

*CISTERCIAN NUNS IN MEDIEVAL ENGLAND:  
THE GENDERING OF  
GEOGRAPHIC MARGINALIZATION*

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Medieval monasticism was inherently, unavoidably, and inextricably bound up with practicalities and concepts of space.<sup>1</sup> A monastery needed a grant of land in order to exist in the first place. The very word “*locus*” often sufficed to describe a monastery.<sup>2</sup> Biblical images such as the “place of horror and vast solitude” (*in loco horrois et vastae solitudinis*) from Deuteronomy 32:10 were regularly invoked as ways of explaining the meaning behind monastic retreat from the world, and particularly in order to emphasize the link between medieval monastic culture and its apostolic origins.

The medieval Cistercians participated enthusiastically in this mode of thinking. Their soft spot for the verse from Deuteronomy 32:10 is well known. From the earliest decades of their monastic experiment in the early twelfth century, the Cistercians had started to tell themselves that their monasteries were located in this biblical place of horror and vast solitude. The most influential use of the Deuteronomic image occurred in one of the order’s official constitutional documents, the *Exordium Cistercii* from the 1130s, where it was applied to Cîteaux.<sup>3</sup> Other references appeared in the *Vita Prima Bernardi*, where the imagery was there applied to Clairvaux, and in Bernard’s correspondence.<sup>4</sup> The related image of the desert (*eremum*) was also popular, as disseminated via the *Exordium parvum*, a Cistercian origins text which coexisted in manuscripts alongside the *Exordium Cistercii*.<sup>5</sup> With such influential precedents, the trend of wilderness imagery spread widely. Cistercian foundation histories from the later twelfth century through the thirteenth century would go on to present a standardized picture. Regardless of the region (France, Scandinavia, England, Germany), the narrative of origins was presented in the same way—the monks arrived at a wild, deserted, and uncultivated place; they chopped

down the trees, turned up the soil and planted crops; and they began to build their monastery, henceforth to work at maintaining the holy Rule, bound by charity and the love of the Cistercian community. A desert-like place was transformed into the paradise of the cloister; that is, a beautiful place (*locus amoenus*) was created. The beautiful place was often depicted as a valley, with the low ground being a sign of desirable humility.

All of this meant that the new Cistercian monks of the twelfth century very quickly united themselves into a cohesive textual community, in part thanks to the shared meanings conjured up by these popular images of the “*loco horroris*” (with its related image of the desert) and “*locus amoenus*.” By invoking these terms Cistercian authors offered their audiences a shorthand or metonymic means of pinpointing a core quality of Cistercian identity.<sup>6</sup> Monks in the Cistercian house at Fountains in England, or the Cistercian house at Clairvaux in France, or the Cistercian house at Eberbach in Germany<sup>7</sup>—monks in all these abbeys, and others, knew that their identities as Cistercians were in part related to how they interacted with the physical locus of the monastery that God had provided for them.

Notably, however, this spatial imagery of deserts, wild places, and beautiful places was applied to male Cistercian abbeys only; it was not used to describe female Cistercian abbeys. As a form of shared cultural meaning, these invocations of landscape seemed to be gendered male, and to derive from and speak to a male textual community only. What was going on here? Why was geography so strongly gendered in the medieval Cistercian tradition, and what can we learn from this concerning the experiences of Cistercian female communities? The English scene provides a handy case study. We know that English Cistercian monks were active producers and consumers of Cistercian spatial ideology, right from their earliest days in the country around 1130. Early Cistercian monks in England were of course pioneers from France, and they carried with them the French trend of naming new monasteries after their physical locations—Rievaulx (in Yorkshire), and later on Beaulieu (in Hampshire) and Rewly (in Oxfordshire). Once English manuscript and scriptorial culture



