

Article

'Mary Magdalene Rises from the Dust,' Twice

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Abstract: Liturgy was the perfect and unparalleled medium for public relations in the Middle Ages, and when it came to relics, it could transform any stone, bone, or a piece of wood into an object worthy of devotion. This article revolves around the activating force of the relics of Mary Magdalene in medieval France. It examines two liturgies—from Vézelay and from Saint-Maximin in Provence—honouring the saint, representing two distinct responses whose character reflects the priorities of the communities that produced them and the agendas that set them in motion. Liturgy was accorded a special role in bolstering the claims of Provence over the corporeal presence of Mary Magdalene in its midst, with liturgists adopting a more audacious and unreserved vocabulary to validate these claims over those of Vézelay.

Keywords: liturgy; office; Provence; Mary Magdalene; medieval France; miracles

1. Introduction

Relics—the bones and even bodily fluids of saints, objects belonging to them, or having been in contact with them—were of the utmost importance in the Middle Ages. They provided a focal point for worship and meditation, stimulated pilgrimage, and augmented the revenues of churches and the commercial hubs that usually sprang up around them. Relics were sometimes discovered (the Latin *inventio*, often used in relation to relics in medieval documents, means both the action of discovery and of invention) and exchanged as presents between churches. They were venerated on special feast days inscribed in the church calendar, carried during processions, and inspired numerous works of art. Considered to be inert authentications and witnesses to some of the most poignant and formative events at the basis of the Christian faith, relics conjured up the proximity of saints and events that were chronologically and/or geographically distant, thus putting the faithful in touch with the most fundamental facets of their faith. Thus, relics were the cornerstones of devotion, community building, and personal and institutional identity. To modern people, it is often unclear how relics achieved such a crucial status and performed such vital functions.

Relics are inert objects. They cannot accomplish anything by themselves, and in order to instil them with meaning and publicise their significance far and wide, someone has to create an effective campaign of public relations for them. The medieval church had at its disposal a powerful and effective tool to achieve exactly that, one that had been tried successfully for hundreds of years: liturgy, the activating mechanism of religion. The formal, sanctioned manner of Christian worship, liturgy was and still is a concoction of texts and music accompanied by a series of well-orchestrated bodily gestures and the occasional procession. The texts forming the backbone of liturgy are drawn from the Old and New Testaments, but they are often accompanied by a more recent *Vita* of this or that saint, some fresh miracle account, or by excerpts of some theological tract. The music is either newly composed or else recycled from time-honoured chants. Liturgy was a calculated, multi-layered, and joint effort, and to its faithful consumers, it exuded divine, uncontested truth. We may think of medieval liturgy as the ultimate form of mass media, long before there were any printed books, newspapers, and, of course, the internet.



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Although nowadays we can access various social media platforms from the comfort of our smartphones, Christian men and women in the Middle Ages had to go to church to obtain their share of religious media. On any given day of the year, a liturgy dedicated to a certain feast was celebrated in medieval churches according to a liturgical calendar that was, by and large, fixed.¹ From cathedrals to small parish churches, from York to Bari, the feast of St Martin, for instance, was always celebrated on 11 November, and the liturgy dedicated to him was practically identical all over Europe. Modern men and women take this kind of simultaneity of experience for granted: watching a live football match or the Eurovision contest from the comfort of our screens wherever we happen to be in the world. Liturgy was the perfect and unparalleled medium for public relations in the Middle Ages, and when it came to relics, it could transform any stone, bone, or a piece of wood into an object worthy of devotion.²

This article revolves around the activating force of the relics of Mary Magdalene in medieval France. In the pantheon of medieval saints, there can be no doubt that Mary Magdalene occupies a place of honour. She became a well-established figure in Christian traditions thanks to liturgy, and emerged around the closing of the first millennium as one of the most important female saints, second only to Mary, mother of Jesus. The medieval image of Mary Magdalene was a conflation of various biblical accounts and exegetical texts. There was a woman named Mary Magdalene in the New Testament who came from a village called Magdala on the western shores of the Sea of Galilee, and who, together with other women, sustained Jesus during his preaching and travels. She was the woman whom Christ healed of demonic possession, and who was present at the Passion, interment, and resurrection of Christ, thus occupying a central place in the history of salvation.³ At the hands of medieval exegetes, she also came to be identified with two other women; the sinful woman (allegedly a prostitute), whose sins Christ forgave after she wet his feet with her own tears, dried them with her hair, and anointed them with an ointment from an alabaster jar (Luke 7: 36–50). The New Testament specifies neither the nature of her sins nor her name. Finally, Mary Magdalene was also conflated with Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, who received Jesus at her house in Bethany and later witnessed the resurrection of her brother Lazarus (John 11: 1–45; 12: 1–8). The late-antique confusion as to who exactly Mary Magdalene was, and the consequent interplay between the trio of Marys that characterised the writings of the Church Fathers, largely ended with Gregory the Great, who, in the late sixth century, harmonised these three distinct women and transformed Mary Magdalene into “the familiar saint whom subsequent centuries would venerate as Mary Magdalene.”⁴

The celebration of Mary Magdalene in the West followed a trajectory that was opposite to the one it outlined in the East. In the latter, she was first venerated in the hallowed places that were associated with her or her family, that is, (1) in Bethany, beginning in the fourth century, (2) around her reputed tomb in Ephesus, from the sixth, and (3) in Constantinople, where her relics were transferred, from the ninth century. Only at a much later period did she become a permanent fixture in liturgical calendars and manuscripts.⁵ In the former, she was first celebrated in the liturgy incidentally, as a witness to the resurrection of Christ during Paschal Time, only thereafter meriting a feast of her own celebrating her (Saxer 1959, vol. I, p. 34). Not until the 10th century, however, was there physical evidence in the West suggesting a localised veneration of Mary Magdalene, with an altar dedicated to her in Saint-Stephen in Halberstadt, Germany, and a church in Exeter claiming to have a relic of hers, possibly being “among the earliest verifiable sites of the saint’s cult in the West.”⁶ The middle of the 11th century inaugurated a period of more profound and sustained attention to the devotional dimensions of Mary Magdalene in the West, with around 40 altars, chapels, and churches dedicated to her, a number that, by the end of the 14th century, would grow to some 150 (Almond 2023, p. 126).

As the cult of Mary Magdalene in France gradually metamorphosed, prayers for her feast day first appeared in the ninth century, but a complete set of Mass propers and an entire office were first attested only in the eleventh or twelfth centuries. Various

sources from the end of the sixth century onwards indicate that Mary Magdalene and “her sister Martha” were commemorated on 19 January,⁷ although when Bede introduced Mary Magdalene to his martyrology at around 720, he fixed her *die natalis* to 22 July. More than a century later, the feast spread from Anglo-Saxon England to the Carolingian world, where it first appeared in the Martyrology of Ado of Vienne, copied ca. 855, before being incorporated into the Roman Martyrology by the tenth century. When it comes to actual liturgy for Mary Magdalene and Martha, as opposed to mere inscriptions in calendars, the Bethany sisters (19 January) made their debut only at the end of the 8th century, with a Mass found in the Frankish-Gelasian sacramentary of Gellone (BnF 12048, f. 14r-v). In the next two centuries or so, only eight further sacramentaries had any liturgical items for the 19 January feast, but given their function, used, by the officiating priest at Mass and transmitting only the texts of prayers and prefaces recited by him, they contained none of the proper or ordinary chants of the Mass that give liturgy its unique local character.⁸ The January feast then trickles into a small number of 11th-century missals and in a greater stream during the 12th century, with chants evidently taken from the Common of Virgins. Thereafter, the feast gradually vanishes from service books, with the 22 July feast taking precedence.⁹

2. “Buried near Aix, You Are Carried to the Domain of Vézelay”

