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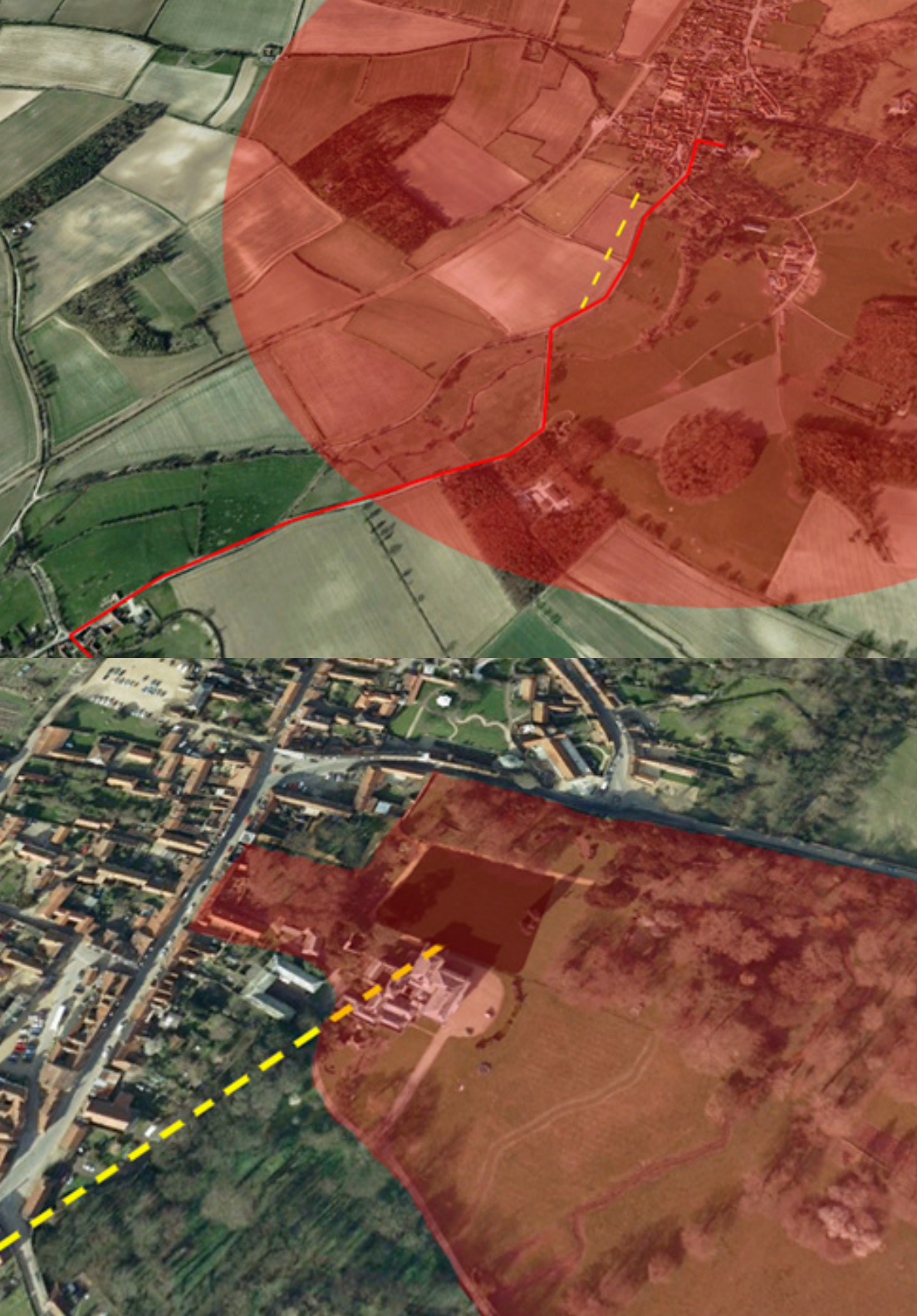Room One Thousand, 3(3)

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From the Fields to the City Gates
Experiencing Spatial Transition in Medieval Pilgrimage

'He is by grace a pilgrim here below, by grace a citizen of there above.'

Romans 9:21

Evocative of cloak swaddled figures crossing windswept moorlands, mountain passes and barren deserts to fall prostrate before some bejewelled splendour in a foreign land, pilgrimage remains one of the most documented and well known phenomena of human history, particularly in Medieval Europe. It also offers an as yet poorly tapped well for research into Medieval sensory history. As an experience both accessible to all, although hyper-personal, and as a window into one of the deepest human yearnings (to access a touchstone with the divine), pilgrimage is a well from whose waters scholars are beginning to drink more deeply.

Opposite: (above) The Holy Mile of Walsingham (red shade), showing the route coming down from Houghton St. Giles to the Slipper Chapel, leading to the town, including the sight line to the Friary (yellow). Original satellite image reproduced from © 2011 Google; (below) Map showing the proposed sightline (yellow) to the site of the Priory (footprint) upon entering Walsingham, and the sacred area of the Priory grounds which housed the shrine to Our Lady. Original satellite image reproduced from © 2011 Google.

Within the context of the Medieval West, much work has been done on the architectural aspects of shrines, the material culture of pilgrimage, and the role of the pilgrim in literature (partly due to Chaucer's legacy). This paper does not focus on the shrines, wells, and cult centres, which littered Europe, as there is already a substantial body of literature dealing with the architectural development of these edifices; the emphasis, here, is on the journeying context. The published studies of shrine sites are too numerous to cite here (and are addressed with regard to individual sites in the case studies), except John Crook's work on the modifications at the shrine of St. Swithun in the cathedral of Winchester, England. Of particular note is the discussion of relic translation and display for pilgrims, in his recent work on English Medieval shrines, which covers the evolution of these monuments from the Anglo-Saxon saint tombs to pilgrim shrines from the Reformation period (Crook, 1993; 2000; 2011). Seeking to address the lack of scholarship investigating the experiential elements of pilgrimage in the Medieval context—both in terms of the practicalities and sensory aspects of the phenomena, particularly with regard to the journeying and arrival process—this essay draws inspiration from the author's recently completed doctoral work (Locker, 2015), on the relationship between the pilgrim and the landscape in Medieval Britain, to offer a more thorough investigation of the spatial transitions from rural to urban environments and the Medieval view of these two spatial types. It does so by focusing on the effect these two spaces have on the pilgrim, as a liminal figure moving from what can be perceived as 'wilderness' through the boundary towards the urban 'civilised' landscape containing the sacred shrine.