developed by the mid-twelfth century the range of evidence increases. Around 1170, when Walter Daniel wrote his account of how Aelred of Rievaulx was inspired to visit Rievaulx while still a layman, he clearly thought that the physical landscape itself was a constitutive element of the abbey's spiritual appeal: "The name of their little settlement and of the place where it lies was derived from the name of the stream and the valley, Rievaulx. High hills surround the valley, encircling it like a crown. These are clothed by trees of various sorts and maintain in pleasant retreats the privacy of the vale, providing for the monks a kind of second paradise of wooded delight."<sup>8</sup> In the early thirteenth century, Hugh of Kirkstall wrote the foundation history of Yorkshire's Fountains abbey, and promised his readers at the outset that he would describe "in what way that vine, blessed by God, grew in a place of horror and vast solitude, and spread itself abroad, stretching out its branches as far as the sea, and its shoots to the outer nations."<sup>9</sup> Authors from other abbeys of Cistercian monks in England invoked the same two images—the reference to the pleasant place or paradise, and the reference to the harsh place variously known as the desert, wilderness, or place of horror and vast solitude.<sup>10</sup>

If we want to move on now to investigate the meanings that space held for Cistercian nuns in England, the first task is to identify which were the Cistercian nunneries. This is not as easy as it may seem. The traditional view of Cistercian women in medieval England is that there were only two official Cistercian nunneries, namely Tarrant in Dorset and Marham in Norfolk. Rather than official women's houses formally incorporated into the Cistercian order, the English scene was allegedly characterized by unofficial houses of nuns.<sup>11</sup> As the argument has it, twenty-five such nunneries enjoyed ambiguous relationships with the wider Cistercian order, floating in and out of the Cistercian affiliation over the course of the High and Late Middle Ages. Sometimes the unofficial English houses started off belonging to one monastic order, and then at a later stage were recorded as Cistercian. Other houses tried to claim a Cistercian identity, yet these claims were either ignored or rejected by the Cistercian

hierarchy. Both kinds of unofficial houses failed to gain explicit recognition from Cîteaux of their incorporation, hence leading modern commentators to relegate them to the category of “unofficial” Cistercian monastery.

In my recent research, I have argued that this division of English Cistercian nunneries into two categories—official and unofficial—seems to miss the point.<sup>12</sup> While Cistercian nunneries in England did not go through the same processes of formal incorporation into the Cistercian order as convents in, say, France and the Low Countries did, there were clearly female religious communities in England that, one, believed themselves to be active members of the international Cistercian communion and, two, were accepted as such by others. (These others included: bishops; archbishops and their courts; popes; kings and their agents; tax collectors; local monks, canons, friars, and rectors; commissioners of the Dissolution of the Monasteries; early antiquarians; and even local and national Cistercian monks, but notably almost never the Cistercian international hierarchy at Cîteaux.) Not only were the communities collectively referred to as Cistercian priories and abbeys, but also individual nuns were likewise granted (and also claimed for themselves) the Cistercian name. Further, by examining less obvious sources such as consistory court records and mortuary rolls, I have been able to identify nine additional monasteries of English nuns which were recognized as Cistercian for at least part of the twelfth to sixteenth centuries, hence increasing the total of English Cistercian nunneries from the traditional twenty-seven to thirty-six.<sup>13</sup>

If we proceed with a broader view of what it could have meant to be a Cistercian nun or a Cistercian nunnery in medieval England, this provides a potential thirty-six libraries in which we might find references to the classic Cistercian images of spatial self-definition, including references to paradise and the desert. Unfortunately, however, the archives still reveal little; surviving narrative sources from these thirty-six nunneries are very few indeed. The Dorset abbey of Tarrant is a rare exception. Not only do its four surviving literary manuscripts place it ninth highest in book survivals from medieval English nunneries, but in the



mid-thirteenth century its abbess was the addressee of a spiritual treatise composed by a local Cistercian monk.<sup>14</sup> John Godard, one-time abbot of Newenham Cistercian abbey, forty miles to the west of Tarrant, wrote to “M” his sister in Christ an explication of 1 Corinthians 9:24, “so run, that you may obtain.”<sup>15</sup> From beginning to end, Godard’s treatise discussed the race and the prize, and especially the difference between the corruptible and incorruptible prizes. The addressee, Godard’s “most affectionate sister,” was advised to beware the pitfalls in the race. The enemies are exterior (traps of taste, gluttony, and fine clothes), but they infiltrate the interior. The treatise includes repeated warnings against overindulgence in taste, sight, smell and so on, backed by substantial and lengthy quotations from biblical, classical, patristic, and twelfth-century authorities.