The first sanctuary dedicated to Mary Magdalene in France—a collegiate church in Verdun—was consecrated in 1049, and soon thereafter, other churches and sanctuaries began to be dedicated to her in places such as Reims, Besançon, Bayeux, and others.¹⁰ It was the Benedictine abbey of Vézelay in Burgundy that first made the most persistent effort to claim possession of Mary Magdalene, but as we shall see below, by the end of the 13th century, a small church in Provence, Saint-Maximin, northeast of Marseille, would challenge Vézelay’s position and reclaim Mary Magdalene as its own. In 1050, Mary Magdalene was made the co-titular saint of Vézelay, a church that, up to that time, had been dedicated to Christ, the Virgin, the apostles Peter and Paul, and the martyrs Andeux and Pontian. By 1058, she was already acknowledged as the abbey’s titular saint, and in a bull written about three weeks before he died, Pope Stephen IX essentially confirmed Vézelay’s claims when he acknowledged that the relics of Mary Magdalene rested in the abbey.¹¹ By that time, Vézelay had already positioned itself as a major centre for the cult of Mary Magdalene in the West, and would remain so for the next three centuries or so.¹²

The 11th century marks a watershed in the reception of Mary Magdalene in the West, owing to the composition of a first *Vita* of sorts, the earliest extant synthesis of the Gospel stories about Mary Magdalene, Mary of Bethany, and the sinful woman into a single coherent narrative. The latter belonged to the genre of hagiography—perhaps the most read and widely circulated medieval literary genre—that included miracle accounts and Lives. The aforementioned *Vita* was, in fact, a sermon entitled *In veneratione sanctae Mariae Magdalenaee*, once attributed to the Benedictine Odo, abbot of Cluny, but which, in all probability, was composed before 1040 by a monk from Vézelay. It combines all passages from Scripture relating to the lives of the three “Marys”, and makes Mary Magdalene worthy of veneration and imitation on two principle accounts: because she led an exemplary contemplative life, and because she could “open the gates of Paradise to the sinner ready to repent”, being a more accessible figure than the blameless Virgin, mother of God (Almond 2023, pp. 75–76). From the 11th century onward, the sermon/*Vita*, together with Gregory the Great’s two homilies on the Gospels (nos. 25 and 33), formed the backbone of office lessons for Mary Magdalene’s 22 July feast.¹³ To account for the supposed presence of her relics in Burgundy, new details were added to the aforementioned sermon in the course of the 11th century, narrating “how a monk called Badilus was sent to Provence in 749 to rescue Mary Magdalene’s imperilled relics from Saracen invaders”, by bringing them to Burgundy.¹⁴ According to a different account, likewise composed in Vézelay but several decades later, the relics of Mary Magdalene were translated from their original resting place in the Holy Land somewhere between 880 and 884 by count Girart de Rousillon, founder

of Vézelay (Saxer 1975, pp. 77–81). Be as it may, it was the former account—originating in the milieu of Vézelay and developed and recounted in several of the saint’s Vitae and a host of miracle accounts, later also promulgated through Jacobus de Voragine’s the *Golden Legend*—that enabled Vézelay to germinate into a popular and prosperous destination for pilgrims, one that thrived well into the late 13th century.¹⁵

Just as in many other churches in the West, in Vézelay too Mary Magdalene was celebrated on 22 July, but testifying to the passion in which she was venerated there, the monks encompassed her main feast with a vigil and an octave, the time-honoured way to indicate elevated interest in a feast.¹⁶ But they also had another device in their liturgical arsenal—creating a totally new feast that would definitively draw attention to the relics of the saint, which they claimed rested in their abbey. The date of the translation of Mary Magdalene’s relics from Provence to Vézelay was fixed on 19 March, and beginning in the 11th century, the monks of Vézelay produced an office celebrating the event, as well as numerous miracle accounts that emphasised that Mary Magdalene’s healing powers were available to those who came to pray next to her tomb in Vézelay.¹⁷ In principle, both ploys—foregrounding an existing feast and instituting a new one—were tried and tested, and as the fortunes (both financial and otherwise) of Vézelay were dwindling (see more on p. X below), others in Provence took notice and plotted to restore the glory of Provence by claiming back the relics of Mary Magdalene as their own, ultimately gaining the upper hand.

Liturgy for the 19 March celebration is extant in nine manuscripts, but the feast itself is attested in a far greater number of manuscripts, mainly in the calendars of some twenty additional sources.¹⁸ A version of the Vézelay translation office adapted for secular use is found in the Vatican, Biblioteca apostolica vaticana, Archivio Cap. S. Pietro E.25, a manuscript commissioned by Louis I duke of Anjou (r. 1360–1384), perhaps in 1380, for the use of monks from Vézelay abbey studying at the university of Paris.¹⁹ A short compendium of 55 folios, it comprises not only an office for the translation of Mary Magdalene replete with music, but also prayers, miracle accounts, legends, and papal diplomas, all relating to Mary Magdalene. The opening legend, the so-called *Translatio posterior*, accounts for the presence of the saint’s relics in Vézelay by telling the story of how, in 749, a monk called Badilus was sent by the abbey’s founder, count Girard, and by abbot Heudo, on a mission to rescue the relics of Mary Magdalene from the hands of the Saracens, who invaded the city of Aix. Amid the destruction and death he witnessed in Aix, Badilus managed to find the relics of Mary Magdalene, and after an arduous journey back to Vézelay, the relics were welcomed into the abbey with great pomp and excitement.²⁰

Those immediately rejoicing with burning incense and burning candles, carrying crosses forward and dressed in white, met them, still living in the aforesaid place. When they had come, they all prostrated themselves on the ground, praying to the omnipotence of the divine majesty, and beseeching more attentively the very dear friend of our Lord Jesus Christ, Mary, to allow the remains of her body to be carried from that place to the monastery. They immediately rose from prayer, and when they tried to advance, went with such agility, feeling almost no weight, that they were thought to be carrying themselves rather than carrying anyone. Finally, with the greatest exultation, with the clanging of bells ringing and the resounding melodies of the monks, lit by many lamps, they brought it [the “weight”] into the church originally consecrated in honour of the mother of God and the holy apostles Peter and Paul, and there, as was fitting, they placed it honourably on the fourteenth of April. In this place, the beloved of God, namely, the blessed Mary Magdalene, shone forth with the virtues of various and innumerable signs.

Qui statim gaudentes, cum turibus tymiamate vaporantibus cereisque accensis, preeuntibus crucibus, niueis induti vestibis, occurrerunt illis, in predicto loco inuitis adhuc degentibus. Quo venientes, cuncti sese humi prostrauerunt, orantes omnipotentiam diuine maiestatis ipsamque amicissimam Domini nostri Iesu Christi Mariam attentius obsecrantes, ut a loco illo deferri ad monasterium

glebam sui corporis permetteret. Qui illico ab oratione surgentes, ut progredi tentauerunt, tanta agilitate perrexerunt, nullum pene pondus sentientes, ut magis ipsimet portari quam ut quippiam ferrent existimarentur. Denique cum summa exultatione, tinnulis signorum perstreptentibus melodiisque monachorum resonantibus, pluribus luminaribus accensis, intromiserunt illud in ecclesiam Dei genitricis sanctorumque apostolorum Petri et Pauli honore a principio sacratam, atque ibidem, ut decebat, honorifice quarto decimo kalendas aprilis reposuerunt. Quo in loco exhinc diuersis atque innumeris signorum virtutibus ipsa Deo dilecta, beata scilicet Maria Magdalene, claruit.

As we would expect from a narrative whose main motive is to lay claim to Mary Magdalene's relics, the *Translatio posterior* is rife with references to both the saint and Vézelay. Surprisingly, however, Vézelay is mentioned nowhere in the Divine Office on 5 March. Instead, the Vézelay translation liturgy revolves around the traditional themes that became synonymous with Mary Magdalene ever since Gregory the Great sketched her image out of three New Testament women. One of the opening responsories of the lengthy office hour of Matins, for instance, exhorts every age to celebrate the translation of Mary Magdalene ("Letetur omne seculum in translatione sancte Marie. . ."), making no particular reference to the monks of Vézelay or the people of Burgundy. Another Matins responsory recalls how Mary Magdalene "anointed Jesus's feet and washed them with her hair and the house was filled with the smell of perfume" (Felix Maria unxit pedes Iesu, et extersit capillis suis, et domus impleta est ex odore unguenti"), while the verse of the responsory *Completum est igitur* reminds the faithful that "When the redeemer of the world was crucified, the disciples were scattered. And Mary Magdalene stood at a distance" (Crucifixo redemptore seculi, dispersi sunt discipuli. Stabat autem a longe Maria Magdalene").