The Character of Pilgrimage in the Medieval West

In her examination of Augustine's 'De Civitate Dei,' Clark suggests that *peregrinus* originally meant becoming a stranger, or a foreigner

in one's own country (Clark, 2004, 78). This emphasises the monastic desire, during these travels, to adopt the ascetic qualities of the hermitic tradition ascribed by the Anchorites and the Desert Fathers; namely solitude, hardship, and an unwavering devotion to God, undiluted by worldly distractions. By becoming a pilgrim or *peregrinus*, one would cast off familial society, and assume the marginal role of a traveller and, before the concept of pilgrimage became so popular amongst the Medieval Christian laity, the early Christian *peregrinus* would, perhaps, become almost psychologically hermit-like for the duration of the journey, shunning company as a distraction from their veneration and devotions (Clark, 2004, 83). Declaring oneself a 'stranger' echoes the words of the Hebrews in the Old Testament who '*confessed themselves no more than strangers and passing travellers on earth*'(Brock, 1973, 10). Liminality and temporal exile are states which characterise the pilgrim experience, existing outside normal societal interactions, in their journey through often unfamiliar landscapes towards a holy destination (mirroring their travelling through life towards Heavenly Jerusalem), no longer an earthly figure but rather moving towards communion with the divine. By donning the mantle of an 'exile,' the Christian pilgrim is temporarily rejecting the notion of their home residing on earth, and embracing the concept of their home being found in paradise. This concept of striving for reunification with all Christians' 'true home' (earthly and, especially, Heavenly Jerusalem); the shedding of normal societal privileges (or, indeed, disadvantages, depending on your status); and the embracing of a liminal position in which your presence is temporary, both within society and outside of it, in the landscapes through which one travels; are all deeply tied into the concept of a pilgrim's 'self-identity.' Regrettably, this is a fascinating aspect of pilgrim studies that cannot be fully addressed within this paper, due to spatial constraints. Suffice to say that the process of travelling through wild,

rural and urban environments which are unfamiliar (or, in some cases, hostile), being perceived differently by communities (i.e. pilgrim charity, alms, lodgings in pilgrim hostels with other pilgrims, etc.), and a process of self-transformation—from initiated pilgrim (during a church service, prior to setting out) to arrival at the shrine site, and, finally, return to normal daily life—describe the various identities a pilgrim takes on during his or her travels. Arnold van Gennep defined the rites of passage in pilgrimage as composed of three principle phases, summarised by Turner and Turner as states of 'separation', 'liminality' or marginality, and 'aggregation.' I will briefly outline these phases below (Gennep, 2004, 184; Turner and Turner, 1978, 2):

Separation: This phrase arises from the behaviours of the pilgrim which separate him from his fellow laymen and initiate his journey: this could be attending a special 'pilgrim mass' such as that performed at Roncesvalles in Spain (on the first Spanish stage of the Camino de Santiago de Compostela), at which numerous blessings are bestowed upon the pilgrim in readiness for their journey.

Liminality: This phase comes about through the process of travel; the motion and detachment from the rest of society which initiates the becoming of a *peregrinus*, or a 'stranger', acting outside the normal machinations of society in a variety of social and personal contexts (interaction with fellow travellers of different social standing, and the meditative quality of walking long distances). In this state, the pilgrim experiences time in a different manner, as the overriding rhythm of the day—that of the footstep—which is very noticeable today, where walking is no longer the primary means of travel. This experience is related by Frey, when describing his experiences on the Camino de Santiago de Compostela, he suggests that the pilgrims are aiming to temporarily transcend the fast-paced and mechanical

modern world by moving through the landscape in a manner which actually deliberately slows their progress, rather than utilising the fastest and most efficient method (Frey, 1998, 34). This rejectionism is far from being a recent concept; in the fourth century, St. Jerome wrote of '*forsaking the bustling cities of Antioch and Constantinople*', showing disdain for the manner in which (then) modern urban life interfered with spiritual development and renewal (Sumption, 1975, 95).

Aggregation: This final phase sees the subject 'consummate' the process of pilgrimage by arriving at the final site and performing appropriate devotions and supplications, before returning to normal life and society.

These interior 'transformations' involve the pilgrim subsuming himself into a radically different mode of life, for a time, and movements that assume a devotional aspect which render the pilgrim unique from the rest of the laity (Turner and Turner, 1978, 2). By completing the pilgrimage, the laity may '*enhance their mundane status through having made the journey*'; the initiation and subsequent ritual of pilgrimage would offer a release from the normal social responsibilities, which, undoubtedly, made the prospect of such a journey attractive across the public spectrum (Turner and Turner, 1978, 9). What follows below is an exploration of space and place, boundaries both real and temporal, of the Medieval imagination and senses, and the potential shift in pilgrim self-identity in moving from the wilderness to a temporary gathering of liminal brethren in an urban environment.

Whilst the concept of what constituted an 'urban' environment in the Medieval world remain fairly consistent with our own, a short explanation on 'wilderness' is necessary (and expanded upon later on in this paper). In the scriptures, a 'wilderness' frequently involves a barren

landscape, harsh and broken, which can give no shelter to man in either a physical or spiritual sense, and, in fact, may be both physically and spiritually hostile (e.g. the temptations of Jesus in the desert by the devil). In European contexts, landscapes—such as mountains, plains, fens and, in a less dramatic sense, moorlands and forests (addressed in detail later)—would have presented physical, mental and spiritual trials for the traveller; the latter with regard to the absence of sanctuary, in the form of an available church, and, potentially, a fear of supernatural— and lack of human—presences in these environments. Populated rural areas (i.e. agricultural) or hinterlands may have represented transitional points between the 'wild' and the urban, and given the prevalence of churches and chapels in rural communities across Europe, may also have offered spiritual (and physical) shelter from the trials of travel. Naturally a liminal figure, the pilgrim's experience is typified by this navigation between spatial zones and transitional areas, constantly crossing thresholds and undergoing physical and spiritual trials as he or she journeys towards the touchstone with the divine that the pilgrim centre (shrine, miracle site, holy well, etc.) represents.

