on feast days to have several men as part of the liturgical proceedings along with the nuns.

Within the abbey, the *cantrix* (female form of cantor), held the major responsibility for the performance of the liturgy including the liturgical dramas. Her many duties included oversight of liturgical life, the regulation of music, teaching music to the nuns, and vocal leadership. She appears in the dramas primarily in her role in starting chants.

Holy Week liturgies are among the most inherently dramatic parts of the entire liturgical year. The reenactments of the procession on Palm Sunday begin the week with a dramatic flair. Each of the three dramas presented here has its own unique development and history, touched on only briefly in this introduction. The works cited in the notes provide


\textsuperscript{13} Among the priests mentioned in the ordinal are the *sacerdos ebdomadarius* (weekly priest), *sacerdos misse matutinalis* (priest of the morning mass), *sacerdos capitalis* (priest of the capitular mass or chapter priest), and *sacerdos beate marie* (priest for the Marian mass).
direction for more extensive inquiry.

The Three Texts

The Depositio is a reenactment of the entombment of Christ which was performed on Good Friday after the Adoration of the Cross or first Vespers. The Depositio at Barking Abbey, which occurs after the Adoration of the Cross, follows the same basic outline as the one found in the tenth-century Regularis concordia, a guide for English monastic life. In the Barking version, the four main actions are carrying the cross to the altar, removing the image of Christ to wash it with wine and water, burying the cross in the sepulcher, and, finally, shutting the sepulcher where the cross remains until it is removed as part of the Easter dramas. Part of what sets this short drama apart from the liturgy is the suggestion that the priests are representing Joseph and Nicodemus. Additionally, clear stage directions add to the sense of this section of the text as a play. At each stage of the drama, the nuns offer commentary, in the form of chants, on the ritual action. By expanding the text incipits in the ordinal with the remaining text for each chant, we gain a very full sense of the ways in which the chant texts are integral to the meaning and action of this short drama.14 Some churches in England had distinct places set aside to serve as the sepulcher while others created a sepulcher for the occasion. Often, these were located on the north wall of the chancel.15 It would appear from the description that the nuns at Barking had a specific place (perhaps a niche or other architectural feature) that represented the tomb of Christ to which they carried the cross and that they augmented that with a coverlet, pillow, and white linens in the actual burial. At Barking the abbess had the responsibility for keeping a light burning continuously at the sepulcher until Easter.

The second drama, Descensus/Elevatio, was performed at Easter Matins. It offers a rare pairing of these two short scenes representing the descent into hell and the raising of the dead. While it is common to find the text for the Elevatio in medieval English sources, it is less common to

14 Yardley, Performing Piety, 143.
15 Sheingorn, Easter Sepulchre, 33–45.
find it paired with the Descensus or “Harrowing of Hell.” The Descensus grew from the theological understanding of the line in the Apostle’s Creed “he descended into hell” and seeks to represent that descent into hell to bring salvation to those who were imprisoned there. The harrowing was popular in medieval England, and there are several extant non-liturgical versions in the vernacular in addition to the liturgical enactments. The Elevatio is a short drama that allows the community to retrieve the cross from the sepulcher and to find an empty tomb on Easter morning. At Barking, the Elevatio follows directly from the Descensus, forming one dramatic unit. The stage directions for this drama indicate that the abbess, the entire convent, and some of the priests represent the patriarchs and prophets; one of the priests represents Christ; the procession of the nuns and priests at the end represents Christ being followed by his disciples. It is notable that, in these two short dramas, the nuns have the opportunity to play the patriarchs and prophets as well as the disciples of Christ. These roles are part of the drama and offer nuns a chance to envision themselves as historical male figures. These opportunities complicate the common metaphor of nuns as the “brides of Christ.”

The Visitatio sepulchri retells the story of the women going to Christ’s tomb and finding it empty; its performance directly followed the Depositio/Elevatio. Although it is the best-known and most widely circulated medieval liturgical drama, it is actually less well represented in English sources than the Depositio and Elevatio. The version portrayed in the Barking ordinal has thus received a great deal of scholarly attention from historians of this genre.


