The *baptismal homilies* 1-3 of Theodore of Mopsuestia (ca. 350-428) as well as the *liturgical homilies* 21 and 22 of Narsai of Nisibis (d. ca. 503) provide us with valuable insights into the dramatic rites by which baptismal candidates were initiated during the fourth and fifth centuries in West and East Syria. In current scholarship, it is generally accepted not only that the two rites are similar, but especially that Narsai is heavily dependent on Theodore. Narsai is even seen as projecting Theodore’s onto the East Syrian rite. Although it is beyond doubt that Theodore influenced East Syrian Christianity in general and Narsai in particular, the specific relation between Narsai’s and Theodore’s baptismal rites has not been previously the subject of thorough investigation. The present study aims to fill this ‘research gap’ by critically comparing the rites on the levels of both performance and mystagogy. This comparison yields the following major results. Firstly, since the rites themselves are remarkably different and the similarities are best explained by appealing to a shared heritage, it is not justified to maintain a dependence of Narsai on Theodore here. Most likely, Narsai is commenting on an existing rite of a particular East Syrian community. Secondly, although Narsai shows familiarity with Theodore’s catechetical homilies, his mystagogy is not primarily dependent on that of Theodore. Drawing on a rich spectrum of traditional symbolism, including that found in Theodore, the East Syrian poet (in the line of Ephrem) creatively produces the artwork he desires. In doing so, he remains within traditional liturgical boundaries, even if that creates some tension with the mystagogy of his esteemed teacher.