Urban: Across the Threshold and Towards the Shrine

As expressed above, the hinterland between urban and wilderness, while not equivalent to today's 'suburban' phenomena, qualifies as transitional territory, a space between two realms, the prime quality of which was movement. Traffic flowed both to and from settlements, through gates into the markets and streets, and from the gates out into the world along the roads and tracks the traveller had previously journeyed upon. William of Auvergne wrote that: '*The first thing that one saw in looking at a city was its gates, by which people gained access to a new status. The city was a civilisation*' (Le Goff, 1988, 178). The symbolism of standing before the city gate, and the visual sensory impact of the approach from a rural

environment to this 'boundary of civilisation', marks this transition, however, for the pilgrim, the visual stimuli may not have been the first clue of nearing a large urban settlement.

It is highly possible that the first sensory encounter an approaching traveller would have with a town or city would have been an audial, rather than visual, experience. In his 2006 publication, 'The Senses in Late Medieval England' Woolgar writes that '*In terms of absolute levels of sound, both town and countryside were very much quieter than today: much would have been audible that is now obscured by background noise*' (Woolgar, 2006, 66). The 'background noise' (not to mention, with the right winds, the 'background smell') of trade, industry and densely packed humanity, may have preceded visual identification of the city or town, especially in forested or obscure landscapes. Church (and cathedral) bells often were a great source of local pride, and their peal was seen as embodying the parish as well as delineating its geographical reach by the audible range. As French writes, '*Parishioners worked to have distinctive bells...they came to symbolise individual parishes*' (French, 2000, 146). For settlements with multiple churches (and, in the case of the largest cities, multiple parishes), these bells may have been in competition with one another, however, all rang out in defiance of the wilderness beyond the city walls. An example of this confluence of tolling bells can be found in the early modern urban soundscape of Florence, which was 'punctuated by the sounds of civic and sacred bells...[which] permeated the city within a sonic exchange that regulated sleep and work and called people to prayer, meals, celebrations, councils, executions and bed' (Atkinson, 2013, 70). The bells united the city spaces, choreographing 'the theatres of everyday life,' sonically delineated the urban landscape from the hinterlands, and were bound to the identity of those living within the city—an expression of communal urban identity, as found in the rural parishes' love of distinctive peals (Atkinson, 2013, 70). Extending

beyond the city walls, just as churches along the Dorset coast in Britain rang out in dubious weather and served as a 'seamark' for ships feeling their way towards Bristol port, so too could the bells of a city be regarded as symbolising audible guide posts and beacons for those making their way towards civilisation in inclement weather (French, 2000, 147).

The concept of the city, in Christian and Medieval minds, was indelibly bound to that of civilisation, Jerusalem and scripture; the urban environment plays host to the most crucial of scriptural events in the New Testament, and both the Classical and Hebraic legacy, which informed European Christianity (whilst varying in their appreciation for the wild), emphasised the civilisation and worth of that which was enclosed within the city walls (this idea is further discussed later in this paper). Forney writes that '*Revelation uses the geographical association for the city where the physical manifestation of the New Jerusalem is to come. An example of the liturgical association for polis is found in Hebrews where readers are called to an approach, or way, created by the One who is crucified outside the gate*' (Forney, 2006, 52). Thus, the approach to the city gate could, if in a spiritual frame of mind, signify being called to the interior by Christ, even more so when applied in the context of the pilgrim passing out of the rural landscape into the urban environment.

Historically, the approach and entry into a city also has connotations of a transition of identity, and this can be seen within the original concept of the role of triumphal arches. These monuments, which have now come to be associated with celebrations of military victories, were initially constructed to sanctify returning armies who had ventured outside the city, and its sacred civilised spaces, in order to fight profane enemies and who had therefore been tainted with 'otherness.' These soldiers needed to be 'cleansed' and re-sanctified as citizens before returning into the city, and city arches acted as vast thresholds through which they could pass. Similarly, in reference to women emerging from 'all the cities of

Israel' to greet Saul and his men returning from the battle where David slew Goliath, Gregory Mobley writes that '*such a scene might be seen as a formalized version of the mythic encounter between wild man and women; at a liminal site, the boundary between city and field, women encounter men and convert them from combatants to civilians*' (Mobley, 2006, 105). Returning to the medieval construct, when entering a city, man entered a space defined in terms which were simultaneously physical, legal and ethical, and, having entered, '*became different from what they had been before*' (Le Goff, 1988, 178). The passage through the gates marked the traveller's entrance back into those systems, which Le Goff explores within the work of William of Auvergne. Here, he argues for a fundamental opposition to the medieval world view and value system of the forest and the city, the latter being a symbolic centre of culture and the former an embodiment of the wilderness (Le Goff, 1988, 178). By crossing a threshold in the form of the city gate, much like the Israelite warriors, the medieval traveller becomes a civilian anew, the liminal space of the gate washing away the wilderness and moving him into a haven of humanity.

Another aspect of spatial revelation that is equally applicable to the city gate(s), and to moving through streets and interactions with the shrine site itself, is the obscuration and emergence of views that doorways and urban environments offer. With the exception of very specific environments, such as forests, generally speaking, the visibility of landscapes which are rural and/or 'wild' is broader, more far reaching, and affords greater panoramas of one's surroundings than those found within the city walls. Thus, the journey of the pilgrim, within the urban locale, automatically disorients and detaches one from the broader environment and instead unfolds, like a strip map, as buildings, streets, gates and doorways reveal new locations. One possible exception would have been the church or cathedral (likely housing the shrine which

is the focus of the journey), whose height, in relation to surrounding buildings, makes it a guiding landmark and an irresistible draw for the eyes and feet of the pilgrim. Using the celebrated pilgrim shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham in Norfolk, eastern England, what follows below is an experimental exploration, using the phenomena outlined above, to the transition from wild to urban, from profane spaces to sacred ones, in the context of a pilgrim approaching was then the bustling pilgrimage-driven town of Walsingham in the late 15th century, at the height of the Marian cult's popularity.