In terms of Cistercian nuns and the gendering of space, Godard’s treatise provides valuable insights into the attitudes and expectations to which Cistercian nuns were expected to conform. When Godard wrote “we sin through the instruments that are called the five senses”<sup>16</sup> and “death enters through the five senses which are the windows of our soul,”<sup>17</sup> he repeated a logic which went back as far as Gregory the Great’s *Moralia* and, further, to the prophet Jeremiah. In the process, he was simply one of many medieval authors who perpetuated the notion that religious women were fragile vessels who should restrict their excursions into exterior spaces for fear of moral corruption. Indeed, Godard knew that his work was part of a longer tradition of advice and care provided by male religious to enclosed religious women. He explicitly invoked the example of Gilbert of Sempringham, and, of all the things Gilbert had done, Godard chose to focus on the fact that Gilbert had taken the nuns of the Sempringham order, tonsured them to the skin, put an end to their wandering eyes, taken away their overly large veils, and, most importantly, stopped them from singing, precisely in order that their comely female voices might not lure people on to what is illicit and full of desire.<sup>18</sup> In similar fashion he invoked Aelred of Rievaulx by name, and again endorsed the fact that the male religious had assumed control over the activities of enclosed religious women, in this

case quoting approvingly from Aelred's *institutio* for anchoresses which, in Godard's view, provided guidance for keeping to the straight and narrow in the running of life's course.<sup>19</sup> In his choice of examples to pass on to his readership, Godard clearly supported the view that male religious had a right and duty to watch over physically enclosed women. Such was one of the cultural influences affecting Cistercian nuns in medieval England and reminding them of the importance of physical enclosure.

Another female community from which we might expect to learn something regarding the gendering of Cistercian monastic space was Marham, located in the county of Norfolk and diocese of Norwich. Modern scholarship knows Marham as one of England's two official Cistercian nunneries, thanks to the fact that in 1250 and 1251 the official Cistercian General Chapter *statuta* mention the newly founded house being incorporated into the order.<sup>20</sup> Like Tarrant, the other so-called official female community, Marham was a community with a certain exposure to literacy. Fortunately for us today, its cartulary survives.<sup>21</sup> Entries were added at various stages over the centuries, hence indicating a periodic attention to record-keeping. Marham's founder was Isabel of Aubigny, countess of Arundel, who was well known for sponsoring learning.<sup>22</sup> Why could she not then have encouraged the Marham nuns in literary pursuits? Certainly, Isabel had encouraged Ralph Bocking to write a *Life* of Richard of Chichester, Matthew Paris had dedicated his Anglo-Norman version of his *Life of St Edmund* to her, and her influence may well have been behind the extraordinary Campsey Augustinian nuns' possession of London, British Library, MS Additional 70513. This manuscript includes the largest surviving collection of Anglo-Norman saints' lives that are known to have been owned by a female community, with many of these lives having been composed by women.<sup>23</sup> Even if Isabel was not the patron behind the Campsey manuscript compilation, the literary collection at the wealthy priory of Campsey was within the same diocese as Marham (although still about fifty miles from Marham), hence suggesting a wider Norwich diocese culture of nuns' book ownership from which the Marham nuns might have profited and towards which they might have contributed.<sup>24</sup>



From all this, then, we might expect the Marham nuns to have participated in literary culture and, perhaps, as nuns following the Benedictine rule, to have spent their regulated post-supper time reading about the classic Cistercian images of geographic retreat, deserts, and second paradises. But we have no evidence that they did so. Dissolution reports, admittedly far from comprehensive in their terms of reference, record only a mass book and six other books at Marham's church in the 1530s,<sup>25</sup> and our knowledge of Marham's documents in the period before the 1530s is restricted to the administrative (not narrative, liturgical, or spiritual) manuscripts which survive today. What sort of life then did the nuns at Marham experience? Their abbey was founded in 1249, one of the last monasteries, of any order, to be founded in Norfolk.<sup>26</sup> Generally speaking with Norfolk monasteries, the later a house was founded the poorer it tended to be.<sup>27</sup> And Marham was never wealthy. It was always of a modest to middling size, with seventeen nuns in 1377, an average of eleven nuns for the period from the mid-fourteenth century to the sixteenth century, and seven nuns at the Dissolution.<sup>28</sup> At the Dissolution it was the third poorest of the eleven nunneries in Norwich diocese.<sup>29</sup> On the other hand, numerous account records from throughout the 1400s show that, even though the nunnery was by no means wealthy, it did manage to end most years on a profit.<sup>30</sup>

