

The Routledge Companion to Global Renaissance Art



Edited by Stephen J. Campbell and Stephanie Porras

THE ROUTLEDGE COMPANION TO GLOBAL RENAISSANCE ART

This companion examines the global Renaissance through object-based case studies of artistic production from Africa, Asia, the Americas, and Europe in the early modern period.

The international group of contributors take an art historical approach characterized by close analysis of form and meaning as well as function, and a focus on questions of cross-cultural dialogue and adaptation. Seeking to de-emphasize the traditional focus on Europe, this book is a critical guide to the literature and the state of the field. Chapters outline new questions and agendas while pushing beyond familiar material. Main themes include workshops, the migrations of artists, objects, technologies, diplomatic gifts, imperial ideologies, ethnicity and indigeneity, sacred spaces and image cults, as well as engaging with the open questions of “the Renaissance” and “the global.”

This will be a useful and important resource for researchers and students alike and will be of interest to scholars working in art history, visual culture, material culture, and Renaissance studies.

Stephen J. Campbell is Henry and Elizabeth Wiesenfeld Professor in the Department of the History of Art at The Johns Hopkins University.

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6.4

PILGRIMS AND THEIR OBJECTS AS AGENTS OF CULTURAL HYBRIDIZATION

The English Alabaster Altarpiece of Santiago de Compostela, Spain

Zuleika Murat

The Cathedral Museum of Santiago de Compostela, Galicia, northwestern Spain, houses a fifteenth-century altarpiece of English craftsmanship (Figure 6.4.1). It is one of the rare examples of an English alabaster altarpiece that can be reliably dated and linked to a specific patron and precise destination.¹ As is well known, most of the surviving alabaster reliefs were indeed put on the market after the English Reformation and the subsequent iconoclasm, when English churches were stripped of their adornments and decorative works.² Such objects, brought to Europe and purchased by different buyers, lost all connection with their place of origin; the documents and sources attesting to their provenance did not accompany them, and the works were thus deprived of their history.³ Conversely, there are numerous documentary accounts of the commissioning of alabaster works that have been lost.⁴ These circumstances prevent any possibility of correlating documents and works, or verifying the verbal accounts of documents on the matter. The Santiago altarpiece, instead, is an exceptionally fortuitous case, which makes it possible to examine the circumstances and arrangements related to the commissioning of alabaster works more closely and thoroughly, as well as to study the role of their patrons.

The altarpiece measures 186 × 90 cm (the central panel is 58 × 27, and each side panel is 41 × 27). Five alabaster reliefs are set within a wooden frame decorated with two-tone bands, and further adorned at the top with a floral frieze. These reliefs are dedicated to five episodes from the life of St. James the Greater, one of Christ's twelve apostles.⁵ Each scene is identified by an inscription traced on the lower margin of the frame, corresponding to the individual panels. The narrative begins with the Apostolic Vocation of St. James and his brother St. John (Figure 6.4.2). As tradition dictates, they are portrayed with their father in the boat the moment Christ called them; they are depicted in the act of fishing, with nets lowered into the water from the side of the boat, carved with great attention to naturalistic detail. On the left of the scene, we see the figure of Christ standing and addressing them. His words were inscribed on the now blank scroll; the letters now lost to time.

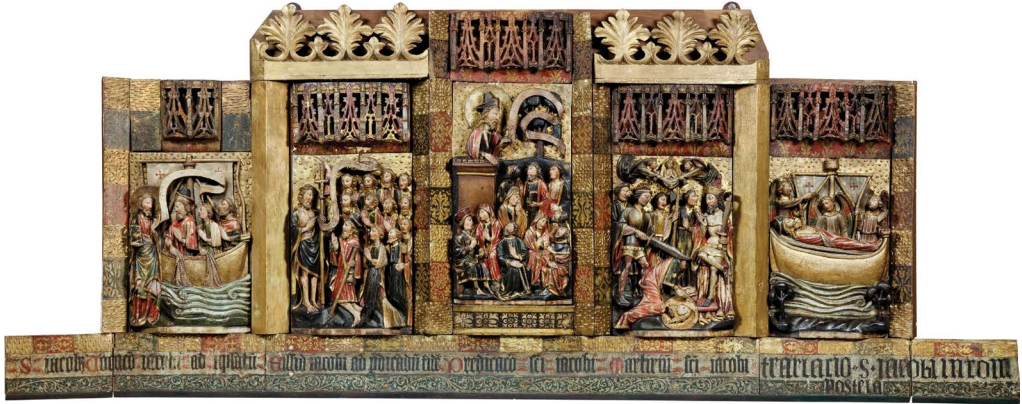


Figure 6.4.1 English workshop. Altarpiece of St. James, ca. 1456. Alabaster with gold and painting, 186 × 90 cm. Santiago de Compostela (Spain), Cathedral Museum. ©Fundación Catedral de Santiago.



Figure 6.4.2 English workshop. Altarpiece of St. James, panel with The Apostolic Vocation of St. James and His brother St. John, ca. 1456. Alabaster with gold and painting, 41 × 27 cm. Santiago de Compostela (Spain), Cathedral Museum. ©Fundación Catedral de Santiago.



Figure 6.4.3 English workshop. Altarpiece of St. James, panel with The Mandate of Christ to the Apostles, ca. 1456. Alabaster with gold and painting, 41 × 27 cm. Santiago de Compostela (Spain), Cathedral Museum. ©Fundación Catedral de Santiago.