The Journey to Our Lady of Walsingham

The cult of Our Lady of Walsingham was famous throughout Christendom in the Middle Ages, and, at its peak, rivalled Canterbury as England's premier pilgrim destination. It was visited by the notable mystic Margery Kempe, in about 1433 (Windeatt 2004), and also drew the attention of the pro-reform Desiderus Erasmus in 1512. This cult was sparked by a vision, in 1061, when the Virgin Mary was said to have appeared before the wealthy widow Lady Richelde de Faverches, and instructed her to build a wooden replica of the House of the Annunciation—the place where she received the news that she was with the Christ child. This was initially located in a small stone church, which, subsequently, became a shrine for the laity. In due course, a religious house was founded by Edwy, chaplain to Lady de Faverches' son, which then grew into the Augustinian Priory (Adair, 1978, 114)—the remains of which are still visible in Walsingham in the form of the lone standing gable end of the church. Records indicate that the shrine was richly jewelled and received huge levels of donations and royal visits up until the Dissolution period when the shrine was destroyed. The primary sites at Walsingham were the Slipper Chapel, which was the final and grandest wayside chapel along

the approach to the settlement, and Walsingham Priory, wherein lay the shrine of Our Lady. In due course, Walsingham became colloquially known as 'England's Nazareth,' a testament to its prestige and reputation. Erasmus records that pilgrims to Walsingham Priory would enter from the west through a narrow wicket and be guided by one of the priory monks, first to a holy well then into the priory church. After this, pilgrims were taken to 'a little house' that held the shrine with the replicated House of the Annunciation which 'literally blazed with silver, gold and jewels', within which were the statues of Mary and Christ, fashioned from gold and silver gilt (Nichols, 1849, 26). The Walsingham area can loosely be divided into the following regions and will be addressed chronologically below:

> *Exterior: The approach to the Slipper Chapel.*
> *Interior I: 'The Holy Mile' from the Slipper Chapel to Walsingham.*
> *Interior II: The settlement of Walsingham.*
> *Interior III: The Priory precinct and church.*
> *Exterior: The approach to the Slipper Chapel*

Walsingham is situated in a shallow dell and bordered by farmland, which adds to its seclusion and sense of being set apart from the rest of the area. The landscape complements the feeling of sanctuary attached to 'England's Nazareth', through the fertility of the soil and the streams and meadows surrounding the town. Although the topography is undulating, the elevations in this approach are slight, and so there is no way to read the landscape beyond the fields and stream which border the path. Consequently, as the route weaves in towards the Slipper Chapel and through Houghton St. Giles, the sight of Walsingham Priory looming a mile ahead would have been sudden, only forecast by the sounds of the monks in worship and the clamour of the bells from the Priory and Slipper Chapel. The lane curves through the

fields to Walsingham, and the features of the landscape—including Walsingham's built environment—are gradually revealed as the route progresses. Walsingham's status as a place set apart and a more intensely spiritual place than most is enhanced by this approach. The slow unfolding of the location provides a sense of travelling from the normal and profane world into that of the secret and hyper-sacred. The Slipper Chapel, as the frontier or liminal marker, represents a threshold between the profane environments surrounding Walsingham and its sacred centre.

Interior I: 'The Holy Mile' from the Slipper Chapel to Walsingham:

The 'Holy Mile' designates the final highly charged approach, where processions with sacraments and relics would have taken place, and penitents walked barefoot to the town (Page, 1906, 395). Aside from 'Nazareth', the area was also known colloquially as 'The Holy Land of Walsingham'. The Slipper Chapel was the last in the series of Walsingham-linked wayside pilgrim chapels built alongside the 'Walsingham Way'—a commonly used route by pilgrims linking Walsingham and London. Its purpose (aside from masses for pilgrims) may have also been to represent a spiritual border post or frontier between the profane English landscape and that of this surrogate 'Holy Land'. Having crossed the 'threshold' at the Slipper Chapel (likely by praying within the chapel with fellow pilgrims in a highly charged atmosphere), the pilgrim landscape, in this approach to Walsingham from the Slipper Chapel, would have a sacral quality, since it was in this small valley that the Virgin Mary appeared and blessed the area with instructions for a replica of her annunciation house. Pilgrims would literally have been walking in a region believed to have been favoured by the 'mother' of Jesus and the church. This link with biblical lands, the Virgin cult and the Christian mythos was surely not lost on the majority of the laity.

Interior II: The settlement of Walsingham

Upon entering Walsingham during the 14th century, the first monument to be encountered was the Friary, which signified the second interior or stage of the approach to the Walsingham shrine; that of the holy town, scene of the Marian vision which prompted the building of the shrine. Visually, the Friary occupied a small complex in comparison to the Priory. However, it was the foremost ecclesiastical sight (shown above and below in yellow) occupying a prominent position at the south entrance to Walsingham and the Friary church (whilst not being particularly high, as indicated from its ruins) and would have been the initial view for pilgrims approaching the town. Processions of monks to and from the shrine site, accompanied by chants, would have heightened the pilgrim's experience. This would have contributed to the reverent and unusual atmosphere, further emphasising the difference between this environment and the many miles encountered by the pilgrim during his or her journey. What would have been most noticeable to the pilgrim, however, after the relative quiet during the many miles of travel amongst fields and fenland (alone or with travelling companions), was the noise emanating from this pilgrim centre. Providing another example of how the spheres of the sacred and profane often overlapped, the pilgrim's ears would have been assaulted by bells, liturgical hymns, itinerant preachers, souvenir merchants peddling their wares, innkeepers competing for guests, and the general sounds of the marketplace next to the Friary. The church of St. Mary, to the east, would have contributed to the mixture of sound created by the bell tower and the flow of people to and from the site. However it is likely that, as a parish church, it did not provide as much of an impact on the pilgrim as the two religious houses, especially when compared to the Nazareth connections produced by the Priory area (shown in Figure 2 below in red).