17 See Young, Drama of the Medieval Church, 1:381–85, who identifies this text as an example of the “third stage” of the development of the Visitatio. See also Diane Dolan, Le drame liturgique de pâques en Normandie et en Angleterre au Moyen-Age, Publications de l’Université de Poitiers, Lettres et sciences humanines 16 (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1975); Susan Rankin, The Music of the Medieval Liturgical Drama in France and England, 2 vols. (New York: Garland, 1989) and “The Mary Magdalene Scene in
Unfortunately, the manuscript’s lack of a full text and of musical notation makes it most difficult to reconstruct the drama completely at this point. There are seven text incipits that would appear to be unique to the Barking version of the Visitatio and undoubtedly reflect the creative work of the nuns there. In the first scene of the Barking Visitatio, the three Marys (Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Mary representing Salome) come to the tomb seeking Jesus. They are met by two angels, one inside the tomb and one outside the tomb, as they find the empty tomb. In a second scene, Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene and then to all three women. Finally the disciples, played by the priest and clerics, appear, and Mary Magdalene shows them the shroud. All rejoice together. The choir of nuns participates in several of the chants towards the end of the drama.

Clearly there are several characters in this drama. The ordinal provides some information on the casting of the play in the description of a meeting of the nuns in the chapter house after terce on Holy Saturday. At this meeting, the abbess chooses the three nuns who should play the roles of the Marys. She also chooses two novices to carry candelabra and accompany the nuns. In the vast majority of the Visitatio manuscripts from the Middle Ages, men played the parts of the three women who went to the tomb. Thus it is significant that the Barking manuscript clearly indicates that three nuns played the roles of the women and that they were accompanied by two female novices carrying candelabra.

The Visitatio is full of stage directions which help the reader to envision the actual enactment of the drama. Among the notable instructions for performing the Visitatio are several tantalizing hints of vocal performance practice. Not only do we get specific indications as to who should

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18 Yardley, “Liturgy.”
sing each chant, but we also get several indications of how they should sing the chant. Various chants should be sung *flebili voce et submissa* (tearful and subdued voice), *plangendo* (plaintively), *suspirando* (sighing), *voce letabunda* (joyful voice), *alternis modulacionibus* (rhythmically), or *solemniter* (solemnly). While it is unclear exactly how these emotions are expressed by the singer, it is clear that her emotions are to inflect the music. In the *Descensus*, the priest is instructed to sing *Tollite portas* three times, repeating each time *in alciori voce* (in a higher/louder voice). As Ogden indicates in his table of vocal qualities, *alta* (the root form of *alciori*) in its various forms is one of the most ambiguous of the terms.19 It can mean “high,” or “loud,” or “intense.” In this particular instance, we have chosen to translate *alciori* as “higher” because, as Ogden indicates, there are several instances of phrases being repeated at successively higher pitch levels. The singer could well also become louder on each repetition. This liturgical drama thus not only includes representations of specific characters and a clear sense that the actors and audience are aware of it as drama; it also includes detailed indications that the singing style itself should be dramatic.

**Female Sacerdotes?**

This new edition with translation calls attention to a very intriguing, but hitherto completely overlooked, element in the text of the Barking *Visitatio sepulchri*. That the three Marys of the *Visitatio* are played by nuns rather than by male clerics is in itself perhaps not so surprising for a nunnery.20 However, the ordinal (lines 205–9) suggests that the nuns

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playing the Marys at Barking were in some sense seen as clerics or priests (sacerdotes). All previous editors and commentators have overlooked, ignored, or misread the gender of several key words in the final lines of the Visitatio. Unless one considers both the feminine plural adjective predicte and the subsequent feminine accusative pronoun eas as scribal errors, it appears that at Barking the three sisters not only performed the roles usually played by priests but were also themselves called “priests” and were seen as performing sacerdotal functions in the drama.

There are really two issues here. The first is the identity of the sacerdotes in this passage. The second involves how the “actors” so identified may have been understood to be performing sacerdotal functions. As regards the first issue, we suggest that the sacerdotes of line 205 are definitely the three Marys and not the male sacerdotes mentioned earlier in the text. There are several reasons for this identification. In classical Latin, sacerdos could be both masculine and feminine (see OLD, s.v, “sacerdus”). While ecclesiastical Latin usually treats sacerdos as masculine (see, e.g., Blaise, s.v. “sacerdus”), there are instances of the term being used in relation to female sacerdotes (e.g., Macy), and seemingly even to nuns in particular (Latham, s.v. “sacerdos”). Thus, the word sacerdos itself could be understood as feminine here, but this usage would represent a significant break with the usual gender of this word in the text. More importantly, the subsequent feminine plural accusative pronoun eas (line 208) is hard to explain if one does not understand it as referring to the sacerdotes who are the subjects of the preceding plural participles and verbs (reinduentes, transeuntes, adeant, and faciant).