The second episode shows The Mandate of Christ to the Apostles (Figure 6.4.3), that is, the moment when Jesus, upon his Resurrection, entrusts the apostles with evangelizing the known world, preaching the faith, and converting peoples to Christianity. Here again, as in the previous panel, Christ's words were originally visible, marked on the scroll in the foreground, but have disappeared. Christ is shown here without the clothes he wore in life, wearing only the robe that covered him at the time of the Resurrection draped over his shoulders; he also holds a Cross, an emblem of his suffering in the Passion, as well as from this time on, symbol *par excellence* of the Christian faith and community. His gaze is fixed on the kneeling figure in the foreground, clad in a red robe that singles him out chromatically among his crowd of companions, all wearing darker, somber clothing. The figure wields a pilgrim's staff and carries a pouch fastened shut by a scallop shell. These typical attributes of medieval pilgrims are used here to indicate St. James in accordance with a commonly used iconographic practice. While the tightly packed host of apostles fold their hands in prayer as a sign of acceptance of the mission entrusted by Christ, St. James extends his raised right hand to Jesus as if a privileged dialogue of glances and gestures is taking place between the two. Centrally placed, the third episode shows St. James Preaching to the Crowds in Spain, hoisted up on a wooden pulpit as he fulfills his apostolic mission. Whereas in the previous scenes it was Christ who spoke, here it is the apostle who addresses

the crowd, accompanied by a long fluttering scroll on which his words were traced. Clearly, the message conveyed is that the apostle has made Christ's mission his own. A large, orderly crowd of men and women listen to him in repentance. Their robes indicate that they belong to various social classes; some seated are holding paternosters, or rosaries, while others are standing and in apparent dialogue with the saint. As customary, the central scene, the most important, is larger than the lateral ones, with the entire upper portion reserved for the figure of the saint, who stands alone in the otherwise empty space. The next scene shows the martyrdom of St. James ([Figure 6.4.4](#)), with, on the right, the figure of Herod commanding the soldiers. The saint's soul is already separated from his body, and we see it above being escorted to heaven within a mandorla by two angels who raise it on a white veil. Finally, the last scene shows the Translation of the Saint's Body, that is, the arrival by sea of the precious relic in Galicia, where the church of Santiago would later be erected, on a boat conducted by angels.⁶

The primary information concerning the Santiago altarpiece is provided by the documents preserved in Santiago at the archives of the Basilica. In particular, we learn from the manuscript Tumbo F (fol. 2v)⁷ that in 1456 John Goodyear, a priest from Chale in the English diocese of Winchester, UK, made a pilgrimage to the cathedral of Santiago de Compostela. On May 25, he personally presented the polyptych before the Basilica's high altar.⁸



Figure 6.4.4 English workshop. Altarpiece of St. James, panel with The Martyrdom of St. James, ca. 1456. Alabaster with gold and painting, 41 × 27 cm. Santiago de Compostela (Spain), Cathedral Museum. ©Fundación Catedral de Santiago.

The dialogue between the individuals involved in the donation, which the document reports in Galician language, provides several interesting insights: first, the donor explains that the gift was intended as atonement for his sins, following a frequently attested practice for similar tributes. Second, John Goodyear requests that the work be placed on the church's high altar or in another conspicuous place within the church; he also stipulates that for no reason should the polyptych be transferred, sold, or given in exchange. This detail is of particular interest, as it inextricably links the polyptych to the sacred space—at least in the donor's intentions. Indeed, this was not only a physical space but also a liturgical environment where certain religious and social rites occurred, a complex arena where different social classes and genders interacted.⁹ On the altar, the polyptych would ideally play a part in the principal liturgies and masses. Above all, it would be a part of the solemn annual celebrations in honor of the apostle and his sacred relics kept in the church, which were highly spectacularized and involved the concerted action of multiple actors, spaces, and objects.¹⁰ The polyptych was to become one of the church's visual and physical centerpieces.

John Goodyear's wish was respected, and the polyptych remained in the church at all times, although not in the position desired by the English prelate, as it seems to have been moved shortly after its donation. The oldest known documents, in fact, mention it placed in what was then the Reliquary Chapel during the first quarter of the sixteenth century, later renovated to become the chapel of San Fernando, where a painted predella made by Maestro Fadrique was added. Later, around 1720, a wooden cymatium attributed to Diego de Sande was mounted on the top of the frame of the altarpiece.¹¹

As the document plainly shows, John Goodyear ascribed great value to the journey and the gift, and placed equal hope in both. The pilgrimage did not take place at a random time, far from it: 1456 was indeed a Holy Year, i.e. a Jubilee which is declared whenever St. James' Feast Day, 25th July, falls on a Sunday; according to a rule established by the Church of Rome, pilgrimages undertaken in Holy Years would guarantee a plenary indulgence to those who undertook them, with the complete remission of their sins. Seen in this light, the reference to sins in the document takes on a further and precise meaning. Innumerable worshippers from all over Europe poured into Spain from sea and overland, some making the well-known walk known as the 'Camino de Santiago' (i.e. Way to St. James) that is still traveled by hundreds of believers yearly. This is the case of the many who came from England, some mentioned in documents of the time, which speak of several ships coming from ports across the English Channel.¹²

As early as the late fourteenth century, in fact, the pilgrimage to Santiago was being regulated, with the Royal Chancellery issuing letters to secure the property of pilgrims in their absence, and others to be presented to the rulers of the foreign states that pilgrims visited or transited through, requesting protection and favor. Indeed, in his book on the pilgrimage to Santiago, Edwin Mullins referred to these as 'forerunners of the modern passport.'¹³ Ship captains received official permits to transport pilgrims, with most ships sailing from ports on the western coast, or London. In 1434, a Holy Year, some fifty ships set sail for Spain, carrying 2,310 pilgrims.¹⁴ Two personal accounts written by English pilgrims also date to the mid-fifteenth century: the first by a man born in France, but who lived in England and died there in 1446, Nompar de Caumont, entitled *Voiatge a saint Jacques en compostelle*; the second is by a priest and fellow of Eton College, William Way, who traveled from Plymouth in 1456. The account, entitled *Informacon for Pylrgymes*, is a veritable guidebook, full of personal observations and useful details.¹⁵ The preference given to the Cathedral of Santiago should come as no surprise: founded, according to tradition, in 829 and enlarged

several times over the centuries, it has been one of the main pilgrimage destinations in European history and is still visited by an impressive number of pilgrims. The popularity of this pilgrimage was fostered by the many indulgences proclaimed, and was further prompted by the frequent miracles performed at the apostle's tomb, which drew crowds of worshippers.

