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Proposal for “Art and the Pilgrimage” exhibit

“Spiritual Learning and the Pilgrim’s experience”

INTRODUCTION:

Medieval pilgrimage involved millions of people moving from throughout North and Western parts of Europe to Compestela, Rome and Palestine. The pilgrimages had a broad impact, including the creation of cottage industries of tourism and augmented intellectual and artistic exchanges. On an individual level, the pilgrim, might experience spiritual and intellectual transformation.¹ This possibility existed with the aid of sacred visual art and holy shrines. While recognizing the belief in holy shrines as having redemptive, healing, interlocution and other powers, this paper will focus on how these and other religious images were a part of the intellectual and transformative aspects of medieval pilgrimage.

Much has been documented about the scholarly life of literate monks who inhabited the monestaries along the pilgrimage routes.² By the first millennium, monestaries had become educational, artistic, charitable and judicial strongholds of medieval Europe.³ Although charitable institutions, the monasteries were also profit makers and wielded powerful social control that would be reinforced as the pilgrim

¹ Turner, V. & Turner, E. Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture. Anthropological Perspectives. Oxford: Basil Blackwell 1978. (Introduction and Chapter 1)

² Caruthers, Mary The Craft of Thought: Medieval Mediation, Rhetoric, and the Making of Images, 400-1200. Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 1998. and Jean LeClercq, The Love of Learning and the Desire for God, trans. Catherine Misrahi. New York: Fordham University Press, 1960

³ “Monastic centers were actively involved in the training of theologians, administrators, and missionaries who served not only in the church but also in the courts and palaces of secular rulers. They provided charity and shelter for sick and needy. In addition to implicating tax systems, monks often administered juridical structures, and the execution of legal decisions. In the static atmosphere of the first feudal age, monastic life existed in a symbiotic relationship with the simple and fixed order of vassalage, an order represented by the traditional threefold structure of society: the knight (who held the sword of temporal power), the priest (who wielded the sword of spiritual power), and the monk (who shed tears of constant prayer).” Marc Bloch, Feudal Society, trans. L. A. Manyon . Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964,p. 60.

entered a monastic center.⁴ Indeed, the inner force of the church was fueled by monastic life and ideals (the *vita monastica*). But with changing economics and urban growth in medieval Europe, secular society became increasingly interested in pursuing its own form of Christian life, or *vita christina*. The understanding of how Christian life could be lead and where Grace could be found began to shift from the monastery to the market place.⁵ Important aspects of the monastic life could be explored by lay people through pilgrimage.

SPIRITUAL LEARNING AND THE PILGRIM'S EXPERIENCE:

The forthcoming exhibition will reveal that pilgrims obtained a deeply intellectual and transformative experience-- that was recognized and supported by the church and other non pilgrims. This experience was driven by a combination of sensations provided by elaborate holy images along the route. The proposed exhibition will focus on items relating to the Pilgrimage of Santiago de Compestela and what these items say about both the intellectual and the transformative experience of pilgrimage.

The Cult of Saint James , or Santiago in Spanish, was born from the idea that James played a part in the Christian reconquest of Spain from the Moors (however James had died nine centuries earlier). The pilgrimage to Santiago De Compestela was

⁴ Although pilgrims and monks both aspire to or practice some form of asceticism, highly symbolic structural nature of these pilgrimage churches and monastic communities might also reinforce their differences: the power of the church in contrast to or over the mendicant pilgrim "*It is therefore possible that the distant view of the robust buildings of a monastery could have inspired ambiguous and conflicting feelings for the medieval pilgrim, depending upon their position in society and state of health; beacon of support on the one hand, bastion of social control and management on the other.*" Candy, Julie. *Landscape and Perception: The Medieval Pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela from an Archaeological Perspective Journeys of Discovery*: Issue 4, 1999. page 18