Not only does grammar argue for this identification; context and

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21 Oxford Latin Dictionary, ed. P. G. W. Glare (Oxford: Clarendon, 1982); Albert Blaise, Dictionnaire latin-français des auteurs chrétiens (Turnhout: Brepols, 1967); Gary Macy, The Hidden History of Women’s Ordination: Female Clergy in the Medieval West (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 60; R. E. Latham, Revised Medieval Latin Word-List from British and Irish Sources (London: Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 1973). It should be noted that the entry in Latham’s Word-List includes a question mark (?) after this definition, indicating “doubt as to the meaning or date assigned to a word, of the justifiability of its inclusion in a particular group” (p. xix). Consequently, one would not want to make too much of this possibility.
sense do as well. At the outset of the *Visitatio* (lines 115–18), the nuns remove their usual black garments and don surplices and veils in the chapel of Mary Magdalene.\(^{22}\) Subsequently (line 205–6), the *sacerdotes* are instructed to put on their own clothes (*propriis vestibus reinduentes*) in that same chapel. Since there has been no indication that the male priests were in costume at all, it seems likely that the three Marys are the ones who return to the chapel to put back on their own garments—the same ones they had removed at the beginning of the drama.\(^{23}\) Also relevant to this identification are the *candelabra*. In the *Visitatio* this word only occurs two times, and each time it is associated with the three Marys. This is not surprising, since, as noted above, a previous section of the ordinal informs us that the Marys are to be accompanied by two novices carrying candelabra.\(^{24}\) The Marys are clearly linked with candelabra at the outset of the *Visitatio* (line 120), and again at its conclusion when the Marys move from the chapel through the choir *cum candelabris* (line 206). Finally, that the abbess should instruct the male clerics to go and rest—the necessary result of reading *eas* (line 208) as referring to men—seems unlikely. That command seems more appropriately directed toward her nuns, the three Marys who here are called *sacerdotes*.

As regards the second issue, one must again consider the change of clothing the three Marys undergo at the start of the *Visitatio*. This change of clothing, suggestive of the priestly donning of special vestments before

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22 Ogden, *Staging of Drama*, 149, states that the abbess “dresses the Marys in purest white surplices with white veils on their heads.” Slocum, “Ritual and Ceremony,” 105, inaccurately suggests that the nuns first changed clothing and then proceeded into the chapel of Mary Magdalene. According to the text, they actually changed clothes in the chapel itself.

23 Ogden, ibid., says it is the priests playing the part of the disciples who “(now in their usual vestments) reenter from ‘the chapel,’ probably the Magdalen Chapel, and with candles they cross through the choir to the sepulchre, pray, return, and pause—here a unique mimed reminder of the race to the tomb by Peter and John.” Slocum renders this phrase as “the priests went back into the chapel vested appropriately.” “Ritual and Ceremony,” 107.

24 See Tolhurst, *Ordinale and Cutomary*, 103: *Post culpum emendacionem et uirtutum amonicionem prouideat abbatissa tres sorores quesituras in sepulcro nocte sequenti crucifixum. scilicet mulieres prefigurantes que ad monumentum domini cum aromatibus uenerint. Singulis autem illarum due iuuencule adhibeantur que candelabra iuxta eas circumferant.*
beginning the liturgy of the mass, clearly indicates that the Marys are now playing a distinctly new role. Likewise, the three Marys also say a confession to the abbess and are absolved. It was common for priests to say the *Confiteor* (“I confess”) before celebrating mass. Thus, both dress and action are suggestive of sacerdotal function. Moreover, one could see the Marys as performing a kerygmatic (and thus sacerdotal) role in the drama, inasmuch as they are to proclaim the good news of Christ’s resurrection to others.