To prepare for the event, we must imagine John Goodyear commissioning the polyptych and carefully choosing the images to display. This detail is anything but trivial, as we know from the archival documents and sources of the time that alabaster altarpieces were produced in series and placed on the market as already complete and finished works. The 'alabastermen,' as they are called in the documents, had devised a highly effective work system. Their workshops were located mainly in stone quarrying areas in the English Midlands and York, where multiple masters collaborated. Their businesses were often family-run and passed on from generation to generation.¹⁶ The high production capacity of the workshops, for which the misnomer 'industrial production' has often been used, can be deduced from the large number of English alabasters preserved today, spread about in museums and collections around the world, which scholars estimate to be at least 3,000 items. In fact, thanks to an effective system of transporting the works, the alabastermen secured a generous slice of the national and foreign market, sending their works by ship to the continent, especially along the coastal areas of northern Europe and the Mediterranean basin from as early as 1390. We know from archival records, in fact, that in that same year, 'a ship called the "George" with woollen cloth of diverse colors, images of alabaster and other merchandise crossed the sea towards the parts of Great Seville.'¹⁷ The statement cited here is of interest as it demonstrates how English cargo ships traded alabasters made for the market on the continent; that is, they were not the result of specific commissions.

Indeed, the iconographic characteristics of the extant alabaster reliefs, which generally display the most common and popular scenes in the lives of the saints to whom they are dedicated, or exemplary figures of particularly venerated saints and martyrs, make the works particularly suited to different contexts. In addition, the nature of their construction allowed for mounting different panels that could be chosen on the spot and put in sequence, thus forming coherent ensembles. So, having access to separate sets of reliefs, buyers could, for example, decide to purchase pieces depicting salient moments in the life of a saint and compose works such as the polyptych of St. Catherine now housed in the Galleria Giorgio Franchetti alla Ca' d'Oro in Venice, from the local church of Santa Caterina de' Sacchi, where it is mentioned from the sixteenth century.¹⁸ Alternatively, they could opt for a series of reliefs dedicated to specific narrative themes, and assemble, for example, panels showing only the final moments of the lives of the saints, thus giving rise to works such as the *Martyrdom Altarpiece*, recently sold at a Sotheby's auction in New York, and now held at the Phoebus Foundation in Antwerp, consisting of a sequence of five panels with scenes of the martyrdoms of Saints Stephen, Lawrence, Erasmus, and Thomas on either side of the central Trinity.¹⁹ Polyptychs of this type are usually complemented by figures of saints standing at the sides, which purchasers could also choose according to their specific devotional needs. In addition, cornices of hanging arches, pinnacles, and cusps would complete the composed assemblages. These were made on freestanding alabaster blocks that could easily be connected to the larger reliefs in situ, upon purchase.

The effectiveness of assemblages of this nature was guaranteed by the size and dimensions of the individual pieces, which were made to uniform and repeated standards. In essence, the alabaster reliefs have identical sizes and measurements, which made them easy to assemble into dimensionally consistent ensembles. The system of fastening these slabs to

folding wooden frames, which were also made in series and according to repeated standards, was itself agile and equally efficient; it was based on anchoring the reliefs to the support through thin iron wires inserted in the back of the reliefs, which hooked the panels to the frame.²⁰ We can get an idea of how such workings took place based on a fourteenth-century document stating that in 1372 John Nevill of Raby ‘caused to be made the new work of marble and alabaster beneath the shrine of St. John, Cuthebert [...] And he caused it to be enclosed in boxes in London, and sent by sea to Newcastle’; a few years later, in 1380, he donated £500 for ‘the work above the altar which is called La Reredos,’ an altarpiece now lost, which was shipped from London in numerous boxes, evidently being reassembled *in situ*.²¹ It is no coincidence, in fact, that the highest concentration of alabaster works is to be found along the coasts, or otherwise in areas relatively easy to reach by waterways, with numerous surviving reliefs in the Mediterranean coasts, northern France, and the northern Iberian peninsula, including Galicia.²²