In addition to recalling her role as witness to the resurrection of Christ, the Vézelay liturgy pays homage to Mary Magdalene in her capacity as sister of Lazarus and Martha and as a repentant sinner. The antiphon opening the third Matins nocturn asserts that while Martha "was busy serving" Jesus, Mary Magdalene, on the other hand, "sitting at the feet of the Lord, listened to the words coming out of his mouth" ("Satagebat igitur Martha, soror Marie Magdalene, circa ministeria, que sedens secus pedes Domini, audiebat verba oris eius"). Paraphrasing John 11:21, the responsory *Lugens pie defunctum*, moreover, recalls how "Lamenting her dead brother Lazarus, Mary Magdalene said to Jesus: Lord, if you were here, my brother Lazarus would not have died" ("Lugens pie defunctum fratrem suum Lazarum, Maria Magdalene dixit ad Iesum: Domine, si fuisses hic, non esset mortuus Lazarus, frater meus"). The responsory concluding Matins focuses attention on the intercessory powers of Mary Magdalene, who, contrite and fallible, is now a "consolation of the sinner": "Mary Magdalene, deign to intercede for us before the Lord our God, for you are not ignorant of human frailty. Hear, Lady, and see and incline thine ear!" (O Peccatoris solatium, Maria Magdalene, intercedere digneris ad Dominum Deum nostrum pro nobis. Quia humanam fragilitatem non ignoras. Audi, Domina, et vide, et inclina aurem tuam). Finally, the Lauds hymn pays tribute to the double act of cleansing that had earned the originally anonymous woman, later conflated with Mary Magdalene, the fame of being a penitent sinner; cleaning the feet of Christ with her tears, she "washes herself of the stain of her crime. Having shown much love for the Lord, she now looks forward to an eternal reward in the heavenly palace" (Maria fuis crinibus, procumbens Christi pedibus, dum rigat eum lacrimis, se lavat sorde criminis. Nunc consecuta plurimum amoris erga Dominum, in celorum palatio perhenni gaudet premio).²¹

It is only during the Mass celebrated on 19 March, however, that those present in Vézelay abbey would have had an opportunity to *hear* what seemingly no longer needed to be reaffirmed: Mary Magdalene was buried in their midst. Following the Alleluia *Optima partem elegit*, the sequence *Maria de Magdalo* comprises five double versicles, rhymed and in regular accentual rhythm (see page X below for the Latin text and English translation). Just as throughout the office examined above, the sequence sings the praises of Mary Magdalene's New Testament life, with the customary allusions to her service to Christ, her

compassion, and her bearing witness to his resurrection. The fourth double-versicle strophe moves away from the New Testament to hagiographical time by alluding to a miracle that, from the 12th century onward, became one of the most popular and widespread about Mary Magdalene; indeed, a third of the space dedicated to her in the Golden Legend revolves around that one miracle. As the story goes, she converted the pagan prince of Provence and his wife to Christianity after promising to grant a son to the wife, who had been hitherto sterile. Setting out by boat on a pilgrimage to Rome, their ship encountered a violent storm; the woman delivered the boy prematurely, and they both died on the boat. The crew left the two bodies on a desert island, and the prince continued to Rome, where he spent two years. On his way back to Marseille, he asked to visit that desert island, and, lo and behold, he found his two-year-old son alive and healthy, next to the body of his dead mother. As soon as the prince prayed to Mary Magdalene, his wife awakened.²² Mirroring the opening strophe, the sequence concludes with a supplication to the saint for salvation and advocacy on behalf of sinners. Interspersed with this petition, articulated by expressive and lofty sentiments, are two details expressed succinctly and matter-of-factly: Mary Magdalene was buried near Aix, but she is now in Vézelay.

The Sequence *Maria de Magdalo*; Source: Vatican, Archivio Cap. S. Pietro E. 25, ff. 39v-41²³

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| <p>1a. Maria de Magdalo, te duce, didascalo, subtrahamur scandalo prauitatis.</p> <p>1b. Arcus, archa federis, vallis Achor, aperis spem reis et miseris desperatis.</p> <p>2a. Iesu cum familia vite necessaria propria de copia das, Maria.</p> <p>2b. Bis perunctis pedibus, sponso caput dulcibus unguis aromatibus, sponsa pia.</p> <p>3a. Tu passo compateris et cum crucifigeris, nec in morte deseris, flens, auctorem.</p> <p>3b. Prompta Iesum ungere, prima vides surgere de sepulchri funere Redemptorem.</p> <p>4a. Hunc prophetas scandere thronum Patris dextere, nos ut urbis supere locum paret.</p> <p>4b. Mortue biennio vitam, victum filio das, et pater tedio per te caret.</p> <p>5a. Post heremi gemitus diem prescis transitus, versus Aquis primitus tumulata.</p> <p>5b. Introlata predium Vizeliacensium, sis ad te clamantium aduocata. Amen.</p> | <p>1. Mary Magdalene, under your guidance, through your teaching, may we be saved from the scandal of evil! Arc, ark of the covenant, valley of Achor, you open hope to the guilty and the desperate unfortunates.</p> <p>2. Mary, you give to Jesus with his family what is necessary for life from your own possessions. Having twice anointed his feet, you anoint your husband's head with spices, sweet wife!</p> <p>3. You have pity on the one who suffers and when he is crucified, you do not abandon your creator, weeping. You are quick to anoint Jesus, you are the first to see the Redeemer rise from the tomb.</p> <p>4. May this prophet ascend to the throne at the right hand of the Father to prepare a place for us in the heavenly city. Two years, you restore life to the dead and you give life to the son, and the father, thanks to you, is not afflicted.</p> <p>5. After the laments of the desert, you know in advance the day of your death, buried near Aix. You are carried to the domain of Vézelay, be the advocate of those who cry out to you! Amen.</p> |
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Clearly, the assembly of chants constituting the liturgy honouring the translation of Mary Magdalene in Vézelay gave precedence to the biblical contours of the saint, echoing time and again the events that shaped her medieval reception in the West. The sequence *Maria de Magdalo* is one of just two chants in the entire 19 March liturgy to mention Vézelay as the resting place of the saint's relics; the other sequence for this feast, *Ave, sancta Magdalena*, likewise concludes with an allusion to the whereabouts of the saint, this time also paying tribute to Badilus, the only chant throughout the liturgy to name him: "Removed from the Aix region, transported to Vézelay by St Badilus, there for a long time hidden, now raised in a reliquary, lead us to the vision of God. Amen" (A pago Aquis sublata, Vizeliaci translata, per beatum Badilonem, Ibi diu tunc celata, duc, in capsula iam leuata, nos ad Dei visionem. Amen)²⁴. Both sequences culminate with references to Aix and Vézelay, yet in a way that seems neutral. The dispassionate tone and the scarcity of references to Vézelay in the chants are perhaps because the latter were performed against the background of a *Vita* (the so-called *Translatio posterior*) which, as we have seen above, was rife with allusions to

Vézelay, and whose sole purpose was to associate Mary Magdalene with Vézelay and to warrant the liturgy that was about to be celebrated that day.

