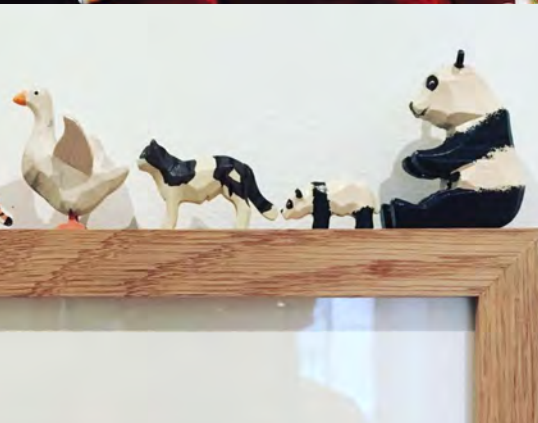
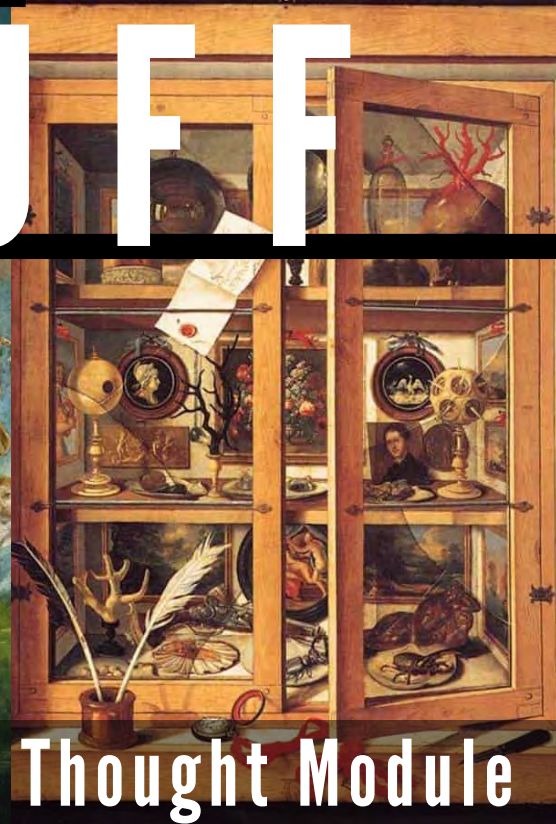
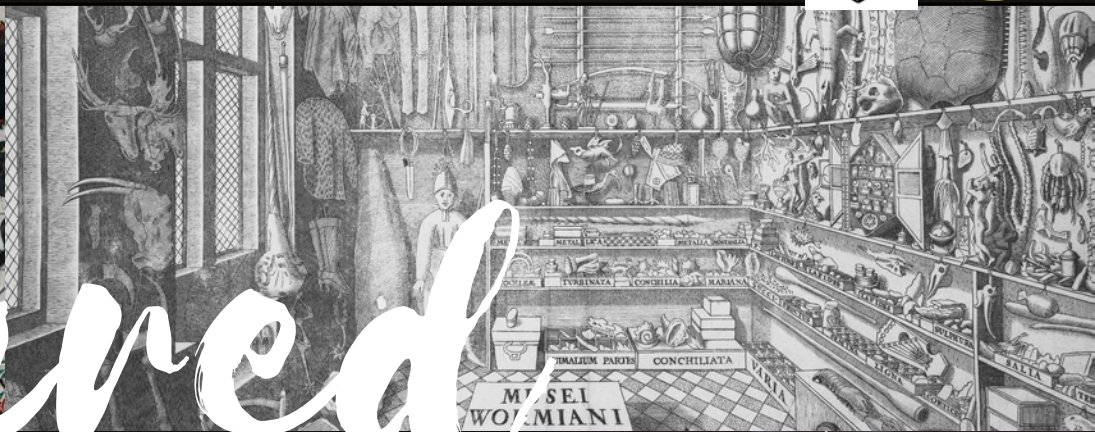


# Sacred STUFF



a Food for Thought Module



READER



# Session I

## STUFF: THINGS, SPACES, AND WHAT WE HOLD ON TO

Excerpt from *Remembrance of Things Past*  
By Marcel Proust (1913)

I feel that there is much to be said for the Celtic belief that the souls of those whom we have lost are held captive in some inferior being, in an animal, in a plant, in some inanimate object, and so effectively lost to us until the day (which to many never comes) when we happen to pass by the tree or to obtain possession of the object which forms their prison. Then they start and tremble, they call us by our name, and as soon as we have recognised their voice the spell is broken. We have delivered them: they have overcome death and return to share our life.