There is no need here to revisit the old issue of whether or not medieval nuns were good economic managers. Rather, what does the Marham example teach us about the kinds of lands that English nunneries held, how these lands fitted into the broader pattern of Cistercian land-holding and economics, and, perhaps, the kinds of emotions the nuns invested these lands with? To begin, Marham's name alone seems to fit perfectly with the Cistercian push to the margins as endorsed by all the foundation narratives and Deuteronomy invocations popular in male Cistercian culture. "Marham" means the ham on the mere; that is, the settlement on the lake. In the Norfolk context, this means the fens and marshes in the northwest of the county, slightly to the southeast of King's Lynn.<sup>31</sup> In addition, Marham happened

to lie in a valley (the Nar valley), again in conformity with the Cistercian ideal. It appears then that Marham possessed all the qualities that would lead its nuns to a wholehearted embrace of the Cistercian metaphors of desert, beautiful places, and the place of horror and vast solitude, and, through such an embrace, access to the spiritual capital that these terms carried.

Before proceeding any further, however, we need to consider the gendering of spatial references, and in particular the ways in which margins and centers can be gendered. It is significant that Cistercian monks deliberately chose to name their abbeys after valleys—in the English context there were the male abbeys of Rievaulx, Jervaulx, Vaudey, and Mireval, all named after valleys. But Marham was actually the name of the village already there before the nuns' house came into existence. In other words, the situation at Marham was not the same as Cistercian monks choosing to give their abbey a name connoting valleys, humility, and distance from society. Marham was a monastery that genuinely was distanced from society, in a valley, on the edge of the fens, and prone to flooding. Cistercian monks could afford to use language and metaphor to renounce the center and claim their metaphorical place on the margins precisely because, in more structural and systematic terms, they did possess and define that culture. Further, in the spirit of the apostolic life, such possession of cultural dominance may well have meant that Cistercian monks not only could afford to renounce their centrality but, in fact, wanted and needed to renounce it. It is no surprise, then, that it is inhabitants of male abbeys who read and wrote about being located in deserts and vast solitude; through possessing cultural centrality and economic solidity, they were both able and more than willing to use these metaphors of renunciation and marginalization.

Economically, the Marham nuns worked within a local geography.<sup>32</sup> The local marshes provided the peat which would prove to be a constant presence in the nuns' history. The nuns were given rights to peat fields from the moment of foundation in the mid-thirteenth century. Villeins owed customary service of digging and carrying the peat, for the express purpose of



providing stable litter for the nuns.<sup>33</sup> Linked with the marshy ground was the lack of woodland; no gifts to the nuns mention woodlands. So without woodland, but with an abundance of peat, we can imagine that the peat served both as animal litter and as heating. We can imagine that over time as people kept digging peat there were more ditches for water to collect in and, hence, more chance of the fens increasing in size. In the thirteenth century, Cistercian nunneries in Flanders were engaged in draining marshes and creating pasture-land,<sup>34</sup> and male Cistercian houses north of Marham in Lincolnshire were doing the same,<sup>35</sup> but none of this happened at Marham. The great Cistercian cliché of turning the uncultivated desert into the paradise of agriculture was not in evidence at Marham. The positive symbolism of metaphorical marginalization was available to male abbeys, but the very real marginalization experienced at Marham was much more tangible than metaphorical.

Agriculturally, the region around Marham was best for grain. Indeed, if we look to the later Middle Ages the sale of surplus grain was the best money spinner for Marham. Livestock was not a big presence; the location on the edge of the fens meant that livestock could succumb to hoof rot.<sup>36</sup> Marham's sheep flocks were extremely modest indeed. In the mid-fourteenth century there were enough sheep for about half a sack of wool a year, up to a high in about 1450 of two sacks a year. Obviously this was not enough to justify engagement in the great international wool trade, so the abbey probably sold its wool to other monasteries that were bigger players in the wool trade.<sup>37</sup> The money the community received for its wool went right back into the local economy—in the fifteenth century the income from wool would have been spent straight away to provide for the nuns' guesthouse or, in another example, it might have been used to pay the wages of the household and farm staff.<sup>38</sup>