This reading thus expands upon Ogden’s claim that at Barking (and at Origny), the abbess exercised “religious power normally reserved for men, for priests.” Not only does the abbess seem to have exercised such power, but in some sense the three Marys also appear to have exercised some type of sacerdotal power as well—enough, at any rate, to merit the title *sacerdotes*.

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**The Edition**

This edition, based on digital images of the sole extant manuscript, collates the four editions mentioned above. The edition follows these principles:

**Orthography:** The orthography of the manuscript is retained (including its irregular and inconsistent use of i and j as well as u and v) except in the few instances where the MS contains an initial double consonant (e.g., line 50 *figurantes* becomes *figurantes*). For consistency, expansion of abbreviations similarly reflects the orthographic practice of the scribe, as does the orthography of supplied chant material.

**Punctuation and Capitalization:** For comprehension, the edition employs modern punctuation, including paragraph divisions. Proper names and the word *Domina* when used as an official title (line 38) have been capitalized, but the individual persons of the Trinity (*deus, filius,"

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25 Odgen, *Staging of Drama*, 146, notes that at that moment [i.e., after confessing to the abbess] “the three Marys are the *celebrants*” [his emphasis].

26 Ibid., 149.
etc.) and the word *dominus* when referring to God or Christ have not been capitalized.

**Typography and Text Symbols:** Antiphonal incipits, hymns, antiphons, prayers and biblical citations are presented in *italics*. Editorial additions, including the supplied text of the chants and relevant emendations, are indicated by angular brackets < >.

**Pagination:** The MS shows page numbers on an alternating basis (e.g., p. 119, p. 121, etc.) on the recto side of each leaf only. According to Dr. B. C. Barker-Benfield of the Bodleian Library, this pagination is modern and may date from 1700. The foliation that appears in Tolhurst’s edition seems to be his own invention and is not found in the MS itself.27

**Expanded Chant Material:** Where possible, the chant material is expanded beyond the incipits given in the MS. The rationale for doing so and the selection method for the expanded texts are provided in the Appendix. It should be noted here that, when we have expanded a chant, we have intentionally omitted the phrase *et cetera* that sometimes follows the incipit in the MS (e.g., at line 157). In the few cases where the MS includes the phrase *et cetera* but no expanded text is available (e.g., line 163), we have retained *et cetera* and added <...>.

**Critical Apparatus:** The apparatus provides “variant readings” and differing editorial emendations proposed by previous editors. In the apparatus, the expression *corr. ad* means *corrigit/corrigunt ad* (= corrects to) and *add.* means *addit* (= adds).
The Translation

The translation strives for balance between readability and literal accuracy. The aim has been to render the text intelligible to both nonspecialist and specialist modern readers, particularly those who might wish to perform these liturgical dramas. Toward this same end, the antiphonal incipits and the expanded chants are also translated. While we have consulted other translations (listed above), this translation represents a fresh attempt to render the Latin into fluent English. In the translation, words or letters in square brackets [ ] have been supplied by the translators.
SIGLA


After worshipping the holy cross, the priests lift it from its aforementioned location and should start to sing the antiphon *Above all woods <of cedars you alone [O cross] excel, [you] on which Christ triumphed and death overcame death.>*. The choir should join in, and, with the cantrix beginning, they should sing the entire antiphon together. They should carry the cross to the high altar where, [as if] representing Joseph and Nicodemus, they should take the image from the cross and wash the wounds of the crucified one with water and wine. While they are doing this, the convent should sing together the responsory *Behold how the just man dies [and no one takes it to heart, [how] the righteous are destroyed and no one pays any attention. The just man is removed from the face of iniquity, and his memory shall be in peace>*. The priest should start; the cantrix should respond; and the convent should then join in. After the washing of the wounds, they should carry the image to the tomb accompanied by candelabra and censer, all the while singing the antiphons *In peace shall I sleep and rest*>; *He will abide <in your tabernacle and rest in your holy mountain>>; *[and] *My flesh <shall rest in hope>*. When they have laid the image reverently in the aforementioned place that has been appropriately adorned with a coverlet of woolen cloth and a pillow and with dazzling linens,¹ the priest should close the tomb and begin to sing the responsory *When the Lord has been buried, <the tomb is sealed: they roll the stone to the tomb’s entrance and place guards to watch over it>>. Then the abbess should provide the candle that should burn continuously before the sepulcher and should not be extinguished until after Matins on Easter night, when the image is returned from the tomb to its own [proper] place in a procession with candles and incense. When these things have been done, the convent should return to the choir and the priest to the vestry.