Interior III: The Priory precinct and church

Aside from the descriptions left to us by Erasmus and the archaeological record of the Priory, few visible traces remain to give us clues about the potential ways pilgrims would have engaged with it. However there are several aspects of sensory interaction in the precinct and church, which can be discussed, taking cues from other cult centres, using William of Worcester's measurements and Erasmus' caustic commentary. Size is undoubtedly one of the most immediate visual aspects which struck the visitor stepping through the wicket gate into the Priory precinct. Worcester provides a detailed description:

> '*The crossing or belfry area consists of 16 paces each way. The width of the nave of the church alone without the two aisles is 16 paces. The length of the cloister, which is completely square, 54 paces. The length of the Chapterhouse alone consists of 20 paces and its breadth 10 paces, but the length of the portico of the Chapterhouse from the cloister consists of 10 paces, thus totalling 30 paces*' (Harvey, 1969, 67).

Not only would the Priory have dominated the skyline when entering Walsingham, once inside the precinct, it would have filled the view of the pilgrim and been a hive of activity. The clamouring of other pilgrims, combined with the proscribed route taken around the precinct, accompanied by a guiding monk, would also have created a sense of anticipation, building as one proceeds site by site towards the pinnacle of the journey—the shrine room itself. Within the church, the chatter of the laity awaiting entrance to the shrine, combined with the pilgrim's own sense of excitement and awe (enhanced by the sensory overload of relics, incense, ornament and candles) would have created an intense experience.

Atchley addresses the use of incense inside a church and its role in marking a space as sacral by flooding the senses with sweet odours (1909).

St. Thomas Aquinas stated that incense '*set the divine apart from the smells of the world*', imbuing church interiors with an actual odour of sanctity (Aquinas, 2007, 12). As opposed to the flood of 'profane scents' which would have assaulted the nose of the traveller arriving at an urban centre (provided by tanneries, markets, food preparation, bodily hygiene, sewage, smoke, etc.), it is possible to see a thick and heady wall of incense which curls around the church interior, itself providing a 'threshold' of sorts, both covering and refuting the profane odours of the settlement outside. The use of incense within religious spaces and rituals has been well attested across many cultures and periods, and with regard to the transformative effect incense has upon a space, it is also worth considering the visual effect, by which (in sufficient quantities) the smoke creates a pungent haze or 'veil' which alters the visual perception of a viewer's environment. This not only adds to the distinction between that which is outside and the sacred space within, but also contributes to a sense of the space within the church as being a meeting point between heaven and earth. Incense makes the familiar church interior unfamiliar through the mystery of its shifting depths of vision as it obscures and reveals details of the building in its coiling smoke. When further augmented by monastic chants or similar accompaniments, the smoke of incense must have made a considerable impact on the weary pilgrim. Whilst one can agree with Insoll (2005), that sites were all things to all men, and debunk the relevance of arbitrarily demarking certain sites as sacred, as opposed to profane, claiming that the two terms were nebulous in their application, there can be no doubt that these sensory trappings helped to instill a feeling of truly being in 'God's house' in which devotion became the primary focus.

It is not the aim of this paper to deconstruct the pilgrim experience within the church. However, a very brief examination of the pilgrim's interaction with the shrine is included in order to give a complete impression of the pilgrim's transition from the urban exterior to the sacred

interior. Within the shrine room there was the replica of the House of the Annunciation, dictated by divine decree, and the statues of the Virgin Mary and Jesus Christ. There was also an opulent display of jewels, precious metals, and other 'votive' offerings from high status visitors (Nichols, 1849, 26). Arriving at the shrine was an intensely emotional experience for the pilgrim (the emotional Margey Kempe visited Walsingham in the 16th century where '*sche had hir meditacyon and hir devocyon wyth wepyng and sobbying as wel as yf sche had ben at hom*' (Windeatt, 2004, 398). Being in the presence of what was perceived as a detached enclave of the Holy Land, surrounded by a material richness that would rarely have been encountered, would have made a strong impression. Erasmus relates more practical aspects of the shrine, indignantly recording that '*the place is very draughty on all sides; the windows are open, and the doors are open, and not far off is the ocean, the father of winds*' (Nichols, 1849, 18). No doubt this bracing atmosphere combined with monks' encouragement, would have kept circulation in the shrine swift. Maintaining an efficient flow of pilgrims around the shrine and out the door would have been beneficial in terms of donation turnover and keeping the laity from interfering too much with the activities of the monks at the Priory, and this appears, generally, to be the case in most pilgrim centres (Crook, 2000, 117).

Rural: The Pilgrim in the Wilderness

Across Medieval Europe pilgrim shrines, cathedrals, churches, chapels and miracle sites were strewn with increasing frequency as the centuries followed each other. The intricate lacework of roads, tracks and paths, of which the medieval route network of Christendom was comprised and which pilgrims utilised, flowed in, out, and around a variety of settlements; some major ecclesiastical and economic centres, others market towns or fortified settlements. This means a huge percentage of the landscapes, through which a pilgrim might have moved, was

rural or uninhabited (wild), pocked with villages, hamlets, fields, moors, woodlands, river plains, hills, mountains and valleys. All of these environments qualify as the 'other' places outside the city walls, some of which truly were wild and presented real danger to the pilgrim.

Lacking the 'Hebraic' wilderness landscapes described within the Bible, the perception of 'wild' landscapes in Europe encompassed areas such as the coastlines and moorlands of Scotland and Northern England. This is demonstrated by the monastic presence established by St. Columba on Iona, as related by Adomnán, whose deliberate building of a monastery in such a remote landscape represented a desire to retreat beyond the landscapes of man to those areas which lay beyond his influence, where nature and silence reigned in a pure expression of God's creation; in short, the wild (Sharpe, 1995). Other examples may include the wintery passes of the Alps, such as St. Bernard's Pass or The Gotthard Pass (although, for obvious reasons, the winter was seldom chosen as a season for travelling through these mountainous corridors), or the stretch of the Camino de Santiago, between Burgos and León, a notoriously testing section of the Camino consisting of a flat, featureless plain which extends to the horizon for several days. Many of these environments could be said to offer European examples of scriptural ideals of wilderness, a locale that offered physical and mental danger, fear, a lack of human presence and the possibility for an almost fierce experience of the supernatural.