The liturgy commemorating the translation of Mary Magdalene to Vézelay effectively made the abbey into a major destination for pilgrims in its own right, and also a stopover en route to Santiago de Compostela. Thanks to the Magdalen cult and its association with the crusading enterprise, Vézelay gained considerable prestige; not only did it forge “a link to apostolic Christianity”, but it also forged one to the French monarchy.²⁵ King Louis IX, for instance, visited the abbey no less than four times during his reign, twice in the context of crusading: in 1248, before he left for the Seventh Crusade, and in 1270, on his way south to his final attempt at crusading in 1270. And yet, the 13th century marked an increasingly difficult period for Vézelay, with the monks revolting against their abbot, often accused of corruption, various secular forces threatening to take control over the abbey (first the counts of Nevers, later the French monarchy), and new monks that were deemed as ill-suited joining the monastic community. Above all, however, it was the diminishing trust of pilgrims in the authenticity of the Magdalen relics in Vézelay, attested from around the 1260s, that undermined its stature as a champion of her cult, apparently because the relics were rarely shown to the public. Determined to change that reality, and anticipating a papal decree to reform the abbey, abbot John of Auxerre (r. 1252–1274) orchestrated an event during which, on 4 October 1265, the bronze coffer reportedly containing the relics of Mary Magdalene was ceremoniously opened up, and in addition to bones, it fortuitously also contained a letter by some “King Charles” attesting to the authenticity of the relics. Two years later, King Louis IX would preside over the translation of the saint’s relics to a new silver casket, giving further credence to Vézelay’s claims.²⁶ Perhaps too little, too late: it was another “Charles”, who, in 1279, would turn the fortunes of Provence around, marking the turning point for the cult of Mary Magdalene in France as a whole. As we shall see, liturgy was accorded a special role in bolstering the claims of Provence over the corporeal presence of Mary Magdalene in its midst, with liturgists adopting a more audacious and unreserved vocabulary to validate these claims over those of Vézelay.

3. “Magdalene Rises from the Dust” in Provence

As sources from Vézelay narrated and as the Golden Legend later popularised, it was 14 years “after the Lord’s Passion and ascension into heaven” that Mary Magdalene arrived by boat on the shores of The Camargue, in the south of France, together with her brother Lazarus. While the latter was concerned with preaching the Gospel in Marseille, the former joined St Maximin, one of the 72 disciples of Christ, in Aix-en-Provence, where he was to become the city’s first bishop shortly thereafter. Subsequently, Mary Magdalene retreated to a cave “made ready by the hands of angels” in Sainte-Baume, where she led an ascetic life of prayer and fasting for thirty years.²⁷ In July 1254, on his way back from his first crusade, the boat of Louis IX landed in Hyères, where his horses were nourished and prepared for the journey across France. According to Jean de Joinville, who accompanied the king during his first crusade to Egypt and his visit to the Holy Land (1248–1254) and wrote a memoir about it, Louis visited Aix-en-Provence, “where it is said that the body of Mary Magdalene rested; and we were in a rock cave, very high, there were it was said that Mary Magdalene was a hermit for 17 years”.²⁸ Several decades after the visit of Louis IX, moreover, the focal point of the veneration of Mary Magdalene would be transferred from Vézelay in Burgundy to Provence; first to Sainte-Baume and soon thereafter to Saint-Maximin.

Notwithstanding the well-established cult of Mary Magdalene at Vézelay, the success of which was attributed to the celebration of her relics at the monastery, the whereabouts of the saint’s relics were called into question when, on 9 December 1279, the Angevin prince Charles of Salerno (1254–1309), nephew of Louis IX, grandson of Blanche of Castile, and the future Charles II of Naples (r. 1285–1309), opened a marble sarcophagus in the crypt of Saint-Maximin. Contemporary and later chroniclers recount how, upon inspection, the prince discovered that the relics were those of Mary Magdalene.²⁹ Certifying the identity of the relics was a propitious discovery of a document inside the sarcophagus allegedly

written on 16 December 700. Upon discovery, a sweet perfume was reportedly emitted from the relics, and a branch of either palm or a plant resembling fennel came out of the skeleton's mouth, taken by one of the chroniclers to be a symbol of Mary Magdalene's preaching.³⁰ In a solemn ceremony that took place less than five months later, on 5 May 1280, in the presence of numerous lay and religious dignitaries, the relics of Mary Magdalene were translated into two opulent reliquaries, one containing her head, and the other the rest of her body.³¹ A campaign mounted in subsequent years by Charles II put pressure on Rome to validate the veracity of the claims issued in Saint-Maximin, and to discredit, once and for all, the claims of Vézelay. In a bull dated 3 April 1295, Pope Boniface VIII (r. 1294–1303) ruled in favour of the relics found in Saint-Maximin, established the Dominican Order as guardian of the church, replacing the Benedictines of Saint-Victor of Marseille who had been entrusted with the task up till then, and authorised indulgences to all the pilgrims who would flock around the relics of the saint in Saint-Maximin on either of the two Magdalene feasts (the long-established one on 22 July, and the newly established one on 5 May, commemorating the translation of her relics in Saint-Maximin) and during their respective octaves.³²

For the Dominican Jean Gobi the Elder, the third prior of the convent at Saint-Maximin (1304–1328), the numerous miracles taking place during pilgrimages to Saint-Maximin were the ultimate proof that the relics of Mary Magdalene indeed found their resting place in his church. Around the year 1315, during his tenure at Saint-Maximin, he produced a book of 84 miracles attributed to Mary Magdalene (*Liber miraculorum beate Marie Magdalene*), more than half of which focus attention on the presence of the saint's relics in his church.³³ The miracle accounts, taking place above all in Saint-Maximin, relate how Mary Magdalene restored sight to the blind and hearing faculties to the deaf, healed the mentally and physically infirm, and released prisoners. According to the *Liber miraculorum*, pilgrims flocking to Saint-Maximin often took great risks to get there; they hailed from 62 different places, from Genoa to Toulouse and from Valence to Toulon, and there was even one pilgrim, a Portuguese sailor, who walked for more than 40 days to reach the church from an unspecified location, so that he might be blessed with a miracle.³⁴ Acknowledging the competition with Vézelay and the need to stake Saint-Maximin's claims to the disputed relics of Mary Magdalene, the book of miracles concludes by recounting a miracle Gobi heard while attending the Dominican chapter held in Metz in 1313. A Dominican friar present in the chapter meeting had told Gobi how the monks of Vézelay had gifted a relic of Mary Magdalene to his monastery in Lausanne, founded in 1234 under the patronage of Mary Magdalene. One day, a man reportedly possessed by the devil arrived at his monastery so that he could be exorcised with the help of that relic. Upon being presented with the said relic by the sacristan, the devil himself profusely protested, asking the sacristan "Friar, what are you saying? What are you saying? Be careful of what you are saying. . . Clearly, friar, you have no idea what you are talking about [that is, the relic supposedly belonging to Mary Magdalene]. . . there is nothing here that belongs to the body or to the relics of Mary Magdalene. This is why I will not exit from this man's body".³⁵ Obviously, Gobi wished to leave no doubt in the minds of his readers by concluding his book with an account that discredited Vézelay's claims, downplayed its role as a cult centre of Mary Magdalene, and promoted Saint-Maximin as the authentic site in which the saint's relics rested and worked miracles.

As Katherine Jansen has already noted, chronicles and miracle accounts were not the only means that gave prominence to the connection between Mary Magdalene and Provence in general, and Prince Charles in particular, thus making the cult ostensibly royal and personal. Latin poetry performed (whether read or chanted) annually in the course of the liturgical observance on 5 May, and even more frequently during the numerous processions to the saint's tomb by pilgrims, also imparted knowledge about the role that Charles played in the history of Mary Magdalene in Provence. In 1283, on the order of Charles, the skull of Mary Magdalene was transferred to a golden reliquary in the shape of a head made of gold, "fitted with a crystal face through which the faithful could view" the

relic.³⁶ The reliquary was inscribed with eight verses, the concluding part of a much longer Latin hymn honouring, above all, prince Charles.³⁷ Right from the outset, the opening verse of the hymn *Inclita Francorum proles* (see page X below for the Latin text and English translation of the entire hymn), composed in Leonine verse, identifies the prince as that “famous descendant of the Franks” and king of Sicily, and praises him for discovering the relics of Mary Magdalene. Subsequent verses heap praise on Charles, repeatedly stressing that it was thanks to him that the cult of the saint was established in Provence. On the whole, the hymn is rife with verbs of agency: Charles acts, appeases Christ, begins to seek Mary, finds her, he opens, examines and reads the charter (a reference to the so-called cartellus, a small piece of parchment, reportedly found in the sarcophagus in which the saint’s relics were found, and dating to the eighth century),³⁸ orders prelates to touch the saint’s relics, and places her arm in a silver reliquary.³⁹ The inscription on the 1283 golden reliquary containing her skull authorised and activated the relic as personal object of devotion for Charles, instrumental in his own salvation. “Give him heaven when he is dead!”, reads the final line of the hymn engraved on the reliquary that set the saint’s skull apart from her other remains, dividing the intercessory powers of Mary Magdalene between Charles (the head reliquary, a symbol that surely did not escape his attention) and everyone else. *Inclita Francorum proles* seems to have never been part of the liturgy dedicated to Mary Magdalene,⁴⁰ but there existed liturgy composed expressly for the 5 May festivities at Saint-Maximin, to which we now turn our attention.