The case of the Santiago polyptych is quite different. This is also demonstrated by the fact that, of the many known alabaster reliefs dedicated to the life of the apostle James, none show the scenes depicted in the Santiago altarpiece.²³ Moreover, Frances Cheetham’s survey has shown that, based on current knowledge, Santiago’s is the only alabaster altarpiece entirely dedicated to this saint.²⁴ It is well known that alabastermen often worked from predetermined models that could be easily replicated.²⁵ Therefore in the case of works that deviate from the more customary iconography, it is necessary to question from which figurative sources the sculptors drew their inspiration. This topic is still under debate, with Cheetham envisioning the considerable influence that prints and engravings had on the design of alabasters, while Stephen Perkinson has noted how, even in copying, the alabastermen’s creativity must have played an important role, perhaps leading to the assembly of several models and reworking into new forms.²⁶ In our case, we can assume that the author of the polyptych drew inspiration from works of a different nature, which he could have seen in English churches. In addition, it should be recalled how, in the documents of the time, the alabastermen are also referred to as painters who dealt with the polychromy of the reliefs, a clear sign of their openness to and competence within different media.²⁷ Indeed, although it is difficult to imagine today, again as a consequence of iconoclasm, sacred buildings in England did teem with images of St. James, which the faithful frequently mentioned in their wills, leaving them offerings of money or material goods. This is the case, for example, of T. Joyns, who in 1516 left a wax taper weighing one a pound to illuminate the image of St. James in the church of St. John and St. James in Brackley, West Northamptonshire.²⁸ The substantial number of English churches dedicated to the apostle, moreover, recently mapped in an in-depth study by Marta Ameijeiras Barros, suggests a now elusive but certainly substantial quantity of images depicting the apostle’s earthly endeavors.²⁹

It may be surprising that such a degree of effort in the commissioning and production of the Santiago altarpiece does not, at least outwardly, correspond to a work that we might define as ‘high quality.’ Above all, the polyptych, although created in the chronological heart of the Renaissance, does not fit into modern conceptions of what the era’s art should look like, and it does not seem to meet the canons of the fashion of the time, which had then been established especially by Italian artists. The execution is rather crude, attention to perspective is lacking, and the figures appear flattened on the same plane; references to classical culture in the forms and the naturalism that distinguishes Renaissance figures are also absent. Essentially, in its formal and stylistic qualities, the polyptych does not deviate

much from alabaster works of the previous century; on the contrary, it reproduces well-established formulas.

However, it is necessary to step back from current preconceptions about stylistic modernization, and understand the values attributed to alabaster as a material at the time; indeed, that stone was considered a valuable material, and alabaster works were commissioned and owned by the political and religious elites of the era. Consider, for example, the polyptych commissioned in 1367 by King Edward III from Peter the Mason of Nottingham for the Chapel of the Garter in Windsor Castle, now lost. It must have been a massive work, transported from Nottingham to London in ten wagons drawn by eight horses each, on a journey that lasted 17 days—from October 20 to November 6.³⁰ Numerous textual and material documents show how the material had also attracted early interest from the elites in the funerary domain, with monumental tombs and portraits made precisely of this stone, starting with the tombs of King Edward II and Philippa of Hainaut, wife of Edward III, respectively, in the abbey of St. Peter, Gloucester, now a cathedral, and in Westminster Abbey, London.³¹ But we should also mention the well-known purchase of English alabasters by the papal legate stationed in England, Cosmato Gentili. Indeed, Gentili obtained permission from King Richard to export English goods from the port of Southampton to Rome on May 4, 1382. The cargo also included three alabaster sculptures depicting the Trinity, the Virgin, St. Peter and St. Paul. The three latter statues are still preserved in the papal basilica of Santa Croce in Gerusalemme, in Rome.³² Finally, it bears mentioning that alabaster works are frequently cited in documents among objects owned by kings, queens, and members of the nobility, who often used them for their own devotional practices.³³ All these circumstances clearly indicate the preference accorded to the material by the highest echelons of society, which then, in a trickle-down effect, spread to the lower strata of society.

Moreover, the use of alabaster, and of such distinctively English forms and materials, could serve as a self-celebration of cultural, national, social, and personal identity; in other words, offering a gift that manifested the origin of the donor and his cultural background, through form and material, could commemorate and recall his identity more effectively. It seems no coincidence that, in the documents produced on the continent at the time where alabaster reliefs are mentioned, it is frequently noted that they were English works; alabasters shared this fate, albeit with less success, with the highly prized textiles known as *Opus Anglicanum*.³⁴ It is no accident, then, that alabaster works were regularly offered by English dignitaries as diplomatic gifts.

This is a striking cultural phenomenon, which can be found in other contexts. It is evidently related to the desire to establish an intimate and exclusive link between the donor and recipient and the place of origin and destination of the work, thus triggering a visual memory of transnational events and relationships. These issues have recently been investigated by scholars in the history of diplomacy in the context of a growing interest in symbolic modes of communication in diplomatic relations.³⁵ In this context, the gift of objects that were 'exotic' or foreign to the recipient's culture ensured greater communicative poignancy, effectively qualifying as a display of the gift giver's visual, formal, and material culture. Kim Woods also drew attention to the 'social significance' of alabaster, insisting that, as we have said already, although it later became a commonly used material, it had initially been used as an 'elite material associated with the highest possible echelons of society' in England and northern Europe.³⁶ An alabaster gift, in other words, was socially accepted and expressed the prestige of both giver and receiver. Among the English alabaster works offered as gifts, it is worth mentioning the altarpiece now kept in the Museo di Palazzo

Schifanoia in Ferrara, which came from the private chapel of the Castello, home to the Este family, rulers of the city; and the now fragmentary altarpiece that originally belonged to the Visconti family, rulers of Milan, of which the only two surviving panels are now kept at the Museo del Castello Sforzesco and the Pinacoteca di Brera, respectively.³⁷ The Ferrara altarpiece was likely donated to Borso d'Este (1413–1471) by an English ambassador during a visit to his court, while the Milan altarpiece was probably given as a diplomatic gift on the occasion of a matrimonial union between a member of the Visconti family and an English personage.³⁸ Beyond gifts related to political events or alliances, we should mention the polyptych (now fragmented) that was donated by English pilgrims or merchants to the Cathedral of Genoa, northern Italy, and is now held at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London after passing through the antiquities market.³⁹ Like the Santiago polyptych, the Genoa altarpiece was likely donated to the church where the saint's relics (in this case John the Baptist's) were—and still are—kept; in fact the last two episodes of the altarpiece refer precisely to the saint's holy remains, as they show John the Baptist's Martyrdom and the Scattering of his Ashes. Unlike the case of Santiago, there is a lack of any clear documentary information for the Genoa polyptych that mentions dates and persons involved; however, it seems most significant that, in a similar set of circumstances, a work markedly 'English' in both visual and material qualities was once again used to pay homage to a saint of considerable importance to the church and to his relics.