And so it is with our own past. It is a labour in vain to attempt to recapture it: all the efforts of our intellect must prove futile. The past is hidden somewhere outside the realm, beyond the reach of intellect, in some material object (in the sensation which that material object will give us) which we do not suspect. And as for that object, it depends on chance whether we come upon it or not before we ourselves must die.

Many years had elapsed during which nothing of Combray, save what was comprised in the theatre and the drama of my going to bed there, had any existence for me, when one day in winter, as I came home, my mother, seeing that I was cold, offered me some tea, a thing I did not ordinarily take. I declined at first, and then, for no particular reason, changed my mind. She sent out for one of those short, plump little cakes called 'petites madeleines,' which look as though they had been moulded in the fluted scallop of a pilgrim's shell. And soon, mechanically, weary after a dull day with the prospect of a depressing morrow, I raised to my lips a spoonful of the tea in which I had soaked a morsel of the cake. No sooner had the warm liquid, and the crumbs with it, touched my palate, a shudder ran through my whole body, and I stopped, intent upon the extraordinary changes that were taking place. An exquisite pleasure had invaded my senses, but individual, detached, with no suggestion of its origin. And at once the vicissitudes of life had become indifferent to me, its disasters innocuous, its brevity illusory--this new sensation having had on me the effect which love has of filling me with a precious essence; or rather this essence was not in me, it was myself. I had ceased now to feel mediocre, accidental, mortal. Whence could it have come to me, this all-powerful joy? I was conscious that it was connected with the taste of tea and cake, but that it infinitely transcended those savours, could not, indeed, be of the same nature as theirs. Whence did it come? What did it signify? How could I seize upon and define it?

I drink a second mouthful, in which I find nothing more than in the first, a third, which gives me rather less than the second. It is time to stop; the potion is losing its magic. It is



plain that the object of my quest, the truth, lies not in the cup but in myself. The tea has called up in me, but does not itself understand, and can only repeat indefinitely with a gradual loss of strength, the same testimony; which I, too, cannot interpret, though I hope at least to be able to call upon the tea for it again and to find it there presently, intact and at my disposal, for my final enlightenment. I put down my cup and examine my own mind. It is for it to discover the truth. But how? What an abyss of uncertainty whenever the mind feels that some part of it has strayed beyond its own borders; when it, the seeker, is at once the dark region through which it must go seeking, where all its equipment will avail it nothing. Seek? More than that: create. It is face to face with something which does not so far exist, to which it alone can give reality and substance, which it alone can bring into the light of day.

And I begin again to ask myself what it could have been, this unremembered state which brought with it no logical proof of its existence, but only the sense that it was a happy, that it was a real state in whose presence other states of consciousness melted and vanished. I decide to attempt to make it reappear. I retrace my thoughts to the moment at which I drank the first spoonful of tea. I find again the same state, illumined by no fresh light. I compel my mind to make one further effort, to follow and recapture once again the fleeting sensation. And that nothing may interrupt it in its course I shut out every obstacle, every extraneous idea, I stop my ears and inhibit all attention to the sounds which come from the next room. And then, feeling that my mind is growing fatigued without having any success to report, I compel it for a change to enjoy that distraction which I have just denied it, to think of other things, to rest and refresh itself before the supreme attempt. And then for the second time I clear an empty space in front of it. I place in position before my mind's eye the still recent taste of that first mouthful, and I feel something start within me, something that leaves its resting-place and attempts to rise, something that has been embedded like an anchor at a great depth; I do not know yet what it is, but I can feel it mounting slowly; I can measure the resistance, I can hear the echo of great spaces traversed. Undoubtedly what is thus palpitating in the depths of my being must be the image, the visual memory which, being linked to that taste, has tried to follow it into my conscious mind. But its struggles are too far off, too much confused; scarcely can I perceive the colourless reflection in which are blended the uncapturable whirling medley of radiant hues, and I cannot distinguish its form, cannot invite it, as the one possible interpreter, to translate to me the evidence of its contemporary, its inseparable paramour, the taste of cake soaked in tea; cannot ask it to inform me what special circumstance is in question, of what period in my past life.

Will it ultimately reach the clear surface of my consciousness, this memory, this old, dead moment which the magnetism of an identical moment has travelled so far to importune, to disturb, to raise up out of the very depths of my being? I cannot tell. Now that I feel nothing, it has stopped, has perhaps gone down again into its darkness, from which who can say whether it will ever rise? Ten times over I must essay the task, must lean down over the abyss. And each time the natural laziness which deters us from every difficult enterprise, every work of importance, has urged me to leave the thing alone, to drink my tea and to think merely of the worries of to-day and of my hopes for to-morrow, which let themselves be pondered over without effort or distress of mind.