*The Hymn Inclita Francorum proles*⁴¹

Inclita Francorum proles, Karolus rex Siculorum,
Quem devotorum genuit grex tantus avorum!
Hujus ad experta fuit alma Maria reperta,
Ut dixit certa sibi visio vox et aperta.

Quando revelatur sibi visio, rex animatur.
Christo donatur laus, postea sic operatur:
Pre Dominum lenit precibus, post querere renit
Mariam tunc invenit, que nec numismate venit;
Occurrit tacta sibi carta vetus vere fracta,
Obvia ter facta minibus, quamvis ter abacta;
Cernitur, accipitur, regis digitis aperitur,
Inspicitur, legitur, quod queritur invenitur.

Multos prelatos fore rex jubet assimilatos
Et consecratos artus tractare beatos.
Miri fragores redolent et odores,
Cedunt langores, Domino cantantur honores.
Corpus inaltatur, argentea capsula paratur,
In qua condatur, super hoc altare locatur.
Carne prius lubrica, post hec plorando pudica,
Hospita mirifica, Christi specialis amica,
Transita post maria, micuit bonitate Maria.
Bis sexcenteno junctis tribus octuageno
Princeps Salerne bonitatis amore superne
Hanc auro donat quam clara corona decorat.
Ergo patrona pia, tu semper adesto Maria
Hic huic viventi! Paradisum da morienti!

Famous descendant of the Franks, Charles, king of Sicily,
you whom such a large flock of devout ancestors
engendered! Saint Mary was discovered thanks to his
efforts, when a sure vision and a clear voice spoke to him.
When the vision is revealed to him, the king is inspired.
Praise is given to Christ, then he acts as follows: first, he
appeases Christ with his prayers, then he begins to seek
Mary, then he finds her, she who was not bought for a
coin. The ancient charter presents itself to him, having
truly been broken, it presents itself three times to his
hands, although it has been rejected three times, it is seen,
received, opened by the fingers of the king; it is examined,
read, we find what we are looking for.

The king orders that many prelates be called, and that
consecrated men touch the holy limbs. Surprising smells
and scents give languor, illnesses fade away, we sing
praises to God. [Magdalene’s] body is lifted, a silver
receptacle is prepared to place it there, it is placed on
this altar.

With a flesh at first lascivious, then modest in weeping
[for its sins], admirable hostess, special friend of Christ,
after crossing the seas, Mary shines with kindness. In one
thousand two hundred and eighty-three [1283] the prince
of Salerno, for love of heavenly goodness, decorates with
gold that which he adorns with a brilliant crown. So
sweet patron, always come to his aid, Maria, as long as he
lives here! Give him heaven when he is dead!

The office for Mary Magdalene’s translation is extant in two medieval breviaries, both without musical notation: (1) a 14th-century breviary from the diocese of Aix (Archives départementales des Bouches-du-Rhône, 2 G 1859, ff. 306v-308),⁴² and (2) a breviary from Aix copied in 1467 (Paris, Lat. 1061, ff. 272-273).⁴³ We can be certain, however, that contrary

to *Inclita Francorum proles*, the chants dotting the Magdalen liturgy they transmit were indeed meant to be sung, for they are preceded by rubrics clearly presenting them as musical genres (an antiphon, a responsory, and a hymn), and they appear in positions within the office that dictated chanting (before and after lesson readings during Matins or during Vespers). Neither the hymns (characterised by their strophic form and metrical regularity) nor the antiphons or responsories (with their prose texts) for the 5 May feast are extant with their melodies. The latter may have been newly composed for the new feast, or else recycled from existing chants, a *modus operandi* regularly employed in the medieval church.

The Magnificat, sung towards the end of Vespers, is one of three New Testament canticles dotting the daily performance of the Divine Office.⁴⁴ Also known as the Song of the Blessed Virgin, the Magnificat takes its name after the opening word of Luke 1: 46–55 (Magnificat anima mea Dominum) and conveys Mary's words of praise and excitement about the news that she shall give birth to Christ. As with every other canticle or Psalm verse(s), the chanting of the Magnificat was customarily accompanied by an antiphon, a short chant in prose set syllabically (that is, one note per syllable). Whereas the text of the Magnificat was identical in every church in which it was sung (usually to a formulaic recitation tone), the text of the antiphon that went with it changed from church to church and depended on the liturgical feast commemorated that day. The antiphon to the Magnificat for the translation of Mary Magdalene in Saint-Maximin, *Exsultet ecclesia* (see page X below for an edition of all the chants performed during the 5 May office, based on Lat. 1061), asserted that, on account of the relics of the saint, "more precious than gold", the church as a whole was bedecked with an illustrious star ("preclaro sydere").

The intimation of Mary Magdalene as a star was not fortuitous, as her first name was understood to be derived from the words *stella maris*.⁴⁵ Indeed, the office of Mary Magdalene's translation at Saint-Maximin comprises two chants with specific references to her as *stella maris*: the responsory *Benedicta maris stella* sung in Vespers hails the saint, star of the sea, as a "sanctuary of God", and the first antiphon of Matins, *Stella maris fulget*, celebrates her as the star of the sea which shines in the sky. For medieval worshippers, the words *stella maris* were, above all, associated with the Virgin Mary, first and foremost through the ubiquitous hymn *Ave maris stella* performed on numerous Marian feasts, including her Purification, Annunciation, Assumption, and Nativity, but also thanks to the incorporation of the two words in numerous other chants dedicated to her (e.g., *Alma redemptoris mater*, *Virgo parens Christi*). The reference to Mary Magdalene as a star in the antiphon to the Magnificat celebrating the Virgin's Mary role as mother of Christ (herself a "star") thus created a powerful link between the two saints. Given that the medieval understanding of Mary Magdalene relied on the merging of three different female figures from the Old and New Testament, it was perhaps only fitting that her liturgy in Provence sought to associate her with the Virgin Mary as well.

In addition to associating the two Marys via a common celestial attribute, *Exsultet ecclesia*, the antiphon to the Magnificat, also congratulates Provence for deserving her relics, ushering in another important theme of the translation office at Saint-Maximin: "Happy Provence, endowed with a happy present which is Magdalene". This and other chants betray an agenda to enhance the reputation of the region as a whole, and of Saint-Maximin and its benefactor, Prince Charles, in particular. The latter is, in fact, the subject matter of the second Matins antiphon, *Karolus, Provincie princeps*, according to which, Charles "deserved" to have in his possession the relics of Mary Magdalene ("these gifts"), suggesting that ownership of the saint's relics substantiated God's favour towards him. A similar idea, this time in relation to Saint-Maximin, is expressed in the first antiphon sung in Lauds, *Claro celi matuino*, where the relics of Mary Magdalene are likened to a new light emanating from "the body of the Magdalen [that] shone with divine radiance". Finally, the Lauds hymn *Ex omni iam Provincia*, comprising a gratuitous antisemitic reference, calls on all the faithful of Provence to "rush with deference, implore with confidence for Magdalen's intercessory prayers", presumably at the church where her relics are found. *Benedictus rex glorie*, the

antiphon to the Benedictus, moreover, celebrates the very translation of the saint's relics "worthy of this homage", on 5 May, thanks to which Provence itself is blessed.