Such modes of communication and pathways of exchange and cross-cultural intermingling often occurred with and through the movement of pilgrims. Indeed, pilgrims' objects acted as the engines and agents of cultural watersheds and transformations, or outright hybridizations. Consider, for example, the importance of the pilgrim badges from Amiens, northern France, in the codification of the image of St. John's Head on a dish. This iconography was widely spread in England precisely on the impetus of the pilgrims who, returning from France, brought with them the badges, which marked a veritable cultural transfer of objects of devotion.⁴⁰ The concept of hybridization has been at the center of critical debate in the sociological, anthropological, and linguistic fields for decades. As Philippe W. Stockhammer (2012a, 2012b) recently reminded us, one must be aware that the critical potential of the concept of 'hybridity' lies implicitly in its opposite, namely 'purity.'⁴¹ Both can exist only at the point when it is recognized that they do, in fact, need each other by definition. In a broader sense, the term denotes textual compositions in different languages, or anything composed of differing, divergent, or even incongruent elements. It is not surprising that, in anthropology and sociology, the concept of hybridity has played an important role in the field of migration studies in urban contexts.⁴²

Such concepts lend themselves to associations with our alabaster altarpiece. Indeed, although the formal language, media, and material are markedly English, the narrative is entirely consistent with and perfectly adapted to the work's final location and destination in Spain. As I shall later discuss, we can also discern links with the patron, thus introducing a third element to the overall amalgam.

The narrative structure of the altarpiece is carefully controlled: the central scene marks not only the narrative core but also divides the polyptych into two clearly distinct parts in terms of meaning. To its right, we see the pivotal moments of the apostle's conversion and his acceptance of Christ's mission. This is the fundamental preamble that essentially sets in motion the ensuing events—not only of the narrative but more generally of the Church of Rome and the Church of Santiago. To its left, we find the death-related episodes, with the martyrdom and arrival of the body in Galicia. These function to prepare the audience for

the viewing and homage of the relics, but also to establish a close, direct link between the altarpiece and the sacred remains, between the polyptych and the place where they are kept and where the polyptych was intended to reside.

The episodes reflected the most widespread sources at the time, known and adopted throughout Christian Europe, particularly the *Legenda Aurea* by Jacopo da Varazze and the *Codex Calistinus*, or *Liber Sancti Jacobi*. The latter is an anthology preserved at the Basilica of Santiago that includes sermons, narratives of miracles, and liturgical texts associated with St. James, as well as a guide for pilgrims who wished to visit the Basilica. Book I, in particular, emphasizes the martyrdom of the saint, while a sermon contained in the same book, the *Veneranda Dies*, related to the celebrations for the feast of St. James, recalls episodes from his life, death, and then, most notably, the translation of his body to Compostela.⁴³ The fact that the *Codex Calistinus* was known elsewhere in Europe, where, moreover, different manuscript redactions of the original were preserved, is shown by the fact that several works adhere to and reproduce the traditions reported by the *Codex* in visual form, including some striking English cases such as the one recently analyzed by Marta Ameijeiras Barros of the church of St. James the Great in Stoke Orchard, Gloucestershire.⁴⁴ Indeed, an early version of the *Codex Calistinus* circulated in England, where already in the thirteenth century a shortened version of the *Great Passion* can be found in the *Gemma Ecclesiastica* of Giraldu Cambrensis (1145/46–1223).⁴⁵

In its adherence to the official sources, and particularly to the Santiago tradition, the polyptych commissioned by John Goodyear further emphasizes the link with the church, proposing a figurative version of the textual traditions elaborated and produced there. It seems particularly relevant, specifically, that the sermon *Veneranda Dies*, composed according to tradition by Pope Callistus, celebrates the solemnity of the calling and the translation of St. James, which are celebrated jointly on December 30. United by the common December liturgy, the sermon extols as fundamental moments in the apostle's life episodes that also appear in the alabaster altarpiece, in the first and last panels, respectively. Other interesting details recur in the altarpiece, for example, the reference to the fishing nets that (Figure 6.4.2), the sermon explains, the apostle abandoned to receive the grace of baptism; in the altarpiece, James is portrayed in the act of relinquishing his grip on the nets, which he holds with only one hand, while the other addresses Christ. The reference to the saint's soul being carried to heaven by angels also re-occurs frequently in the text, precisely how it is depicted in the penultimate scene of the altarpiece (Figure 6.4.4).