<PROHEMIUM>

/p. 119/ Nota quod secundum antiquam consuetudinem ecclesiasticam resurrexio dominica celebrata fuit ante matutinas et ante aliquam campane pulsacionem in die pasche. Et quoniam populum concursus temporibus illis videbatur deuocione frigessere et torpor humanus maxime accrescens, venerabilis domina Domina Katerina de Suttone, tunc pastoralis cure gerens vicem, desiderans dictum torporem penitus exstirpare et fidelium deuociionem ad tam celebrarem celebracionem magis excitare, vnanimi consorum consensu instituit ut statim post tercium responsorium matutinarum die pasche fieret dicte resurexionis celebracio. Et hoc modo statuetur processio.

<DESCENSUS/ELEVATIO>

In primis eat domina abbatissa cum toto conuentu et quibusdam sacerdotibus et clericis capis indutis, quolibet sacerdote et clericico palmam et candelam extintam manu deferente, intrent capellam sancte Marie Magdalene, figurantes animas sanctorum patrum ante aduentum Christi ad inferos descendentes et claudant sibi ostium dicte capelle. Deinde superueniens sacerioni sacerdos ebdomadarius ad dictam capellam appropians alba indutus et capa cum duobus diaconis: vno crucem deferente cum uexillo dominico

<DESCENSUS/ELEVATIO>

At the outset, the lady abbess, together with the entire convent and with certain priests and clerics dressed in copes, should enter the chapel of St. Mary Magdalene. Each priest should carry in his hand a palm and an unlit candle. They represent the souls of the holy fathers who, living before Christ’s coming, descended into Hell. They should enclose themselves in said chapel and close its door. Then the officiating priest, dressed in an alb and cope, should approach the chapel with two deacons: one bearing a cross
with the Lord’s standard hanging from it; the other carrying a censer in his hand. The other priests and clerics, along with two boys carrying candles, should accompany them to the door of said chapel where the officiating priest should thrice begin the antiphon *Tear down your gates, <O princes, and be raised up O eternal gates and the king of glory will enter*. He represents the person of Christ descending to Hell to destroy its gates. Each time, he should begin the aforementioned antiphon in a higher pitch, and each time the clerics should repeat [it]. Every time he begins the antiphon, he should strike the door of the chapel with the cross thereby representing the destruction of the gates of Hell. When he strikes it the third time, the door should open. Then, together with his ministers, he should enter. Meanwhile, a certain priest from within the chapel should begin the antiphon *From the gate of Hell*, to which the cantrix with the whole convent should add *O Lord, rescue <my soul>*. Then the officiating priest should lead out all those in the said chapel, while the [other] priest should begin the antiphon *O Lord, you have released <my soul>* and the cantrix should add *from Hell*. Then they should all leave the chapel, i.e., the limbo of the Fathers. The priests and clerics should sing the antiphon *When the king of glory <entered Hell to vanquish it, and the angelic choir in his presence commanded the gates of the princes to be torn down, the population of saints who were captive in death cried out in a tearful voice: You have come, o desired one, whom we were awaiting in darkness to lead out from [their] prisons on this night those in chains. Our sighs were calling you. Our lavish laments sought you. You have become the hope for the desperate, a great consolation to those in torment. Alleluia.* as they move in procession through the middle of the choir toward the sepulcher, each carrying a palm and a candle signifying victory over the enemy. The lady abbess, the priores, and the entire convent follow them as if they were the patriarchs.