This was a fairly local monastic economy, dictated in large part, it would seem, by the abbey's location on the edge of the fens on rather marginal land.<sup>39</sup> The Marham community never received any gifts of urban land; we can say that the abbey perfectly exemplified the literal interpretation of the cenobitic

community in the desert. Such a situation might possibly have given the nuns spiritual satisfaction. Experiencing genuine isolation and solitude, and without economic prosperity, Marham's nuns may well have felt a deep connection to the journeys of the early desert cenobites. Marilyn Oliva's observations provide some support for this inference, as she has noted that some Norfolk nunneries (of differing monastic orders) tended to cluster together in valleys (quite distant from the male religious houses that were spread evenly throughout Norwich diocese), perhaps as a means of emulating their desert forebears.<sup>40</sup> Of course, whether such decisions about location were made by patrons or monastic personnel is ultimately hard to know.

In Marham's case, it is worth pointing out the complete absence of nearby male Cistercian houses. The county of Norfolk housed no Cistercian monks at all. The only other Cistercian house in East Anglia was Sibton, nearly fifty miles southeast of Marham and lying in a region of Suffolk far more prosperous than Marham's northwestern Norfolk location. Sibton does appear to have lent privileges for copying into Marham's cartulary,<sup>41</sup> but otherwise seems to have had no documented contact with the nuns at all. Sawtry abbey was closer, at almost thirty-five miles to the southwest of Marham, while Warden abbey was over fifty-five miles to the south-west. In 1446/47, the abbots of these two houses visited Marham,<sup>42</sup> but this isolated record of visitation mentioned in a bailiff's account simply brings into stark relief the complete absence of reference to any other Cistercian abbots visiting the house during the 300 years of its existence. In 1401, a monk from Sawtry represented Marham as procurator in legal proceedings.<sup>43</sup> In 1480, the election of a new Marham abbess was reported, via one of the English Cistercian abbots, all the way up the hierarchy to Cîteaux.<sup>44</sup> But, other than these few instances of interest and cooperation (in what is, we should note, a large archive of surviving administrative documents from Marham), Marham seems to have registered very little in the minds of English Cistercian monks.<sup>45</sup>

I began this discussion by referring to practicalities and concepts of space. It is clear that practice and concept intersect.



The dominant male Cistercian houses possessed a firm foothold on their regions with reference to economics, land-holding, influential patrons, in-house scriptoria, and charismatic abbots, and this obviously practical advantage facilitated both the need and the possibility of pursuing the shared conceptual goal of living in a metaphorical desert. The largely ignored and self-reliant nuns of Marham may of course still have seen themselves as living in a biblically-inspired desert, but our surviving evidence does not tell us this. They may have borrowed books from other nuns such as those at Campsey, and imbibed ideas of desert retreat this way, or they may simply have known about the renunciation of apostolic life though currents of general knowledge flowing in society more broadly. They are unlikely to have gained access to dedicated copies of the *Exordium parvum* or *Exordium cistercii*—not only were the Marham nuns located far from other Cistercian libraries, but it is unclear whether or not all Cistercian abbeys owned copies of these texts in the first place, notwithstanding rules that they ought to have.<sup>46</sup> Did the Marham nuns embrace their isolation as a manifestation of the Cistercian ideal of life in the desert? Would they have preferred the more regular attention that the monks of Newenham abbey seem to have bestowed on Tarrant's nuns, even if such attention brought with it John Godard's counsel to remain physically enclosed?<sup>47</sup> Did the Marham nuns feel poor and alone on the edge of the fens? The extent to which marginalized nuns embraced marginalization is difficult to know.

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#### END NOTES

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2. Marie-Anselme Dimier, "Le mot *locus* employé dans le sens de *monastère*," *Revue Mabillon* 58 (1972): 133-54.