⁵ [There was] "a change in Christian awareness that was to mark the twelfth and thirteenth centuries: the life of the lay Christian, as well as the life of the monk or cleric, would emerge as the sphere in which grace was active, in which salvation was worked out. As James of Vitry (+ 1240) wrote, not only monks but also "all the faithful of Christ who serve the Lord under the gospel's rule and live by the orders of the single greatest Abbot or Father of all" participate in the Christian life. This expansion of the *vita christiana* from the monastery to the market place signaled a new perception of the laity in the medieval church. " Torvend, Samuel. "Lay Spirituality in Medieval Christianity" *Spirituality Today*, Summer 1983, Vol. 35, No. 2, pp. 117-126.

one of the three great pilgrimage destinations for Christians during the Middle Ages. Fueled by the cult of saints, pilgrims took routes that would allow them to encounter various relics shrines, in the hopes that their prayers might induce the shrine's saint to intercede with Christ or Mary on their behalf. ⁶

In the company of pious peasant, noblemen, woman and child walking dutifully to Santiago de Compestela were also thieves, witches, heretics and charlatans. In addition to the challenges of scarce food and shelter, feral animals and marauders, the pilgrims would have to face criminal companions—some of whom were ordered to the pilgrimage, less penitential than penitentiary.⁷ However great the obstacles, pilgrimage and encounters with holy objects were ultimately understood as means of spiritual progress.⁸

Entering a Sacred Space

Holy sites provided a sense of catharsis for travelers who had been enduring hardships. Varied accounts relate the recognition and the emotion of the pilgrims as they entered localities considered to be auspicious- closer to God, free from Demons. Other markers, such as crosses on the outskirts of monastic lands and villages signaled a transition into divine territory, one for the pilgrim that would be civilized and protected.

⁶ Webb, D. Pilgrims and Pilgrimage in the Medieval West. London: IB Tauris, 1999.

⁷Greenia, George D. (College of William & Mary) Abstract: Preying on Pilgrims: Criminals among the Holy. The Institute for Medieval Studies 20th Anniversary of the Spring Lecture Series. University of New Mexico. March 28-31, 2005 and , also chronicled in other pilgrimages, such as Saewulf. 1892. The Pilgrimage of Saewulf to Jerusalem and the Holy Land in the Years 1102 and 1103. Palestine Pilgrim's Text Society, vol. 4, pp.8-9.

The Pilgrim's Guide relates a story of thieves who are waiting by the river, skin the author 's horses (whilst the author has already been poisoned already by drinking bad water). Other incidents relate capsizing boats, muddy plateaus, rocky terrain..Melczer, William. The Pilgrim's Guide to Santiago de Compostela. New York: Italica Press, 1993.

⁸ In one text of pilgrimage to Jerusalem, a pilgrim remarks how --each time they encounter an object or place of spiritual significance, such as the entrance to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher or the rock of Mount Cavalry, "there is absolution from pain and guilt" Bernhard, J.H. translator. Account of the Holy Land, about 1350 A.D. . Library of the Palestine Pilgrim's Text Society V.6 LONDON: Palestine Pilgrim's Text Society 1894.

The artworks in this exhibition contribute to understanding not only the physical transitions made by pilgrims who crossed varied terrain and foreign towns, but also the intellectual and spiritual transitions that were enhanced by encounters with holy images.

The elaborate, monumental door of the church or cathedral is a more obvious demarcation of change into a sacred place. Read like a text, the sculptures and stories carved in relief emphasized the power of the past, the church and the divine. Entrances to churches and abbeys that included capitols baring reliefs of pilgrims and alcoves where monks would leave clothing reinforced the idea that the pilgrims were expected.⁹ But moreover, the experience of the large pilgrimage church—the long naves and ambulatories in which pilgrims would view reliquary, tomb or other shrine might potentially make a pilgrim feel small, in awe.¹⁰ The architecture and scale, imagery and even the smells, entry feasts and chants - contributed to a pilgrim's concept of self in the larger medieval social structure and augmented (and in some way, challenged) the pilgrim's knowledge and personal memory.¹¹ When encountering different motifs and stories, a pilgrim might feel his or her own foreignness or ignorance. Well-known biblical narratives would also resonate a familiarity for the pilgrims, thus connecting them to the foreign places. The elaborate thresholds to churches must have been profound sensory and intellectual moments in the pilgrim's journey.¹²

⁹ Webb, D. Pilgrims and Pilgrimage in the Medieval West. London: IB Tauris, 1999.