Chants of the Translation Office of Mary Magdalene on 5 May; Source: Lat. 1961, ff. 272–73.⁴⁶

Folio number in Lat. 1061	Chant genre	Latin original	English translation
F. 272	Vespers Responsory	R. Benedicta maris stella, Magdalena, Dei cella, columbina specie, naufragantum tu ficella, pia prece fuga bella, veteris mlitie. V. Rosa rubens et novella, favus dulcis fundens mella virtutis et gratie.	R. Blessed star of the sea, Magdalene, sanctuary of God, with the appearance of a dove, you the refuge of the shipwrecked, in your goodness, put wars to flight of ancient malice. V. Red rose and brand new, sweet honey spreading your rays of virtue and grace.
F. 272r-v	Vespers hymn	1. Iam Christus sapientia, Lux, vita, salus cordium. Magdalene solemnna Dat nobis in solatium. 2. Solemnis est letitia, Commune cunctis gaudium. Magdalene presentia Nostrum ornat exilium. 3. De patris ergo gratia Manat hoc beneficium. Dum Magdalene gaudia Virtutis dant encennium. 4. Deo patri sit gloria, Christo laudis preconium, Flamini reverentia Trinitati imperium. 5. Quesumus, auctor omnium.	1. Already Christ, light, life, salvation of hearts, offers us the solemn feast of Magdalene in order to console us. 2. The joy is solemn, the joy is common to us all, the presence of Magdalene adorns our exile. 3. It is thus from the grace of the Father that this good follows, when the joys of Magdalene offer the present of the virtue. 4. Glory to God the Father, public praise to Christ, respect to the Spirit, authority to the Trinity. 5. This is what we ask, creator of all things.
F. 272v	Antiphon to the Magnificat	Exsultet ecclesia tam preclaro sydere virtutum ornata, beata provincia Magdalene munere felici dotata, vere digne gloriatur que thesauro super auro nobili ditatur.	May the Church exalt for being adorned with such an illustrious star in virtues. Happy Provence, endowed with a happy present which is Magdalene, boasts truly worthily, she who is enriched by a treasure more precious than gold.
F. 272v	Matins Hymn	1. Beata nobis gaudia Novum parat officium, Magdalene magnalia Lingue loquuntur omnium. 2. Dum hora cunctis previa Lux adest penitentium, Magdalena propitia Sis apud Deum filium. 3. Impleta gaudent omnia Deo corda fidelium, De Magdalene copia Fit nobis stillicidium. 4. Deo patri sit gloria Christo laudis preconiam, Flamini reverentia Trinitati imperium. 5. Quaesumus, auctor omnium.	1. These are new joys that this new office prepares for us, the tongues of all tell the greatness of Magdalene. 2. While at this hour which precedes all things, the light of penitents presents itself, may Magdalene be auspicious with God the Son. 3. The hearts of the faithful rejoice that everything was accomplished by God, a drop of water reaches us from Magdalene's abundance. 4. Glory to God the Father, public praise to Christ, respect to the Spirit, authority to the Trinity. 5. This is what we ask, creator of all things.
F. 272v	Matins, Antiphon 1	Stella maris fulget in ethere Magdalena surgit de pulvere gaudet orbis de tanto munere.	The star of the sea shines in the sky, Magdalene rises from the dust, the earth rejoices of such a great present.
F. 272v	Matins, Antiphon 2	Karolus, Provincie princeps et corona, alumnus clementie, flos patriae meruit hec dona.	Charles, prince and crown of Provence, son of clemency, flower of the homeland, deserved these gifts.
F. 272v	Matins, Antiphon 3	Gemma nitet speciosa, virtus exit radiosa, Marie de tumulo salus datur copiosa, Magdalene velut rosa, corpus fragrat seculo.	The precious stone shines, the radiant virtue of Mary comes out of the tomb; A bountiful salvation is given, [and] like a rose, the body of Magdalene embalms the world.

Ff. 272v-273	Responsory 1	R. Fulget dies hec serena, novae lucis radio, in qua felix Magdalena, lucerna sub modio, solemnium cum gaudio exaltatur ex arena. V. Ut eterni fontis vena nostra reddit corda plena gratie profluvio.	R. This serene day shines from the ray of a new light, during which the happy Magdalene, light under a bushel, with solemn joy, is exalted from the sand. V. Like the vein of an eternal fountain, she fills our hearts from the river of grace.
F. 273	Responsory 2	R. Archa legis deaurata fertur in oraculum, floret cedrus exaltata, dat grana manipulum, sole fit amicta mulier signaculum mundo benedicta. V. Magdalene titulum vox non ficta clamat, ornat seculum ymago relicta.	R. The golden ark of the Law is carried like an oracle, the tall cedar blooms, the sheaf gives its grains, the woman clothed with the sun, blessed, becomes a sign for the world. V. A sincere voice cries Magdalene's titles, her image that remains with us adorns the world.
F. 273	Responsory 3	R. Sacrum corpus balsamum transcendit odore, sepultura thalamum virtutum splendore, lingua signat calamum spiritus virore. V. Deitatis organum candet super Libanum fronde, fructu, flore.	R. The holy balm transcends her body in smell, the bed of her burial prevails by the splendour of her virtues, the tongue marks the calamus by the verdant spirit. V. The instrument of divinity shines on Lebanon, by its foliage, its fruit, its flower.
F. 273	Lauds Antiphon 1	Claro celi matutino, mundi cursu vespertino nova lux apparuit, dum in sancto Maximino corpus fulgore divino Magdalene claruit.	For the clear morning of the sky, for the world's late course, a new light has appeared when at Sainte Maximin, the body of the Magdalen shone with divine radiance.
F. 273	Lauds Antiphon 2	Tu, archa testamenti, cum iubilo deducta, aurora sacramenti, quo iusto cedit lucta, gratia penitenti.	You, the Ark of the Covenant led with jubilation, dawn of the sacrament which wins the fight for the just, grace to the penitent.
F. 273	Lauds Antiphon 3	Tu bortus primitivus terras designans optimas, tu parvi fontis rivus crescens in aquas plurimas.	You, the original bunch of grapes designating the best lands, you the stream of the little fountain which grows to give many waters.
F. 273	Lauds Antiphon 4	Tu ad lucem veniens clausa margarita, salutarem pariens fructum balsamita, ex te virtus exiens probat, quod sit ita.	You, coming into the light, a closed pearl, you the perfumed one, generating the beneficial fruit; the virtue that comes out of you proves that this is so.
F. 273	Lauds Antiphon 5	Gloriatur in te Deus affluens deliciis, et letatur per te reus fultus patrociniis.	God glorifies himself in you, full of delights, and the culprit is breastfed by you, by relying on your patronage.
F. 273	Lauds hymn	1. Ex omni iam Provincia Concurrant ad obsequium, Implorent cum fiducia Magdalene suffragium. 2. Iudeorum perfidia, Error absit gentilium, Magdalene prodigia Mentis illustrent gentium. 3. Sed signorum insignia Virtutumque commercium Probant, quantum in patria Sit Magdalene praemium. 4. Deo patri [sit gloria, Christo laudis praeconium, Flamini reverentia, Trinitati imperium.] 5. Quaesumus, auctor omnium.	1. May all of Provence rush with deference, implore with confidence for Magdalene's intercessory prayers. 2. Let the perfidy of the Jews be removed, the error of pagans depart; the wonders of Magdalene enlighten pagan minds. 3. Yet the remarkable signs and the union of virtues prove to what extent in the homeland Magdalene has rewards. 4. Glory to God the Father, public praise to Christ, respect to the Spirit, authority to the Trinity. 5. This is what we ask, creator of all things.
F. 273	Antiphon to the Benedictus	Benedictus rex glorie et omnis coeli concio, benedictum letitiae festum dignum obsequio, benedicta devotio benedictae Provinciae, quam benedixit hodie Magdalene translatio.	Blessed be the King of Glory and all the troop of heaven, blessed is the joyful holiday worthy of this homage, blessed Provence that the translation of Magdalene blessed today!
F. 273	Antiphon to the Magnificat, 2Vespers	O quam felix, quam delectabilis dies ista, quam venerabilis, Magdalena, flos novi germinis, revelatur et gustatur multitudo dulcedinis.	O how happy, how pleasant, how venerable is this day! Magdalene, flower of a new shoot, we reveal ourselves and we taste the multitude of her sweetness.