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16 albo MS; al<ter>o S; corr. ad alio T; corr. ad altero LY
17 sau T
18 existente MS; existente ST; corr. ad existens LY

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2 This is presumably the aforementioned (line 54) cross carried by the deacon.
When they come to the tomb, the officiating priest should cense it and [then] enter the tomb while beginning the verse Christ is risen. The cantrix then adds: the victor returns from the underworld, the tyrant in chains in tow, and opens up Paradise. Meanwhile, [the priest] shall take the Lord’s body from the tomb and begin the antiphon Christ is risen in front of the altar with his face toward the people while holding the Lord’s body in a glass in his hands. Then the cantrix shall sing from the dead; <no longer is he dead. Death will have no further hold over him; for because he lives, he lives in God>, and at that antiphon they should move in procession toward the altar of the Holy Trinity [carrying] the solemn instruments, namely the censers and candles. The convent should follow singing the aforementioned antiphon with the verse Now the Jews should say <how the soldiers guarding the tomb lost the king in light of the placement of the stone. Why did they not preserve the rock of justice? Either they should return the buried one or they should worship the risen one with us saying: Alleluia!> and the versicle: Tell the nations <that the Lord reigned from the wood [of the cross] Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!>. The prayer: God, for our sakes <you wanted your son to submit to the yoke of the cross in order to rid us of the power of the enemy: grant to us, your servants, that we might obtain the grace of [his] resurrection. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.> This procession thus symbolizes how Christ proceeded into Galilee after his resurrection, followed by his disciples.

3 It is not entirely clear whether this refers to the imago Crucifixi mentioned in the Depositio or to the Host. See Young, Drama of the Medieval Church, 1:167n2.

4 That “glass” is, presumably, a monstrance (a vessel used for exposing the Eucharistic Host for veneration). See ibid., 1:167.
VISITATIO

When these things have been completed, three nuns, who have been pre-selected by the lady abbess, should come forward and, having removed their black garments in the chapel of St Mary Magdalene, should be dressed in dazzling [white] surplices. The abbess [should also] have placed white veils over their heads. Thus prepared and holding silver vessels in their hands, [the three nuns] should say the Confiteor to the abbess. The abbess absolves them, and they should [then] stand in the prescribed place with candelabra. The one representing Mary Magdalene should sing the verse At one time God’s <…>. When she is finished, the second one, who represents Mary [mother] of James, should respond with the second verse Therefore she alone approaches <…>. The third Mary, playing the part of Salome, should sing the third verse It is permitted for me to go with you <…>. After this, as they proceed through the choir, they should sing together the verses Alas, how numerous are the lamentations <that pound upon our private thoughts for our consoler of whom we wretched ones are deprived, whom the cruel Jewish people put to death> in a tearful and subdued voice. When they have finished these verses, just the Magdalene alone should sing the verse Alas, we are wretched; <why did we have to see the Savior die?>. [Mary, mother of] James should respond Alas, our consolation <that he endured such a death>. [And] Salome [should then sing] Alas, Israel’s redemption <that he was willing to do such [a deed]>. The fourth verse, namely Now, behold <let us hasten to approach the tomb to anoint the most holy body of the beloved>, they should all sing together. Then, as the Marys leave the choir, they should all sing Oh! Who moved <the stone from the entrance of the tomb?>.

VISITATIO SEPULCRI

When they arrive at the tomb, a cleric in a white stole representing the angel who rolled the stone away from the entrance of the grave should be seated in front of the tomb. Sitting on the stone, he should say to them: O followers of Christ? The women should respond: We seek Jesus of Nazareth. The angel should then reply: He is not here; for he is risen. Come and see the place where he was put; then go and tell his disciples and Peter that he has risen. When he says Come and see, they should enter the tomb and kiss the place where the Crucified one had been put. Meanwhile, Mary Magdalene should pick up the head-shroud and take it with her.

Then another cleric inside the tomb representing a second angel should say to the Magdalene: Woman, why are you weeping? She replies: because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have put him. At this point, the two angels, singing in unison, should say to the women: Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen. Remember how he told you, while he was in Galilee, that the Son of Man would have to suffer and be crucified, and would rise again on the third day. But they, doubting the Lord’s resurrection, say to each other plaintively: Alas, what pain! Alas, what dire straits of pain that I am bereaved of the presence of the beloved master! Alas, who took the beloved body from the tomb? Then, as Mary Magdalene sighs, they should sing together: To you I sigh etc. Then, from the left side of the altar, a figure shall appear and say to her: Woman, why are you weeping? Whom do you seek? Thinking that he is the gardener, she answers: Sir, if you have carried him away tell me, and I shall take him. The figure rejoins: Mary!

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5 On the head-shroud (sudarium), see Berger, *Drame liturgique de Pâques*, 264.