¹⁰ Pilgrimage churches were constructed and designed to accommodate the large flow and activities of pilgrims. O. Werckmeister. "Cluny III and the Pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela." Gesta 27, 1/2 (1988): 103-112.

¹¹ (I use "challenge" to refer to the way that strange or foreign places, concepts and experiences can be can be disconcerting) Turner, V. & Turner, E. Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture. Anthropological Perspectives. Oxford: Basil Blackwell 1978. more elaborated in : Lamia, Stephen "Souvenir, synesthesia, and the *sepulcrum Domini*: sensory stimuli as memory stratagems." in Valdez del Amo, Elizabeth and Carol Stamatis Prendergast eds. Memory and the Medieval Tomb. Aldershot, Hants, England ; Brookfield, Vt. : Ashgate, c2000 19-42.

¹² Eliade, M., The Sacred and the Profane: the nature of religion. New York: Harcourt, 1959 .p 19. Eliade discusses the idea of senses and the importance of denoting a sacred space via a "threshold". The idea (although somewhat fuzzy)- about senses leading to a deeper understanding of place and oneself is also

The medieval pilgrimage was akin to a rite of passage. As defined by Vic Turner and Arnold Van Gennep, a rite of passage has three components: the separation of an individual from daily life or social structure, the reaching of the limen (or margin), and the reincorporation back into culture.¹³ When a pilgrim embarked, they would be donning special garment that signaled their voyage, thus separating themselves from their traditional role in society. When en route to a sacred place they would be on the margins, or threshold of society: in foreign lands, enacting aspects of the ascetic life of Christ and encountering holy shrines of deep visual and spiritual impact. On return home, pilgrims not only might have attained a greater degree of spiritual awareness and faith, but they would surely have stories of their pilgrimage, souvenirs from their holy destination and other markings of a transformative experience. Thus, medieval holy shrines and relics could be considered perfect emblems for the quest of a pilgrim: symbiosis between ritual and personal expression.

ORCHESTRATED TRANSFORMATION

As demonstrated above, medieval artworks were the product of both private and communal concerns. The Medieval religious imagery was often didactic and worked on many levels, depending on context- from intricate meditation maps for clergy, prompters for chantry, and fantastic to contemplate paradise or hell. Religious art also contained allusions to local politics or aspirations, admonitions about social behavior and roles a

related to phenomenology. See: Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. Phenomenology of Perception. New York and London: Routledge, 2002.

¹³ Van Gennep, Arnold The Rites of Passage. Translated by Monika B. Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffee. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1960

parent should assume.¹⁴ When in the context of a pilgrimage church or shrine, the religious image was placed in consideration of the activities and movement of the pilgrim.¹⁵ Divine art and sacred spaces, such as pilgrimage churches, could themselves be considered metaphor for intellectual and spiritual quest. In moving through the entrance of a pilgrimage church and into the sacred space of the holy shrine, tomb or relic, a pilgrim would find the outward reflection of the inner journey from wilderness to paradise.