The relationship between text and image, written tradition and its visualization in figures, could have also extended originally to the words once inscribed on the scrolls beside the figures of Christ and St. James. Jessica Brantley has recently hypothesized that the scrolls commonly found in alabaster altarpieces and panels played a distinct role in how the public enjoyed the works, and that they bore words related to certain rituals.⁴⁶ In her hypothesis, 'reading while looking encourages interior performances, the performances enacted by the viewer at prayer,'⁴⁷ constituting a multimodal, multimedia prayer. In the case of Santiago, since the inscriptions have been lost, no such verification is possible. That being said, it is highly likely that there was just such a relationship. After all, a synergy between word and image is frequently found in European art at the turn of the Middle Ages and the Modern Age, where the two linguistic codes acted in combination regarding the communication of certain concepts and also, conversely, involved different audiences by offering multimodal experiences, depending on whether they were literate or not.⁴⁸

I mentioned a further level of interpretation that I believe exists in the Santiago polyptych, which combines with the previous ones and further contributes to the composite nature of the altarpiece made of a combination of many elements. Indeed, I think we can discern a reference to the patron, John Goodyear. The polyptych's reference to the sea voyage of the apostle James and his activity as a preacher to the crowds may in fact allude to the donor. John Goodyear also traveled by sea, and preached to the crowds while carrying on the apostolic mission with which St. James had also been invested. In this way, John would have passed down memories of himself to posterity, not only through the visual and material nature of the donated object but also, in a more subtle way, through an idealized celebration of his role in the community, fulfilled daily as St. James had done before him, and his pilgrimage to the place where the relics, visualized in the altarpiece, in fact rested, all performed in connection with the promise of salvation offered by the act of pilgrimage made in the Holy Year.

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Notes

- 1 In addition to the bibliography that will be mentioned in the following notes, see on the polyptych: Walter L. Hildburgh, "A Datable English Alabaster Altarpiece at Santiago de Compostela." *The Antiquaries Journal* 6 (1926), 304–7; Francis Cheetham, *English Medieval Alabasters. With a Catalogue of the Collection in the Victoria and Albert Museum* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 22–3; Alejandro Barral Iglesias, "El Museo y el Tesoro," in *La Catedral de Santiago de Compostela*, eds. José M. García Iglesias et al. (Laracha: Xuntanza Editorial, 1993), 15–25; Alejandro Barral Iglesias, *La Catedral de Santiago de Compostela: meta de peregrinación* (León: Edileasa, 2003); Fernando Pérez Suescun, "Los Alabastros Medievales Ingleses Y La Iconografía Jacobea: Algunas Piezas Singulares." *Anales De Historia Del Arte* 24 (2014), 421–38.
- 2 See *The English Reformation Revised*, ed. Christopher Haigh (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Margaret Aston, *England's Iconoclasts. Volume I. Laws against Images* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988); Richard Marks, *Image and Devotion in Late Medieval England* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 2004), particularly chapter 10, "Deface and Destroy"; Eamonn Duffy, "The Reformation and the Alabastermen," in *Object of Devotion. Medieval English Alabaster Sculpture from the Victoria and Albert Museum*, ed. Paul Williamson. Exh. Cat. (Alexandria, VA: Art Services International, 2010), 54–65; Margaret Aston, *Broken Idols of the English Reformation* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016).
- 3 This is the case, for example, with the Swansea Altarpiece now in London's Victoria and Albert Museum, purchased in Munich in the 1830s by Lord Swansea, John Henry Vivian, and of whose original provenance no record exists. On this piece, see Francis Cheetham, *English Medieval Alabasters. With a Catalogue of the Collection in the Victoria and Albert Museum*, 2nd ed. (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2005), 70–1.
- 4 For example, the altarpiece ordered by Edward III from Peter the Mason, on which see further on in this text.
- 5 St. James the Greater is mentioned in the New Testament, along with the other apostles who were the primary disciples of Jesus Christ. In the following centuries, in line with a trend shared by