4. Epilogue

The two liturgies examined above represent two distinct responses whose character reflects the priorities of the communities that produced them and the agendas that set them in motion. The long-standing affection of Charles II for Mary Magdalene is well-documented; he spent the last 30 years of his life “erecting physical signs of his devotion to the saint throughout the county of Provence and the Kingdom of Naples”, including a fair number of monasteries, churches, and chapels. As we have seen, he turned Provence into the focal point of her cult in France.⁴⁷ Exactly because Charles II saw Mary Magdalene as his personal protector, others could easily interpret devotion to one as devotion to the other. The 5 March translation office, in all probability composed by a Dominican from Saint-Maximin, testifies not only to the intermingling of politics with the spiritual, but also to the association of devotional objectives, being as much a monument to Mary Magdalene as it is to Charles. The chants of the Vézelay liturgy celebrating the translation of the saint’s relics to that abbey, on the other hand, are based on a common stock of biblical and legendary narratives related to Mary Magdalene, and are essentially devoid of any localising elements and references to secular or religious authorities. If we take, for example, Louis IX, even though he visited Vézelay four times during his reign and was personally involved in promoting the cult of Mary Magdalene there, his steadfast royal patronage did not make an impact on the Vézelay liturgy. Understandably, Mary Magdalene was, for him, just one of numerous saints and relics that he honoured and venerated with various degrees of enthusiasm. Above all, his greatest devotion was to relics of the Passion, for which he built the magnificent Sainte-Chapelle in Paris, accounting for the frequent allusions to him in the Sainte-Chapelle liturgy.

The will and testament of Louis I, duke of Anjou, dated 27 September 1383, testifies to the great devotion of the duke to Mary Magdalene. Just three years prior, he commissioned the above-mentioned small compendium mostly dedicated to the liturgy of Mary Magdalene (Vatican, Archivio Cap. S. Pietro E.25), and he was determined to manifest his devotion long after his death as well. He ordained that the principle Mass on Mary Magdalene’s July and March feasts at the Sainte-Chapelle be celebrated by “a prelate”, probably a reference to the cantor or some other high-officiating clergyman. The second son of John II of France, he was understandably concerned with enhancing the cult of Mary Magdalene in the royal and monumental reliquary built by Louis IX in the middle of the 13th century. To Vézelay, he bequeathed 400 francs for repairing the reliquary “in which the glorious Mary Magdalene” rests “as many believe and say”, and 100 livres for founding a chapel dedicated to the saint, where a Mass was to be celebrated daily, as well as during each of the four feasts celebrating Mary Magdalene. Yet, he also left considerable sums of money to the two shrines in Provence that, as we have seen, challenged Vézelay’s claims about possessing the relics of Mary Magdalene during the 1280s. Louis ordered that 100 livre de rente be given for building a chapel in Sainte-Baume, the cave in which Mary Magdalene reportedly did penitence, as well as seeing to the maintenance of the cave itself and the houses founded around it; he also left 100 livres de rente tournois for a chapel at Saint-Maximin, declaring his wish that Saint-Maximin be “completed and accomplished.”⁴⁸ Victor Saxer may well have been right to suggest that, for Louis I, devotion to Mary Magdalene was a family tradition, accounting for his equal posthumous patronage to the rivalling cult centres of the saint in France. Louis I may have also been motivated to support the saint’s shrines in Provence because, during the last two years of his life, he was Count of Provence. In 1383, exactly a century after Charles, then Prince of Salerno, transferred the skull of Mary Magdalene to a golden head reliquary, setting the seal on the saint’s relics with the verses applauding him “for discovering the relics of Mary Magdalene”, Louis I provided generous financial support to sustain the two competing cult centres for Mary Magdalene in France.

The Saint-Maximin liturgy may well have distinguished the saint as “The star of the sea [shining] in the sky [who] rises from the dust”, but the dust on the saint’s relics was far from settled. Foundations, chapels, and churches continued to be dedicated to Mary Magdalene in the course of the next two centuries or so, and her relics (particularly her hair) continued

to be “found” in churches such as Saint-Jean de Nogent-le-Rotrou and Saint-Calixte de Cysoing in France, and were also in possession of the Order of Friars Minor Conventual in Marseille.⁴⁹ And yet, the rivalry between Vézelay and Saint-Maximin marked not only the heyday of the Magdalen cult in France, but also testified to the activating power of liturgy. Reactive and proactive, liturgy is a site of relatedness, of debate, of recollection, and of authority. It is composed in response to an event related to saints, objects, or concepts that arise from the combination of the latter two categories. As we have seen, it creates and regulates realities, adjusting for local needs and circumstances, fine-tuning a narrative so that it focuses on one detail and not the other.

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Notes

- 1 This is above all true for feasts of the Temporale (Easter, Christmas, and so forth), which were celebrated rather uniformly all over Europe. Feasts of the Sanctorale tended, overall, to vary more from church to church, country to country, but there existed a sizeable pool of saints who were celebrated practically universally. These included Old and New Testament saints, as well as scriptural and late martyrs, bishops, and more (for instance, saints Martin, Georges, Nicholas, Ursula).
- 2 The opening two paragraphs are based on [Maurey \(2021\)](#).
- 3 All in all, there are twelve references to Mary Magdalene in the New Testament: Matt. 27: 56, 61, 28: 1–10; Mark 15: 40, 47, 16: 1, 9–10; Luke 8: 2–3, 24: 10–11; John 19: 25, 20: 1.
- 4 [Jansen \(2001\)](#), p. 32. The entire paragraph is based on Jansen’s authoritative account of the saint in chapter one of her book.
- 5 See [Saxer 1967](#)). On the relics of Mary Magdalene in the Byzantine empire, see [\(Almond 2023, pp. 140–48\)](#).
- 6 [\(Gross-Diaz 2020, p. 158\)](#). The earliest relic of Mary Magdalene in Europe may well be the one found in 1983 in the church of Saint-André, east of Paris, and dated to the 8th century. See [\(Gross-Diaz 2020, p. 158\)](#).
- 7 [\(Saxer 1959, p. 57, n. 44\)](#).
- 8 Tours 184, BnF lat. 12050, BnF, nouv. Acq. Lat. 1589, Chartres 577 (4), BnF lat. 12052, BnF lat. 819, lat. 11589, and lat. 9433.
- 9 [\(Saxer 1959, pp. 32–45\)](#).
- 10 [\(Saxer 1959, pp. 60–65\)](#).
- 11 “... Abbatiam Viziliacensem, ubi sancta Maria Magdalena requiescit...” See [\(Saxer 1959, p. 69\)](#).
- 12 During the 12th century, which saw two crusades to the Holy Land, devotion to Mary Magdalene was considerably expanded to include most regions in France, with dozens of churches and sanctuaries dedicated to her; see [\(Saxer 1959, pp. 122–23\)](#).
- 13 On the milieu in which the sermon was composed, see [\(Iogna-Prat 1992, pp. 41–42; Iogna-Prat 1989, pp. 21–23\)](#).
- 14 [\(Jansen 2001, p. 38\)](#).
- 15 For an edition of the *Vita apostolica* and the *Translatio posterior* see [Lobrichon \(1992, vol. 104\)](#). Saxer has thoroughly recounted the fortunes of Vézelay thanks to the cult of Mary Magdalene there until the 13th century [\(Saxer 1959, pp. 60–126\)](#). For the fanciful account of Mary Magdalene in the Golden Legend (among other things, we read on p. 375 that she was very rich, and that together with her brother Lazarus, she owned “a considerable part of Jerusalem itself”), see [\(de Voragine 2012, pp. 374–83\)](#).
- 16 The 22 July feast seems to have been observed more in monastic settings than in secular churches. See [\(Saxer 1959, p. 183\)](#).
- 17 [\(Saxer 1959, pp. 69–71, 324–25; 1975, pp. 37–75\)](#). For the manuscript tradition of these miracle accounts, see [\(Saxer 1960, pp. 69–82\)](#).
- 18 [\(Saxer 1975, p. 38\)](#).
- 19 The only extant source from Vézelay to transmit the monastic office for 19 March is Lyon, Bibliothèque de la Part-Dieu (Bibliothèque municipale), 0555 (473), copied at the end of the 13th century. See [\(Saxer 1959, p. 306\)](#). On the Vatican manuscript (https://digi.vatlib.it/view/MSS_Arch.Cap.S.Pietro.E.25, accessed on 1 May 2024) and its destinaries, see [\(Saxer 1975, pp. 166–67, and 72\)](#).
- 20 For an edition of the *vita*, see [\(Lobrichon 1992, pp. 169–77\)](#). The following paragraph is drawn from Vatican, Archivio Cap. S. Pietro E.25, ff. 7v–8.
- 21 All chant texts are taken from Vatican, Archivio Cap. S. Pietro E.25.
- 22 [\(Jansen 2001, pp. 294–95\)](#).
- 23 On the whole, the Latin texts translated throughout this article are faithfully reproduced as they appear in the various sources. Diphthongs remain collapsed, and the original orthography is retained even in cases in which different letters are used inter-