One of the most commonly encountered landscapes for the pilgrim in Europe (which took on the role of the scriptural desert's Western equivalent) was the forest. The forest represented both a foreboding place, filled with spiritual and physical danger, and a paradisiac shelter in several chivalrous romances; and provided encounters with 'wise men', sages and hermits (Le Goff, 1988, 56). The forest was the setting for liminal encounters, blurring the real and supernatural. We can see

this in representations of Christ in wooded 'wilderness' preparing to encounter Satan. This idea of encounters from 'otherworldly' forces within the forest is a popular aspect of folklore throughout Britain and Europe, and is expanded upon within the sensory sections of the case studies. In this way the idea of 'the desert' has always been composed of juxtaposing material and spiritual realities, and the persistent interplay of symbolism and geography (Le Goff, 1988, 52).

The traveller within the forest is in many ways a spectator. Their journey along a set path allows the scenery to flow by as a visual, though not interactive, encounter, a series of moving images that wall them in along the route through the trees. Visibility was a crucial factor in the melding of the different aspects of the forest. The tree cover provided a screen that hid others from a traveller's view, and in turn hid the traveller from others. Breaking from the path to venture into the woodland does not render the traveller more involved with the forest; in fact, they are further cast as an alien presence within the environment, their place is not within the boughs and undergrowth but along the track, and deviating from this role puts the traveller at risk from unusual encounters (both real and imagined) and disturbs their sense of orientation and direction. Paths typically led through cleared spaces, and the surrounding vegetation could be impenetrable both physically and visibly. Thus, the forest was typically seen as 'opaque', able to contain great and useful reserves of game, honey, timber and grazing land, and also filled with those at the social and literal fringes of society such as '*hunters, charcoal-burners, blacksmiths, honey and wax gatherers, ashmen…and bark pullers*' (Bloch, 1951, 6).

These embowered environments of the forest represented a serviceable 'wilderness' for monastic communities seeking solitude, and who placed themselves in the margins of society in order to escape its profanity. Like the pilgrim, monks (and to a more extreme degree, ascetics, anchorites

and hermits) were imposing an exiled status on themselves within these marginal landscapes. The 1065 cartulary of Sainte-Foy of Conques records that a cell of monks had settled where '*there was no human habitation except for the brigands in the forests*'. As far as ecclesiastical institutions were concerned, the forest represented the desert (Le Goff, 1988, 54).

Woodlands could, however, be 'tamed' by human enclosure, and, in some cases, formed into 'hunting forests' which allowed nature to flourish in a controlled manner and specifically for the enjoyment of high status society, or made use of as sources of timber (Cummins, 2002, 33 – 56). It is important to note that encountering true 'wildwood' (i.e. primeval woodland) would be uncommon in Medieval Europe, as many of the wooded environments had been altered since the Mesolithic period, though this may not have altered the perception of the landscape and woodlands as 'wild' in character (Rackham, 2002, 14). This dualistic view of the landscape, as both wild and controlled, represents the product of a mixed heritage of Eastern and Classical Western literature which created the Western Medieval Christian identity. These two perspectives on the essential character of wild landscapes were united through the concept that, wherever possible, truly unpopulated and 'wild' landscapes should be made *useful* in terms of crops, livestock and industry, and be tamed through Christian presence (Fumagilli, 1994, 14). Wild landscapes could and should be turned to the use of Man (and the glory of God through Man's works), adding to his God-given dominion over nature, as expressed in Genesis.

The Hebraic view of the wild, and of the character and role of natural environments, was also expressed through the Scriptures and would have greatly coloured a pilgrim's experience of the landscape. The laity would have been familiar with, at least, the most celebrated biblical events through sermons, preachers and the daily transmission of Christian doctrine by the Church, with many natural features linked,

within the Old and New Testaments, to spiritual experiences. Most obviously, water was associated with regeneration and healing (one has only to observe one of the central Christian rites – baptism – to see the importance attributed to water as a spiritual cleanser and element of transition), and rivers acted as natural boundaries across which a shift from one area to another (geographically and spiritually) was registered. For example, the River Jordan is not only the scene of Jesus' baptism, but both the conduit and symbol of the event, becoming so rooted, within Christian tradition, as a representation of the event that pilgrims, even today, gather to pray at the site and purchase vials of river water to take home, echoing the tradition of *ampullae*.

Trees and plants also have a long and complex history of associated symbolism within Christian theology: grapes symbolising the blood of Christ; the Chestnut symbolising chastity; the Acacia, the purity of the Virgin; the Fern, symbolising humility; and the Cedar, Christ himself (Ferguson, 1959). More generally, however, trees were linked with the Cross. The Golden Legend speaks of the True Cross being constructed from three trees which grew from three seeds derived from the 'Tree of Mercy', planted by Seth in the mouth of Adam's corpse: '*And then he laid the grains or kernels under his father's tongue and buried him in the Vale of Hebron; and out of his mouth grew three trees of the three grains, of which trees the cross that our Lord suffered his passion on was made, by virtue of which he gat very mercy, and was brought out of the darkness into the very light of heaven*' (Voragine, 1993, 5). The mountains and fissures of Israel were said to have been created '*by God's own hand*', representing God's intimate involvement with the formation of the world – the tectonic processes not being known to the contemporary laity (Walsham, 2001, 39). These motifs would have echoed down to the laity through sermons, as '*neither the concept of a hallowed place nor the assumption that nature was responsive to human conduct was alien to biblical thought*'

(Walsham, 2011, 39). This may also have affected the manner in which the laity experienced the landscape on a daily basis, many of which were occupied in primarily agricultural work. A pilgrims travels would have augmented the perceived 'relationship' established by laity with their local environment.