6 The Latin word “persona” as used here may be a short-hand form of the expression “persona Christi” (person of Christ). Compare the use of this expression earlier in the Latin text (line 59). Although “persona” is a feminine noun in Latin, it would be unwarranted to draw any conclusions from this point regarding the gender of the person playing the part of Christ in this drama.
moment, she recognizes him and prostrating herself at his feet, she says: *Rabbi*. However, the figure withdraws from her and says: *Do not touch me; for I have not yet ascended to my father. Go to my brothers and tell them: I am ascending to my father and your father, my God and your God*. When that figure disappears, Mary Magdalene should communicate her delight to her companions in a joyful voice singing the verses: *Rejoice and be glad etc.*.<…>.

When those verses are finished, a figure from the right side of the altar should approach the three women all at once, saying *Hail! Do not be afraid! <Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee. There they will see me>*. Then, the three women should prostrate themselves on the ground, take his feet and kiss them. Having done so, they should sing these verses alternately in rhythmic measure, beginning with Mary Magdalene singing *Jesus of Nazareth etc.*.<…>. Upon finishing these verses, the Marys should stand on the steps in front of the altar, turn toward the people, and sing the responsive *Alleluia. The Lord has risen from the grave;* and the choir should answer them. After this, the priests and clerics representing the disciples should come forward singing *O dreadful race*.<…>. Then one of them should approach Mary Magdalene and say to her: *Tell us, Mary, <what you saw on the way>*. She should reply: *The tomb of the living Christ <I saw and the glory of the risen one>. Angelic witnesses <his head-shroud and garments>.* Then she should point with her finger to the place where the angel was sitting, and she should show them the head-shroud for them to kiss while they sing the verse: *Christ, our hope, has risen; <he precedes his disciples into Galilee>*. The disciples and choir should then add the final verses: *More credible <is the trustworthy Mary alone than the entire deceitful crowd of the Jews> and We know that Christ <has risen from the dead. You, O victorious king, have mercy on us>*.
After this, the Magdalene should start to sing:

Christ is risen from the dead; no longer is he dead. Death will have no further hold over him; for because he lives, he lives in God

with the clergy and choir accompanying her. When they finish, the hymn O God we praise thee should be solemnly sung and the priest should begin it. Meanwhile, the aforementioned “priests” [i.e., the three Marys] should put back on their own garments in the chapel; and, passing through the choir with candelabra, they should move toward the tomb in order to pray. Once there, they should offer a brief prayer. Then they should return to their station until the abbess shall order them to go and rest.

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34 corr. ad predicti LY
Appendix: Sources for Chant Expansion

The expansion of the chant texts relies on several sources. Young (1933) was especially helpful not only because of the choices he made in expanding the Barking texts, but also because of his inclusion of material from Rouen which many scholars believe is one of the sources for the Barking *Visitatio*. The online resource at [http://cantusdatabase.org/](http://cantusdatabase.org/) gives variant readings of many chants; the extensive work of Lipphardt-Roloff-Mundt (1990) is also very helpful. Where possible, the lists below include references to the numbering of chants in their work. Lipphardt-Roloff-Mundt do not always give the full text of the chants, but often give bibliography as well as a good sense of the geographic distribution of the chants.

Depositio

*Super omnia ligna*


*Ecce quomodo moritur iustus*

[http://cantusdatabase.org/node/381287](http://cantusdatabase.org/node/381287) Chant listed as a responsory for Holy Saturday. The verse is listed at [http://cantusdatabase.org/node/381288](http://cantusdatabase.org/node/381288).

*In pace in idipsum*


*Habitabit*

Caro mea
http://cantusdatabase.org/node/375033 Antiphon for Holy Saturday.

Sepulto domino
http://cantusdatabase.org/node/385187 Responsory for Holy Saturday. The early tradition in England (Regularis concordia) has the antiphon Sepulto domino. Since this is specifically designated as a responsory, we have chosen to include the verse most commonly associated with the responsory. Young (1933, 1:123).