- other saints, textual accounts of his life and martyrdom flourished. These texts, filled with details, provided material for visual depictions of the saint's life. After the first collections of *Passiones* (i.e. Passions), composed as early as the fifth century, followed by other accounts throughout the initial centuries of the Middle Ages, a crucial turning point in the development of the biography and iconography of the saint occurred in the twelfth century, with the *Great Passion* of Book I, chapter IX of the *Codex Calixtinus*, preserved in the Cathedral of Santiago, and then with Jacobus de Voragine's *Golden Legend*. See Jacobus de Voragine, *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints*, trans. William Granger Ryan (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), vol. 1, xiii. For an overview on the textual sources on the life of St. James, see Marta Ameijeiras Barros, "Rediscovering the Jacobean Cult in Medieval England: The Wall Paintings of St James the Great in Stoke Orchard." *Ad limina* 6 (2015), 238–39. See also further in this text.
- 6 On this important aspect of the life of the saint, see *Translating the Relics of St James. From Jerusalem to Compostela*, ed. Antón M. Pazos (New York: Routledge, 2017).
 - 7 Archive-Library of the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela, ACS, CF 27, *Tumbo F*, fol. 2v. See, on this fund and its crucial documentary value, Xosé M. Sánchez-Sánchez, "El Tumbo F de la Catedral de Santiago. Una regesta de documentos desde el siglo XIV." *Annuarium Sancti Iacobi* 9 (2020), 65–161.
 - 8 The document is transcribed in full, in the original language, in Antonio López Ferreiro, *Historia de la Santa M. Iglesia de Santiago*, vol. VIII (Santiago: Imp. y enc. del Seminario conciliar central, 1906), 112–12* (*sic!*).
 - 9 On the concept of space as a social construct, the main reference is: Henri Lefebvre, *La Production de l'espace* (Paris: Éditions Anthropos, 1974). On the interrelation between space, architecture, furnishings, and liturgy, see at least: Sible de Blaauw, *Cultus et decor. Liturgia e architettura nella Roma tardoantica e medievale. Basilica Salvatoris, Sanctae Mariae, Sancti Petri* (Città del Vaticano: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1994); *Kunst und Liturgie im Mittelalter*, eds. Nicolas Bock et al. (Munich: Hirmer, 2000); *Art, Cérémonial et Liturgie au Moyen Âge*, eds. Nicolas Bock et al. (Rome: Viella, 2002); Allan Doig, *Liturgy and Architecture: from the Early Church to the Middle Ages* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008).
 - 10 The saint's holy remains were enshrined in a marble sepulcher under the high altar; pilgrims came from the ambulatory to the altar of Mary Magdalene, in the internal apse, behind the high altar, consecrated in 1105, and from there they attended the first morning mass and received communion. Here they also performed the dramatic rite of kissing and embracing the sculpture representing the apostle, which was accessible through two wooden ladders. Only on Sundays and feast days was mass celebrated on the high altar. Pilgrims describe with wonder the arrangements in the chapel; in 1502, for instance, Antonio de Lalaing tells that 'on the altar there is... a large silver lamp hanging in front of the saint's body, donated by this king [of Scotland]. There also hangs another twelve lamps, donated by King Louis XI of France, and another ten offered by various lords' (the translation provided here is my own); José García Mercadal, *Viajes de extranjeros por España y Portugal* I (Salamanca: Junta de Castilla y León, 1999 [1st ed. 1952]), 419–20. See also Manuel Castiñeiras González, "Topographie sacrée, liturgie pascale et reliques dans les grands centres de pèlerinage Saint-Jacques-de-Compostelle, Saint-Isidore-de-Léon et Saint-Étienne-de-Ribas-de-Sil." *Cahiers de Saint-Michel de Cuxa* 34 (2003), 27–49; Miguel Taín Guzmán, "L'altare dell'Apostolo e i riti jacoepi nella cattedrale di Santiago de Compostela. Alcune immagini tra XIV e XIX secolo." *Compostella. Rivista del centro italiano di studi compostellani* 34 (2013), 12–22.
 - 11 Manuel García Iglesias, "Contribución al estudio artístico de la Catedral de Santiago en el siglo XVI: la pintura." *Cuadernos de estudios gallegos*, 93–95 (1978–1980), 271–92; Ramón Yzquierdo Peiró, *Las colecciones de arte de la catedral de Santiago: estudio museológico*. PhD Thesis, 2 vols, Santiago de Compostela, Universidade de Santiago de Compostela, 2015, I, 118–21, 289–90, 334–5, 371–2.
 - 12 For an overview of pilgrims and pilgrimage practices in England, see *Pilgrimage. The English Experience from Becket to Bunyan*, ed. Colin Morris (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002).
 - 13 Edwin Mullins, *The Pilgrimage to Santiago*, 3rd ed., (Oxford, Signal Books, 2001), 61–72 (for the letters issued by the Royal Chancellery, see 66). See also Diana Webb, *Medieval European Pilgrimage c. 700–c. 1500* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), 66.
 - 14 Mullins, *The Pilgrimage*, 66.

- 15 Mullins, *The Pilgrimage*, 66–67; Donald R. Howard, *Writers and Pilgrims: Medieval Pilgrimage Narratives and Their Posterity* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1980), 20–1.
- 16 The documents refer to several cases where father and son were both alabastermen; for instance Nicholas and Thomas Hill of Nottingham, as well as Walter and Edward Hilton of York, or John and Thomas Roper also of York. It also appears from the documents that women, especially widows, participated in the family business, probably taking over from their husbands after their deaths. In 1546, for instance, Margery Walker, a widow from Burton-on-Trent, lists a number of debtors in her will, including Laurence Cleaver and Thomas Lycett, who owed her money for some alabaster tables; she herself owed a certain Edward Jonys for the rent of a shop, where she evidently sold her products. Cheetham, *English Medieval Alabasters*, 16.
- 17 *Select Cases in Chancery A.D. 1364 to 1471*, ed. by W. Paley Baildon. Publications of the Selden Society X (London: Bernard Quaritch, 1896), 45–46. According to Hildburgh, Seville is not to be considered the only destination of the ship; on the contrary, it was probably just one of many stops that merchants made to sell their products. Walter L. Hildburgh, “Some Presumably Datable Fragments of an English Alabaster Retable, and Some Assembled Notes on English Alabaster Carvings in Spain.” *The Antiquaries Journal* 24 (1944), 34.
- 18 Zuleika Murat, “Medieval English Alabaster Sculptures: Trade and Diffusion in the Italian Peninsula.” *Hortus Artium Medievalium* 22 (2016), 399–413 (here at 403–404 for the altarpiece of Santa Caterina de’ Sacchi).
- 19 See Zuleika Murat, “Introduction,” in *English Alabaster Carvings and Their Cultural Contexts*, ed. Zuleika Murat (Woodbridge: the Boydell Press, 2019), 7.
- 20 Cheetham, *English Medieval Alabasters*, 24–6.
- 21 William H. St John Hope, “On the Early Working of Alabaster in England.” *The Archaeological Journal* LXI:1 (1904), 225 (later reprinted in *Illustrated Catalogue of the Exhibition of English Medieval Alabaster Works Held in the Rooms of the Society of Antiquaries* (London: Society of Antiquaries, 1913, 1–15)).
- 22 In respect to alabasters in Continental Europe, especially France, the Iberian Peninsula, and the Mediterranean, see Santiago Alcolea Gil, “Relieves ingleses de alabastro en España. Ensayo de catalogación.” *Archivo Español de Arte* XLIV (1971), 137–53; Nigel Ramsay, “La production et exportation des albâtres anglais médiévaux,” in *Artistes, artisans et production artistique au Moyen Age. Volume 3. Fabrication et consommation de l’oeuvre*, ed. Xavier Barral i Altet (Paris: Picart, 1986), 609–19; Xosé C. Valle Pérez, “Un alabastro inglés en Vilanova de Arousa.” *Museo de Pontevedra* XLIV (1990), 375–87; Nigel Ramsay, “La diffusion en Europe des albâtres anglaise,” in *Le Moyen Age, Histoire artistique de l’Europe*, ed. Georges Duby (Paris: Seuil, 1995), 316–21; Ramsay, “Medieval English Alabasters in Rouen and Evreux.” *Apollo* 147:435 (1998), 50–1; Ángela Franco Mata, *El retablo gótico de Cartagena y los alabastros ingleses en España* (Murcia: Caja de Ahorros 1999); Ángela Franco Mata, “Escultura gótica inglesa en Galicia.” *Até o confín do mundo: Diálogos entre Santiago e o mar* (Vigo: Museo do Mar de Galicia, 2004), 163–73; Murat, “Medieval English Alabaster Sculptures.”
- 23 Cfr. Pérez Suescun, “Los Alabastros Medievales Ingleses.”
- 24 Cheetham, *English Medieval Alabasters*, 44, 103.
- 25 This has frequently been noted by numerous scholars; see for a recent essay, Markus Schlicht, “La standardisation comme garant du succès commercial? Les albâtres anglais de la fin du Moyen Âge.” *Perspective* 2 (2019), 179–94, 283–95.
- 26 Cheetham, *English Medieval Alabasters*, 19–20; Steven Perkinson, “The Making of ‘Mynding Signes’: Copying, Convention, and Creativity in Late Medieval English Alabasters,” in *Reassessing Alabaster Sculpture in Medieval England*, eds. Jessica Brantely, Steven Perkinson, Elizabeth C. Teviotdale (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2020), 65–97.
- 27 Cheetham, *English Medieval Alabasters*, 27.
- 28 Robert M. Serjeantson, and Henry Isham Longden, “The Parish Churches and Religious Houses of Northamptonshire: Their Dedications, Altars, Images and Lights.” *The Archaeological Journal*, 70 (1913), 281; Ameijeiras Barros, “Rediscovering the Jacobean Cult.”
- 29 Marta Ameijeiras Barros, “Mapping the Cult of St James the Great in England during the Middle Ages: From the Second Half of the 11th Century until the Middle of the 14th Century.” *Ad limina* 7 (2016), 113–65.
- 30 The documents (Public Record Office, Issue Rolls, 42, Edward III [1367/8–1368/]) were first mentioned and partially published in St John Hope, “On the Early Working of Alabaster.”