Pilgrimage and Space in the Medieval Imagination

When addressing pilgrimage, the movement and interaction between natural and built landscapes is essential to their experience. The movements and interactions between these two zones involve different and often simultaneous classes of 'spaces' within each of the environments. Within this paper, we have seen a series of transitions which are based upon the author's own experience of pilgrim routes, yet which remain more general in their description in order to render the conclusions more broadly applicable to pilgrim studies in various areas. Rural or urban spaces are all laden with overlapping boundaries related to purpose, interpretation, and personal experiences. These multiple perceptions of space, or 'multivocal spaces', produce diverse responses depending upon the origin, background, role and mental state of the person inhabiting or passing through them. In '*Experiencing Landscapes*' (2003), Karin Altenberg discusses how archaeologists have '*traditionally used a quantitative approach to space*', but argues that '*social space must not, or indeed cannot, be formally quantified*' (Altenberg, 2003, 1). What appears to have emerged from the growing body of scholarship and theorising on concepts of space in the Medieval context is that the Medieval mind was an agile one which was capable of perceiving places in multiple perspectives, depending on the role of the person at the time. Approaches that apply a quantitative value to how we think about space in historical contexts do not account for peoples' mental agility, and thus tend to represent experiences or thoughts about spaces and

places as rigid and monolithic. For example, the landscapes through which the pilgrim moves contain that ethereal concept of 'spirit of place', which, whilst not being a scientific or, indeed, a rational element, holds a place in the discussion of how an environment affects those passing through, as '*the land is a repository of memory*' (Pearson, 2006, 6). The concept of 'spirit of place' often finds itself manifested through folklore in the idea that a certain landscape holds 'significance' (Pearson, 2006, 7). Its 'established' folkloric or historic significance may be lost on those unfamiliar with the locale or the associated folk culture. However, a pilgrim's own response to the landscape would, in turn, become part of the memory of the location, potentially related to others upon his or her return home, and influence the perceptions of subsequent pilgrims to the area. A 'foreign' response may be influenced by the person's memories, physical experiences at the time, mental condition, etc., offering a multitude of personal responses to an environment outside of its commonly recounted folklore. Thus, we can see a cycle of received perception (which may or may not tally with the formal 'history' or folklore of the landscape) being renewed and disseminated via the pilgrim, colouring the preconceived notions of the listeners who may, in the future, encounter that location with the pilgrim's words in mind. In short, pilgrimage landscapes clearly meant differing things to different people simultaneously, and these meanings were fluid, capable of being shaped by both locals and those who passed through them from afar. Although successive generations might not fully understand why, these attitudes are replicated through a superstitious view of certain locations.

Returning to the local pilgrim context, aspects of 'performative memory' can be seen where the physical action of travelling through a local landscape allows the pilgrim to access memories attached to certain well-known features or monuments. As discussed in the previous paragraph, these might be personal, or belong to the wider

community in the form of folklore or 'saintlore' (Connerton, 1989). Both individual and culturally learnt interactions and perceptions of space and landscape must be taken into account in order to fully explore what may potentially have occurred within the Medieval mind when moving between locations. This is especially true in those particular situations of pilgrimage and religious travel, be it across a mountain pass, arriving at the gates of Rome or moving through the streets of Jerusalem.

The Pilgrim's Search for Liminal Space

It could be suggested that the pilgrim, as the quintessential liminal figure, moved not only between the urban and rural but also between earthly and divine environments (as in the approach to Walsingham) and experienced the process of transitions as a rolling series of encounters which harboured spiritual meaning. In the process of Christian pilgrimage, one which is meant to fundamentally alter a person, placing them outside of normal society, forcing them to confront discomfort and themselves along the lonely track (when travelling solo) and bringing one closer to God, the pilgrim may have encountered the crossing of boundaries as encounters which placed him in either sanctuary, danger, company or solitude in a fundamentally spiritual sense. This would mean that an environment which offered spiritual company (i.e. a chance to pray in a roadside chapel) would not be the same as one which offered physical company (i.e. a crowded street). Thus, it is possible that moving outside of an urban environment was, to the seriously minded pilgrim, an ideal transition which put him in the ideal state of pilgrimage—against the elements, outside of profane society and its temptations, and marching ever onwards towards the pilgrim shrine, God, and, ultimately, Heavenly Jerusalem. In addition, the transitions from woodland to open track, river crossing to city gate, street to cathedral, all held a mixture of cultural and personal triggers of

memory which coloured the raw experience of a pilgrim's travel, making it one of the most personal processes available in Medieval Christianity.

Wilderness and sanctuary, the earthly and the profane, rural and urban—the common perception of the Medieval mind paints a world of immutable duality, where two definite qualities exist in opposition to each other. However, the duality of sacred and profane elements in the landscape has long been a subject occupying scholars investigating disparate cultures, and, in the context of the Medieval, Western laity, with religious ideals and activity fundamentally interwoven into the fabric of their lives. The pilgrim exemplifies this duality.

In the text 'Defining the Holy' (2004), the authors suggest that '*for many people the mundane landscape was, and is, interwoven with sacred sites*' (Hamilton and Spicer, 2005, 4). Using this assertion as a starting point, it is possible to see the laity as acting out both the rituals of everyday existence, and engaging in devotions which utilised sacred sites, all within a landscape which allowed the co-existent simultaneous presence of sacred and profane space. An explicit example of this coexistence of spatial uses was present at some of the more celebrated urban pilgrim sites. It would not be unusual to see merchants and pedlars within the church knave itself, jostling for position amongst the clerics and pilgrims, and there are records of tooth-pullers and cobblers plying their trade on the steps and in the atrium of St. Peter's Basilica amongst the hordes of pilgrims (Hamilton and Spicer, 2005). Members of the laity were also known to celebrate feasts by coming into church and singing obscene songs, bringing the profane world into direct contact with the sacred (Webb, 1999; Hamilton and Spicer, 2005). Mircea Eliade reconciles these simultaneous attributes of religious landscapes with the supposition that the devote person views the whole world as '*the work of the gods*' and consequently sacral at all times (Eliade, 1959, 64). Timothy Insoll provides a similar yet more nuanced suggestion that

'*the same landscape can mean different things to different people, and can be one and the same, and thus lack any arbitrary division*' (Insoll, 2007, 88).