3. *Exordium cistercii*, I, in *Narrative and Legislative Texts from Early Cîteaux*, ed. Chrysogonus Waddell (Brecht: Cîteaux commentarii cistercienses, 1999), p. 400.
4. *Vita Prima Bernardi*, Book I, ch. 5, part 25, in *Patrologiae cursus completus, series latina*, ed. Jacques-Paul Migne, 221 vols (Paris, 1844-64), vol. 185: col. 241D; Jean Leclercq, H. Rochais, and C. H. Talbot, eds, *Sancti Bernardi Opera*, 9 vols (Rome: Editiones Cistercienses, 1957-77), vol. 7, ep. 118, p. 298, and translated in Bruno Scott James, *The Letters of St. Bernard of Clairvaux* (London: Burns Oates, 1953), letter 121.
5. The *Exordium parvum* of the 1110s and 1140s had referred to the "desert-place called Cîteaux," *Exordium parvum*, III, in Waddell, ed., *Narrative and Legislative Texts*, p. 421.
6. For more on this, see my *Narratives of a New Order: Cistercian Historical Writing in England, 1150-1220* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2002), chapters 4-5.
7. For Cistercian invocations of the phrases, see Jean-Baptiste Auberger, *L'unanimité cistercienne primitive: mythe ou réalité?* (Achel, Belgium: Éditions sine Parvulos, 1986), pp. 119-24.
8. Walter Daniel, *The Life of Aelred of Rievaulx by Walter Daniel*, trans. F. M. Powicke, intro. Marsha Dutton (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1994), VI, p. 98.
9. "[qualiter illa vin]ea Domini benedicta in loco horroris et [vastae] solitudinis sic creverit, sic se dilataverit, extendens palmites suos usque ad mare et propagine [suas ad ex]teras nationes." *Narratio de fundatione Fontanis monasterii*, in *Memorials of the Abbey of St Mary of Fountains*, I, ed. John Richard Walbran (Durham: Surtees Society, 1862), pp. 1-129; p. 2.
10. For references from Kirkstead and Louth Park, both in Lincolnshire, see William Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum*, 6 vols in 8, ed. John Caley, Henry Ellis, and Bulkeley Bandinel (London: Joseph Harding, 1817-30), vol. 5, p. 418, and Charles H. Talbot, "The Testament of Gervase of Louth Park," *Analecta Sacri Ordinis Cisterciensis* 7 (1951): 32-45, p. 40.
11. For the relevant historiography, see my "'Houses of a Peculiar Order': Cistercian Nunneries in Medieval England, with Special Attention to the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Centuries," *Cîteaux: commentarii cistercienses* 55 (2004): 245-87, pp. 251-54. For the traditional list of twenty-seven convents, see David Knowles and R. Neville Hadcock, *Medieval Religious Houses: England and Wales* (London, New York, and Toronto: Longman 1953), pp. 222-26, and repeated in the second edition (1971) of the same book.
12. See "'Houses of a Peculiar Order.'"
13. See the thirty-five monasteries in "'Houses of a Peculiar Order,'" to which can now be added Thicket priory from Yorkshire.
14. David N. Bell, *What Nuns Read: Books and Libraries in Medieval English Libraries* (Kalamazoo: Cistercian Publications, 1995), pp. 210-11.
15. C. H. Talbot, "Two Opuscula of John Godard First Abbot of Newenham," *Analecta Sacri Ordinis Cisterciensis* 10 (1954): 208-267, pp. 220-245.
16. Talbot, "Two Opuscula of John Godard," p. 237.