In lieu of literature, religious images were meant to stimulate memory recall. Mary Caruthers in, The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Mediaeval Culture argues that anything that encodes information in order to stimulate the memory to store or retrieve information is "writing", whether it be alphabet, hieroglyph, ideogram American Indian picture writing, or Inca knot writing."¹⁶ As Caruthers has demonstrated, there are non-written means of passing on knowledge and eliciting memory that are just as effective as writing.¹⁷

¹⁴ Caruthers, Mary The Craft of Thought: Medieval Mediation, Rhetoric, and the Making of Images, 400-1200. Cambridge; Cambridge University Press, 1998, Ann McGee Morgenstern "The tomb as prompter for the chantry". in Valdez del Amo, Elizabeth and Carol Stamatias Prendergast eds. Memory and the Medieval Tomb. Aldershot, Hants, England ; Brookfield, Vt. : Ashgate, c2000 81-99
Thomas Dale. "Monsters, Corporeal Deformities, and Phantasms in the Cloister of St-Michel-de-Cuxa." *Art Bulletin*, Vol. 83 (2001): 402-436.; Don Denny. "The Last Judgment Tympanum at Autun". Speculum, Vol. 57, No. 3. (Jul., 1982), pp. 532-547; Ilene H. Forsyth. "The Ganymede Capital at Vezelay" Gesta, Vol. 15, No. 1/2, Essays in Honor of Sumner McKnight Crosby. (1976): 241-246.; Valdez del Amo, Elizabeth. "Lament for a lost Queen: the sarcophagus of Dona Blanca in Najera" in Valdez del Amo, Elizabeth and Carol Stamatias Prendergast eds. Memory and the Medieval Tomb. Aldershot, Hants, England ; Brookfield, Vt. : Ashgate, c2000 43-80

¹⁵ By the time a Pilgrim would have reached a particular shrine or reliquary of a saint, they would have entered a long church, passed through its ambulatories, been witness to carvings, biblical narratives, sacred sounds that would have heightened the emotional impact of being able to touch the sacred object. Barbara Abou-El-Hai. "The Audiences for the Medieval Cult of Saints" Gesta, Vol. 30, No. 1. (1991): 3-15

¹⁶ Caruthers, Mary. The Book of Memory: A study of Memory in Medieval Culture. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

¹⁷ Ibid. While explaining avenues in medieval thought, Caruthers appears to be attempting to combat prejudices against those cultures/groups that did not traditionally have written form (for example, what Harold Bloom ignores in his books on intellectual contributions of the west). While considering that the written form is given a privileged place the spoken word in European Culture Caruthers is highlighting other avenues of intellectual contributions—largely which we have neglected. She shows that there are memory

It was not by coincidence that images were to have a profound impact on the pilgrims. “In the Middle Ages, ritual tomb, artistic and physical setting orchestrated the construction of memory through image, design and affective context”.¹⁸ Medieval religious arts, from monastic cloister capitals to tympanum carvings and engravings upon ritual objects often contained mnemonic or memory devices, which engaged the intellectual-spiritual life of the lay viewer. The pilgrim’s encounters with new stories or motifs that were presented differently than what they had been accustomed to must surely have given them cause for more consideration. However much these works may have illustrated previous learned material, i.e. familiar stories, they could be utilized for thinking, remembering and inventing.¹⁹ Their impact was heightened by the larger, multi layered experience of the pilgrim’s quest.

Physical sensation, intellectual recognition emotional reaction shaped a person’s comprehension of an image. Images were not always viewed as subservient to verbal knowledge. In medieval thought, both the consideration of and confrontation with the divine image was a multi sensory event which could be considered as intellectual, akin perhaps, to acquiring concepts from texts. As, in 1140, Abbot Suger inscribed on the doors of the Abbey Church of St. Denis in Paris “Bright is the noble work; but being nobly bright, the work, Should brighten the minds, so that they may travel through the true lights, To the True Light where Christ is the True Door “. Elizabeth Valdez del Amo described how early Medieval treatises on images give strategies to reveal concepts and foster memory development in the following way: images needed to be “schematically

recall triggers just as pertinent and equivalent to writing, that serve the same function, to pass on knowledge, and do it just as effectively

¹⁸ Valdez del Amo, Elizabeth and Carol Stamatis Prendergast eds. Memory and the Medieval Tomb. Aldershot, Hants, England ; Brookfield, Vt. : Ashgate, c2000.p2.