Similarly the Medieval attitude to the 'natural' and 'wild' places reconciled differing viewpoints and interpretations. We are presented with a dualism within the personal response to nature; it represented both a *locus amoenus* ('lovely place', typically a bucolic pastoral landscape) and the *locus horribilis* ('terrible place', wild and barren in character) (Howe, 2002, 210 – 212). The concept of *locus amoenus* was inherited from Greek and Roman pastoral literary traditions (such as Theocritus' 'Idylls' and Virgil's 'Pastorals'), containing all that was beautiful, pure, and representative of a paradisiacal state devoid of distractions from spiritual contemplation (thus ideally suited to hermits and religious retreat), although this landscape was not thought of as beyond improvement by man's efforts (Howe, 2002, 210). The 'wilderness' is the setting in many biblical tales for interaction with the spiritual world (such as Jesus' temptation, Moses' receipt of manna, John the Baptist's dwelling place), although this interaction was not always benevolent and forms a separate realm from that which is encountered in the daily rhythm of the laity majority. This view of the 'wild' landscape is inherited from the Hebraic literary heritage, which runs through the scriptures, and it was just these 'broken' environments to which hermits and monastic communities were originally drawn in the East. This may have started the transformative process from *horribilis* to *amoenus* (Howe, 2002, 213; White, 1972, 6).

The Hebraic 'wilderness' is the *locus horribillis*, a bleak and blighted landscape which frequently found its way into hagiographies during the 11th and 12th century (Howe, 2002, 212). It is this concept of wilderness, that of the blighted topography and uninhabitable lands, that was most likely within the minds of the Medieval laity. Whilst scale would initially seem to constitute a necessary element of 'wilderness',

from the author's own experience, it does not have to be the case. Small patches of moorland, snatches of ancient woodland, and secluded landscapes which are obscured from view (or, indeed, general access) by agricultural and 'civilised' environments also render the feeling of the human presence as 'invasive' and unusual, thus conjuring the feeling of 'the wild'. The condition of the human presence as unusual or even unwelcome (primarily produced by little evidence of human impact within the environment) is crucial in producing the sensation of 'wild nature' as opposed to 'managed nature'. These 'minor' landscapes, sometimes found between or at the edges of fields, hedgerows, territory boundaries, and other transitional areas, also blur the lines between definitions of 'natural' and 'wild', sharing such close proximity with settled and potentially 'urbanised' or cultivated areas. The implications of the 'micro transitions' for pilgrims may have included an increase in perceived distance of the journey. The route would feel larger and more dynamic than it really was, and there is even the possibility that a certain mythical quality to the journey would be brought out by reflecting on the travels of saints across similar landscapes.

The urban environments of the Medieval West, host of the majority of pilgrimage shrines and religious power centres, also generated a complicated and intricate series of spatial interactions and interpretations in the Medieval world. Dismissing the Classical legacy, Le Goff cites the Judeo-Christian (i.e Hebraic) tradition as '*the most important influence on the medieval urban imagination, which is hardly surprising...an image could become powerful only if it was supported with a biblical reference*' (Le Goff, 1988, 169). This tradition of 'contradictory' urban representation and symbolism is first identified within the Old Testament. The city was originally cast as inherently cursed (the first city was raised by Cain), testaments to man's pride (Babel), and dens of vice and sin (Sodom and Gomorrah), and was only remoulded in a more positive light with the

conquest of Jericho and the rise of Jerusalem.

King David and King Solomon are credited with the success of Jerusalem, both through the location and delivery of the Ark of the Covenant and the building of the Temple and the Palace, both of which represent that which was typical of urban symbolism throughout the Middle Ages: the seats of the two great powers, religious and royal (or civil) which govern and provide stability and spirituality. The New Testament adds further ingredients into the mix of urban symbolism: Jerusalem's association with both the life and death of Jesus and the introduction of the concept of Heavenly Jerusalem (especially in the context of an enduring symbolic struggle with the 'evil' city of Babylon in the Book of Revelations). In contrast, it is possible that, depending on the moral nature of the city, the surrounding natural areas may be presented as polluted by the moral decay within the urban environment or, in contrast, as a refuge for the spiritually minded (represented through their use as retreats by the ascetically-minded Christian).

The urban environment also represented its fair share of vice and danger; the scriptural example of Sodom and Gomorrah serves particularly well to demonstrate this point. However, the perpetual apocalyptic fears in the Medieval period, and attributions of plague outbreaks to man's sin, also suggest that the brothels, taverns, thieves and over-indulgent priests within city walls contributed to a contemporary worry about the state of the urban soul. That being said, the city was seen as an emblem of civilisation, stability and security. The walls surrounding an urban settlement created distinctions between those who dwelt without (rural, agricultural producers) and those who dwelt within the settlement (urban, industrial producers and agricultural consumers). Those outside the city walls were invariably less secure than those within it. This loss of security is part of what presented pilgrims with opportunities for transformation.

Concluding Remarks

This paper presents areas for consideration when attempting to grasp the experiential elements of pilgrimage studies, expanding on the experimental methods used in the author's doctoral thesis and bringing the focus onto the pilgrims themselves. When approached from an interdisciplinary perspective, pilgrimage represents a vital field through which to further our understanding of the Medieval Christian mindset. The liminality of the pilgrim, as a figure in temporal exile, belonging neither to earthly society nor to heaven, but treading a path in between, meant that the spatial interactions undertaken were complex and multifaceted. This was mirrored in his or her travel between the rural and the urban. The rural and natural landscapes symbolised the dangerous and profane aspects of the scriptural wildernesses, yet also may have contained memories and cultural triggers relating, in a very personal way, to the pilgrim's life. As pilgrims traversed the boundaries between different environments, they would have experienced them as encounters latent with spiritual meaning.

By employing methodologies and information gleaned from the fields of anthropology, theology, history and archaeology, it is possible to begin exploring the mental and sensory processes that constituted the 'pilgrim experience' in a variety of environments. As can be seen from the Walsingham case study, zones of interaction with the pilgrim centre and its revelation may have been deliberately designed to maximise the effect upon the pilgrim, not only within the shrine but also in the designated approach to the settlement containing the shrine (e.g. the use of the Slipper Chapel and the 'Holy Mile'). One future avenue for this approach and its expansion lies in the long-distance pilgrimage, in which various geographical and cultural boundaries are encountered both to and from the pilgrim centre, and may afford us a glimpse into the concepts of self-identity for the Medieval mind when far from the pilgrim's native parish and country.

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