17. Talbot, "Two Opuscula of John Godard," p. 235.
18. Talbot, "Two Opuscula of John Godard," p. 233.
19. Talbot, "Two Opuscula of John Godard," p. 225.
20. Joseph M. Canivez, ed., *Statuta Capitulum Generalium Ordinis Cisterciensis*, 8 vols. (Louvain: Bureaux de la Revue, 1933-41), vol. 2: ann. 1250, cap. 43, p. 355; ann. 1251, cap. 26, p. 364.
21. Norwich, Norfolk Record Office (NNRO), MS Hare 1; calendared in John A. Nichols, *The History and Cartulary of the Cistercian Nuns of Marham Abbey 1249-1536*. PhD diss. Kent State University, 1974. The dissertation is an extremely thorough study of Marham's administration and economics, especially for the fourteenth to sixteenth centuries.
22. On Isabel as literary patron, see Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, *Saints' Lives and Women's Literary Culture c. 1150-1300* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 2001), ch. 5.
23. Wogan-Browne, *Saints' Lives*, pp. 6-7.
24. Similarly, V. M. O'Mara, "Preaching to Nuns in Late Medieval England," in *Medieval Monastic Preaching*, ed. Carolyn Muessig (Leiden: Brill, 1998), pp. 93-119; p. 107 refers to an anonymous sermon from a fifteenth-century East Anglian manuscript. The sermon was directed at nuns (possibly at Carrow in Norwich), hence indicating an East Anglian nunnery manuscript culture in Marham's general vicinity.
25. Bell, *What Nuns Read*, p. 153.
26. Most nunneries in Norfolk and Suffolk (i.e. the diocese of Norwich) were founded in the mid- to late twelfth century; Roberta Gilchrist and Marilyn Oliva, *Religious Women in Medieval East Anglia: History and Archaeology, c. 1100-1540* (Norwich: U East Anglia P, 1993), p. 23.
27. Benjamin Thompson, "Monasteries and their Patrons at Foundation and Dissolution," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6<sup>th</sup> series, 4 (1994): 103-25.
28. Marilyn Oliva, *The Convent and the Community in Late Medieval England: Female Monasteries in the Diocese of Norwich, 1350-1540* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1998), pp. 41; 127.
29. Oliva, *The Convent and the Community*, p. 19. On Marham's poverty, see comments in Benjamin John Thompson, *The Church and the Aristocracy: Lay and Ecclesiastical Landowning Society in Fourteenth-Century Norfolk*. PhD diss. University of Cambridge, 1990, esp. ch. 7.
30. Oliva, *The Convent and the Community*, pp. 96-97.
31. On the location of Marham, with special reference to soil composition and topography, see Nichols, "The Cistercian Nuns of Marham Abbey," pp. 39-41.
32. For an excellent study of Marham's economy, see Nichols, "The Cistercian Nuns of Marham Abbey," especially chapter 4.
33. See the abbey's rental from 1365; London, British Library, Stowe MS 933, fol. 37r.
34. Erin Jordan, "Patronage, Prayers and Polders: Assessing Cistercian Foundations in Thirteenth-Century Flanders and Hainaut," *Cîteaux: commentarii cistercienses* 53 (2002): 99-125.

35. Louis J. Lekai, *The Cistercians: Ideals and Reality* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State UP, 1977), p. 299.
36. On the potential for hoof rot, see Nichols, "The Cistercian Nuns of Marham Abbey," p. 45.
37. Unlike many of England's other Cistercian nunneries, Marham was not listed in Francesco Balducci Pegolotti's list of wool producers from 1315; printed in W. Cunningham, *The Growth of English Industry and Commerce During the Early and Middle Ages*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1910), pp. 628-41.
38. Quite often, in fact, the account rolls show that the nuns would be in debt to their own farm hands for a year or two, although they do seem to have made good.
39. On the characteristics of Marham's land, see Nichols, "The Cistercian Nuns of Marham Abbey," ch. 2, and Frank Meeres, *"Not of this World": Norfolk's Monastic Houses* (Norwich: Blackall Books, 2001), p. 29. More broadly, see Mark Bailey, *A Marginal Economy? East Anglian Breckland in the Later Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1989), esp. pp. 33-36, 160, 163-64.
40. Oliva, *The Convent and the Community*, pp. 22-27.
41. NNRO, MS Hare 1, fol. 7v.
42. NNRO, MS Hare 2205/194X5 recto.
43. NNRO, MS Hare 1, fol. 8r.
44. C. H. Talbot, ed., *Letters From the English Abbots to the Chapter at Cîteaux 1442-1521* (London: Royal Historical Society, 1967), p. 83.
45. These are housed at NNRO, with many discussed in Nichols, "The Cistercian Nuns of Marham Abbey."
46. For surviving manuscripts of the Cistercian customary (a varied collection of texts, including the two *exordia* texts), see Waddell, ed., *Narrative and Legislative Texts*, pp. 22-103, and note the single surviving English copy at pp. 69-70.
47. In addition to Godard's treatise, other evidence that the Newenham monks had connections with Tarrant can be found in Canivez, ed., *Statuta*, vol. 2, ann. 1257, cap. 50, p. 434, and, from the mid-fourteenth century, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Top. Devon d. 5, fol. 120r-v.