¹⁹ IBID 1990., p 9-35 Note by emphasizing the familiar image as a point of departure for inventive thought, Carruthers distinguishes this from Yates (in The Art of Memory, London: Routledge, 1966) who considers the goal of medieval mnemonics to be to reinforce memory. P.9-35.

ordered and placed within specific, clear locations in the mind; derived from sense impression, and they should be emotionally charged.²⁰ These treatises, from antiquity through the middle ages evidence that the placement, images were clearly part of complex program: often placed in specific settings, meant to achieve various affects- including visual, emotional, intellectual. The careful placement of the piece or image, the personal history of those traveling to see hallowed objects, and the overall sensory experience (for example, the incense in the church- whether foreign or familiar, the chants that might have been heard, the actual touching of the relic or tomb) strongly shaped the comprehension of divine image and sacred object. Thus, these factors elucidate the image's aesthetic power for the medieval pilgrim and the key role image played in the movement from physical learning, from metaphor to lived experience

²⁰ *Introduction*. In Valdez del Amo, Elizabeth and Carol Stamatias Prendergast eds. Memory and the Medieval Tomb. Aldershot, Hants, England ; Brookfield, Vt. : Ashgate, c2000

Catalogue Entry

VIRGIN AND CHILD

Limousin artist active in Spain, Ca. 1200

Gilt copper, champleve enamel, and glass cabochons on wood core

H. 14 1/2 in. (36 cm)

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan.

This small scale jeweled and enameled figure depicts the Madonna enthroned with the Christ child in her lap. Both figures maintain stiff poses. The Virgin's right hand perhaps once held a lily.²¹ The Christ child raises his right hand. Gem-like cabochons decorating the figures' robes, crowns and foot rest. Crowns emphasize their royal status. This presentation of the Madonna enthroned holding the baby Jesus, or Throne of Wisdom (*sedes sapientiae*). In the Throne of Wisdom metaphor Mary represents the throne of King Solomon and the Child the word of God.²²

The back of the throne has a hinged door. While such openings could have housed relics, they were also used to contain the Host.²³

Akin to an important devotional piece in the Salamanca cathedral, this Virgin and Child represents the sort of venerated objects that were venerated by Pilgrims and understood for various reasons. It served, as a sacred object, as possible point communication with the divine, revealed political and artistic exchange along the route, showcased the wealth of the church or donor, provided a point of departure for reflecting on the concept of the Throne of Wisdom and, stood as a metaphor for the spiritual journey of the Pilgrim.

A Limousin artist who lived in Spain executed it signaling artistic and political exchange along the Pilgrimage route. The Limousin enamel work executed in Castile is

²¹ Broehm, Barbara Drake. *Virgin and Child* in O'Neill, John P., et. al. (Eds.). The Art of Medieval Spain, A.D. 500-1200. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1993. p283.

²² Forsyth. Ilene. Throne of Wisdom, Princeton. 1972

²³ Broehm. Barbara Drake 284

emblematic of political ties between Limoges and the Castilian royalty.²⁴ It indicates movement of artists and exchange of ideas along the pilgrimage routes. Perhaps, to a pilgrim unfamiliar with enamel work, it would could inspire awe and curiosity.

The elaborate ornamentation of the Virgin and Child signals the sacredness of its contents. The ornate gilt copper and detailed enamel exterior contribute to the piece's regal impression. The decorative treatment indicates the wealth of the commissioner, perhaps the church. The context of viewing the piece - amidst the architectural program and ritual activity of a Pilgrimage church – heightened its emotional impact on the Pilgrim.

The Throne of Wisdom, which likens Mary to the Throne of Solomon, referred to her status as a vessel of the Immaculate Conception.²⁵ Although many medieval pilgrims were familiar with this iconography, they would nevertheless had to consider its multilayered meanings. Iconography, conceptualization and treatment of subject matter varied from region to region. The Pilgrim would have been attuned to, and perhaps in some cases challenged by, the visual and metaphoric linkage of Old and New Testament themes in such pieces as the Virgin and Child.