changeably for similar words (the use of the letters *i* and *y* is a case in point.) Abbreviations are resolved without comment, punctuation is editorial, and common orthography is restored without comment.

24 The sequence is found in Vatican, Archivio Cap. S. Pietro E.25, ff. 43v-44v.

25 (Jansen 2001, p. 39). The association of Vézelay the crusades started after Pope Eugenius II called for a new crusade (the second one, 1147–1149), with Bernard of Clairvaux preaching for the campaign from Vézelay on Easter 1145.

26 (Saxer 1959, pp. 185–95; Almond 2023, p. 156).

27 According to the Golden Legend, it was by order of “Gerard [de Rousillon], duke of Burgundy,” the founder of Vézelay, that the saint’s relics were transferred from Aix to Vézelay (see de Voragine 2012, pp. 374–83.)

28 “Le roy s’en vint par la contee de Provence jusques a une cité que en appelle Ays en Provence, la ou l’en disoit que le cors a la Magdeleine gisoit; et fumes en une voute de roche moult haut, la ou l’en disoit que la Magdeleine avoit resté en hermitage xvii ans.” See (de Joinville 2010, p. 330).

29 For an English translation of the invention and translation account at Saint-Maximin, see (Head 2001, p. 663).

30 See (Saxer 1959, pp. 230–33). Both the Dominican inquisitor Bernard Gui (1261–1331) and Philippe de Cabassole, bishop of Cavaillon in Provence (1305–1372), wrote detailed accounts of the *inventio* of Mary Magdalene’s relics in 1279. Gui, in a book dedicated to the lives of the popes (*Flores Chronicorum seu Cathalogus Pontificum Romanorum*) written in the 1310s, and Cabassole, who held various high-ranking ecclesiastical positions in Provence, in 1335 (*Libellus hystorialis Marie beatissime Magedelene*). It was Cabassole who made the reference to the Mary Magdalene’s apostolicity. For the English translation of Gui’s account about the invention of Mary Magdalene’s relics, see (Head 2001, pp. 664–65).

31 Charles II died on that same date 25 years later, in 1309. According to a sermon written by the Dominican Giovanni Regina da Napoli (d. ca. 1350), “this was no mere coincidence: it was the final seal authenticating Mary Magdalene’s great love for her spiritual son” (Jansen 2001, p. 308).

32 (Saxer 1959, p. 241). On the process of accreditation of Mary Magdalene’s relics and on their political dimensions, see (Almond 2023, pp. 160–63; Jansen 2001, pp. 308–15; Gavoty 1855, pp. 83–85). Interestingly, the new, 5 May liturgy established at Saint-Maximin seems to have obviated the need for a separate celebration on 22 July. A breviary copied in 1467 from Aix, discussed more below, comprises an elaborate liturgy for the May feast, but none for the July one.

33 For the attribution to Gobi and on the manuscript history of the *Liber miraculorum*, see (Gobi l’Ancien 2009, pp. 29–46; Sclafer 1991, p. 64).

34 For a clear synopsis of the *Liber miraculorum* and its author, see (Montagnes 1989, pp. 49–66). Apparently, no pilgrims arrived from north of Valence, underscoring the saint’s appeal in Provence, but not in other parts of the royal domain.

35 “Frater, quid dicis tu? Quid dicis tu? Frater, avertas quid loqueris. . . Certe, frater, tu nescis quid dicis, aut etiam quid loquaris. . . quia nichil est ibi de corpore vel reliquiis Magdalene, quare propter hoc istum hominem non dimittam.” Quoted from Gobi l’Ancien, *Miracles de sainte Marie-Madeleine introduction et traduction de Jacqueline Sclafer*, 184. For an English translation of this miracle, see (Head 2001, pp. 668–69).

36 (Jansen 2001, p. 313).

37 The hymn was bound together with the book of miracles authored by Gobi and discussed above, part of an appendix comprising eight folios transmitting 11 poems in Latin, and one in Provençale. See (Albanès 1880, pp. 405–13). According to Albanès, the poems must have been written by a Dominican friar from Saint-Maximin before 1368 (*ibid.*, p. 413).

38 See (Saxer 1959, pp. 231–33).

39 The hymn does not mention the arm in relation to the silver reliquary, but as Jansen as already noted, Charles is known to have commissioned a silver arm reliquary for Mary Magdalene, and the silver arm reliquary itself is mentioned in Gobi’s *Liber miraculorum*; see (Jansen 2001, p. 314, n. 24).

40 No extant service book transmits it, nor is there any indication that it was ever set to music.

41 The Latin text is taken from Gobi and Sclafer (1996, pp. 198–99).

42 (Marbot 1899, pp. 28–30). The author provides no further details about the provenance of the manuscript nor does he offer a more precise dating of the manuscript. I sincerely thank Marie-Claire Pontier, director of the Archives départementales des Bouches-du-Rhône, for sharing with me a copy of Mary Magdalene’s office from this manuscript.

43 (Leroquais 1934, vol. III, pp. 69–71). There are very few extant liturgical service books from Aix from before the 15th century (Meyer 2019). The first extant breviary from Aix dates from the first half of the 14th century and transmits no liturgy for Mary Magdalene (Paris, lat. 1038).

44 The other two are the Benedictus (Luke 1: 67–79), and the Nunc dimittis (Luke 2: 28–32).

45 (Jansen 2001, p. 208).

46 The chant texts are presented in their order of appearance in Lat. 1061, which does not include any musical notation. Chants repeated during the liturgy during the Little Hours, for instance, are transcribed only once, where they first appear in the liturgy.

47 (Jansen 2001, p. 308).

- 48 “Voulons que en la saint chapelle du palais à Paris, soient chantées à prélat les vespers et la grant messe des festes qui s’en suivent . . . c’est à savoir. . . de la glorieuse Madeleine, de sa translation. . . Item nous voulons et ordonnos que en l’abbaye de Verzelay soit donnez CCCC francs pour une fois, pour le reparation de la chasse de la glorieuse Marie Magdalene laquelle repose en l’église d’icelle Abbaye, si comme plusieurs croient et dient. . . Item à Saint Maximin, une chapelle de C livres de rente tournois. . . Item une autre chapelle en la Balme de L livres de rente. . . Item nous voulons faire parfaire et accomplir l’église de Saint Maximin en Provence. . . et aussi ce qui conviendra en la chapelle et maison en la roche en laquelle la glorieuse Magdalene fit sa pénitence.” Quoted in (Saxer 1975, p. 169). I sincerely thank Gaëtan Naulleau for discussing with me the foundations of Louis I.
- 49 (Saxer 1959, pp. 269, 70, 82).

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