- 31 The importance of the funerary monuments of Edward II and Edward III in spreading the use of alabaster among the elites was recently demonstrated by Kim Woods in her “The Origins of English Alabaster Carving: A Reappraisal,” in Brantely, Perkinson, Teviotdale (eds.), *Reassessing Alabaster Sculpture*, 9–36.
- 32 Thomas Duffus Hardly (ed.), *Syllabus of the Documents Relating to England and Other Kingdoms Contained in the Collection Known as “Rymer’s Fœdera”*, 2 vols. (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1873), II, 501. See Murat, “Medieval English Alabaster Sculptures,” 402.
- 33 See the documents published by Kim Wood, *Cut in Alabaster. A Material of Sculpture and its European Traditions, 1330–1530* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2018), 164–72, 331–65.
- 34 See Murat, “Medieval English Alabaster Sculptures”; Murat, “Contexts and Receptions of English Alabasters: Symbolic Meanings, Material Qualities, Aesthetic Values,” forthcoming.
- 35 For a general overview on these matters, with some more specific examples, see Janet L. Nelson, “The Role of the Gift in Early Medieval Diplomatic Relations,” in *Le relazioni internazionali nell’alto Medioevo* (Spoleto: Fondazione Centro italiano di studi sull’alto medioevo, 2011), 225–53; Leah R. Clark, “Objects of Exchange: Diplomatic Entanglements in Fifteenth-century Naples.” *Predella. Journal of Visual Arts* 43–44 (2018), 129–66. For the religious context, see the forthcoming article by Micol Long, “Every Scent of Perfume, Glitter of Metal, Preciousness of Gems, Texture of Cloth. An Inquiry into the Material and Sensorial Dimension of Gift-Giving Between Twelfth-Century Prelates.”
- 36 Woods, *Cut in Alabaster*, 164 (see further 172–76 for some reflections on the theme of alabaster and diplomacy).
- 37 On the two altarpieces, see Murat, “Medieval English Alabaster Sculptures,” 409–10; James Cook, Andrew Kirkman, Zuleika Murat, Philip Weller, “Alabaster Altarpiece,” in *The Museum of Renaissance Music: A History in 100 Exhibits*, eds. Tim Shephard and Vincenzo Borghetti (Turnhout: Brepols, 2022).
- 38 I have examined these altarpieces and the possible circumstances of their production and donation in Murat, “Contexts and Receptions.”
- 39 See Kathryn A. Smith, “‘A Lanterne of Lyght to the People’: English Narrative Alabaster Images of John the Baptist in Their Visual, Religious, and Social Contexts.” *Studies in Iconography*, 42 (2021), 53–94; Murat, “Contexts and Receptions.”
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- 43 See Jacopo Caucchi von Saucken, *Il sermone ‘Veneranda Dies’ del Liber Sancti Jacobi. Senso e valore del pellegrinaggio compostellano* (Santiago de Compostela: Xunta de Galicia, 2003).
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- 48 See for instance the recent study by Jessica N. Richardson, “Visibile Parlare: Inscribed Prayers, Apotropaic Aphorisms and Monumental Mobile Images in Fourteenth-Century Bologna,” in *Sacred Scripture / Sacred Space. The Interlacing of Real Places and Conceptual Spaces in Medieval Art and Architecture*, eds. Tobias Frese, Wilfried E. Keil, Klaus Krüger (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2019), 351–386, with previous bibliography.

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