The Virgin and Child (containing either a relic or the Host) would have resonated with the aspirations of the Pilgrim. As a container for the Host, it would have been integral to the ritual miracle of the Eucharist. As a reliquary, it would also been a part of the rituals (such as processions) and prayed to as an interlocutor. Ultimately, it is an object of divine transformation from the body to the spirit, wilderness to paradise. Such an object

²⁴ Broehm, Barbara Drake. *Reliquary Casket* in O'Neill, John P., et. al. (Eds.). [The Art of Medieval Spain, A.D. 500-1200](#). New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1993. p277.

²⁵ The phrase "Throne of Wisdom" itself associates Mary with glory and with teaching. This is also a part of the Cult of Mary- the practice of venerating Mary as the Mother of God. Forsyth. Ilene. [Throne of Wisdom](#), Princeton. 1972

both symbolized and reinforced the spiritual and intellectual transformation of the Pilgrimage journey.

CHECKLIST.

This exhibition would rely on interactive components that would allow the visitor to conceive of the overall sensory experience a Pilgrim would have in encountering the divine image. These may include casts of sepulchers, which were entered and touched by pilgrims, and the pilgrim garment, photographs of the terrain, a station to listen to music- from madrigals to chants that may have varied from region to region.

Reliquary Basket

Castile or the Limousin, ca 1150-75

Champleve enamel on gilt copper; modern wood core

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; Gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917.
(17.190.685)

A Pilgrim would venerate this piece. It displays enamel workmanship from Limoge and motifs specific to Santo Domingo de Silos and Limoges, two of the most important stops on the pilgrimage road to Santiago.

Reliquary Crucifix

Church of San Salvador de Fuentes (Asturias), ca. 1150-75

Silver, silver gilt, and niello repousse, over a wooden core with pearls, antique intaglios, semiprecious stones, glass, a sapphire and a garnet

23 1/2 x 19 in

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; gift of J. Pierpont Morgan, 1917.
(17.190.1406)

This would be the centerpiece of the exhibition (in revision). This is a powerful piece in its emotive display of the triumphant living Christ, a scene of Adam resurrected from his tomb, 4 terminal figures, the 4 evangelists and Lamb of God. Noted also for its exceptional workmanship (possibly by a woman) and exotic rinceau patterning Jerrilyn Dodd's, in the Metropolitan Museum catalogue, describes it's inclusion of antique intaglios as veneration for the past that foresees the incorporation of Islamic work into Christian contexts. This exhibition would emphasize how it's use in processions, the exotic filigrees, the concepts depicted on the might be considered by the Pilgrim.

Portion of a Crosier Shaft

Northern Spain , late 12th Century

Ivory

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; The Cloisters Collection, 1981.(1981.1)

This object is used in processions. Carvings reflect both international influences and iconography peculiar to Northern Spain.

St James the Greater as Pilgrim

Spain Burgos, 1489

Alabaster, gilding, polychromy

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; The Cloisters Collection, 1988. (69.88)

Shows the traditional garb of the Pilgrim.

Pilgrims Badges

? 1460-80

lead alloy

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; The Cloisters Collection.?

These show the importance and pride with which the Pilgrimage is attributed. These would also be useful for contemporary comparisons.

Pier with Acrobats

Spain, 1175-1200

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; The Cloisters Collection.?

Display of entertainment, part of the cottage industries that entertained pilgrims from town to town.

Capitol, Saint Guilleme Cloister

Languedoc, 12th Century.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; The Cloisters Collection.

The leafy forms of the French capitols would be placed in contrast to the mozarabic, zoomorphic (and possibly near eastern influenced) capitals from Northern Spain. This would emphasize the varying motifs and workmanship architectural programs that distinguished regions and churches.

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