Descensus/Elevatio

Tollite Portas

A porta inferi

Domine abstaxisti

Cum rex glorie
Lipphardt-Roloff-Mundt (1990, 9:904–905 = A⁴³) See also Cantus http://cantusdatabase.org/node/351752

Consurgit Christus tumulo
From the hymn Ad coenam agni. See Young (1933, 1:562); Lipphardt-Roloff-Mundt (1990, 9: 912–913 = H³). H³ also includes the subsequent two items.
Quesumus auctor
From the hymn *Ad coenam agni*. See Young (1933, 1:562)

Gloria tibi domine
Final stanza of *Ad coenam agni*. See Young (1933, 1: 562)

Christus resurgens

Dicant nunc
Cantus [http://cantusdatabase.org/node/375062](http://cantusdatabase.org/node/375062) antiphon verse for a supplementary occasion. We think this is the most likely version, but there are others. See, e.g., the antiphon verse listed in Cantus [http://cantusdatabase.org/node/375063](http://cantusdatabase.org/node/375063). Listed as an antiphon verse for Easter—as a “supplementary” occasion. See Young (1933, 1:587 under Notes p. 255, note 4) for a discussion of this as a separate antiphon text, then as a responsory verse and then again as a separate text.

Dicite in nacionibus

Deus qui pro nobis

Visitatio Sepulchri

*Heu! nobis internas mentes* (Young, 1933, 1:382).
Heu! miserere (Young, 1933, 1:382).

Heu! consolacio nostra (Young, 1933, 1:382).

Heu! redempcio Israel (Young, 1933, 1:382).

Iam iam ecce (Young, 1933, 1:382).

Eya! quis revolvet (Young, 1933, 1:382).

Non est hic surrexit
Young (1933, 1:660). We have chosen to expand several of these chants with the text from the Rouen manuscript because of the suggestions of scholars of the influence of Rouen on the Barking version. See especially Dolan (1975, 139) and Rankin (1981, 227–55). Young (1933, 1:382) expands the text from another unidentified source: sicut praedixerit; ite, nuntiate quia surrexit de sepulcro. Young (1933, 1:660) gives the version of the text we are using as part of the Rouen drama but does not suggest it as a possibility for expanding the Barking version.

Quia tulerunt dominum meum (Young, 1933, 1:382)

Quid queritis viventem cum mortuis
Young (1933, 1:660) from the Rouen drama. We are suggesting its inclusion here.

Heu dolor
Young (1933, 1:394). Young (1933, 1:383, note 1) suggests that this chant from the Fleury play book could potentially complete the Barking incipit so we have included it here.

Domine si tu sustulisti eum
From Rouen, Young (1933, 1:660). Another option could be this antiphon for Lauds on Feast of Mary Magdalene. The full text of which is: Dicit ei Jesus: Mulier, quid ploras? Quem queris? Dicit ei: Domine, si tu sustulisti eum, dico mihi ubi posuisti eum et ego eum tollam. Alleluia alleluia, http://cantusdatabase.org/node/375484. The last part of this
antiphon would complete the incipit.

_Noli me tangere_

From the Rouen drama, Young (1933, 1: 660). Another option would be _nondum enim ascendi ad patrem meum alleluia alleluia_ from Cantus. This would again appear to be a dialogue form of a chant from the Feast of Mary Magdalene: _Dixit Jesus: Maria. Conversa illa dicit ei: Rabboni. Et dicit ei: Noli me tangere; nondum enim ascendi ad patrem meum. Alleluia. alleluia_


_Auete. Nolite timere_

From the Rouen drama, Young (1933, 1: 660). Young does not suggest it for Barking.

_Dic nobis maria_

_Sepulcrum christi_

_Angelicos testes_

_Surrexit christus spes nostra_

These four chants are from the sequence _Victimae paschali laudes_. The usual text is _Dic nobis Maria_, not _Dixit nobis Maria_, as the MS reads. Young does not include the expanded text for this chant but does for the others. Text taken from [http://www.preces-latinae.org/thesaurus/Hymni/VictimaePaschali.html](http://www.preces-latinae.org/thesaurus/Hymni/VictimaePaschali.html).

_Credendum est_ (Young, 1933, 1:384).

_Scimus christum_ (Young, 1933, 1:384).

_Christus resurgens_

Cantus [http://cantusdatabase.org/node/375061](http://cantusdatabase.org/node/375061) Antiphon for Easter. See also above p. 34.
References