And suddenly the memory returns. The taste was that of the little crumb of madeleine which on Sunday mornings at Combray (because on those mornings I did not go out before church-time), when I went to say good day to her in her bedroom, my aunt Léonie used to give me, dipping it first in her own cup of real or of lime-flower tea. The sight of the little madeleine had recalled nothing to my mind before I tasted it; perhaps because I had so often seen such things in the interval, without tasting them, on the trays in pastry-cooks' windows, that their image had dissociated itself from those Combray days to take its place among others more recent; perhaps because of those memories, so long abandoned and put out of mind, nothing now survived, everything was scattered; the forms of things, including that of the little scallop-shell of pastry, so richly sensual under its severe, religious folds, were either obliterated or had been so long dormant as to have lost the power of expansion which would have allowed them to resume their place in my consciousness. But when from a longdistant past nothing subsists, after the people are dead, after the things are broken and scattered, still, alone, more fragile, but with more vitality, more unsubstantial, more persistent, more faithful, the smell and taste of things remain poised a long time, like souls, ready to remind us, waiting and hoping for their moment, amid the ruins of all the rest; and bear unfaltering, in the tiny and almost impalpable drop of their essence, the vast structure of recollection.

And once I had recognized the taste of the crumb of madeleine soaked in her decoction of lime-flowers which my aunt used to give me (although I did not yet know and must long postpone the discovery of why this memory made me so happy) immediately the old grey house upon the street, where her room was, rose up like the scenery of a theatre to attach itself to the little pavilion, opening on to the garden, which had been built out behind it for my parents (the isolated panel which until that moment had been all that I could see); and with the house the town, from morning to night and in all weathers, the Square where I was sent before luncheon, the streets along which I used to run errands, the country roads we took when it was fine. And just as the Japanese amuse themselves by filling a porcelain bowl with water and steeping in it little crumbs of paper which until then are without character or form, but, the moment they become wet, stretch themselves and bend, take on colour and distinctive shape, become flowers or houses or people, permanent and recognisable, so in that moment all the flowers in our garden and in M. Swann's park, and the water-lilies on the Vivonne and the good folk of the village and their little dwellings and the parish church and the whole of Combray and of its surroundings, taking their proper shapes and growing solid, sprang into being, town and gardens alike, all from my cup of tea.

## “The Art We Live With”

By James K.A. Smith (2020 in *Image*)

THERE ARE QUIET SPACES in museums across the country I treasure as almost private retreats. While crowds swarm the European and modernist galleries abuzz with selfie sticks and school field trips, I relish the hush of the decorative arts collections. Secluded, blissfully neglected by the guidebooks, these are spaces to linger and, fittingly, dwell.

The period rooms at the Met, for example, are sumptuous transports. I could spend days in the bedroom from the Sagredo Palace or the tapestry room from Croome Court, each a feast for the senses. I lose myself in carved curlicues on seventeenth-century bedposts, want to dive into the red plush of velvet wall coverings, am mesmerized by intricate silver inlays that adorn a mahogany desk, dreaming of what it would feel like to write in such environs.

At the Art Institute of Chicago, I’m enthralled by the art-deco wall coverings from the Chicago Stock Exchange trading room. Adler & Sullivan’s design has the feel of controlled chaos (perhaps mirroring the trading room floor), with looping, oblong spirals in greens, golds, and reds like a Persian rug on a wall. Nearby is gallery 162, home to American decorative arts from the twentieth century, where the luxurious bends that the Eameses imagined for humble plywood always bring a sense of delight. And then there are the graceful, alluring curves of Noguchi’s coffee table, at once whimsical and sensual, its base the outline of a lounging body, its glass top disappearing yet still functional, a kind of invisible magic.

It’s in this section of the museum that an uncanny encounter takes place: here on a pedestal is a coffee table that I’ve also set drinks on in my son’s living room. Here the table is at a distance, literally untouchable, an object of contemplation. But in my son’s apartment, I’ve experienced the Noguchi more intimately, suspending food and glasses and art books, a hub of conviviality. Removed from its intended function and home, the table is now an art object.

But the museum doesn’t *make* this table artful. Its relocation to a gallery doesn’t bestow beauty but simply highlights what is already there—the imaginative, playful design already in that table when it held canapés and cocktails in my son’s living room.

When Duchamp placed the famed urinal on a pedestal and called it “Fountain,” he was not thereby transforming something ugly and unmentionable into art. Rather, the recontextualization illumined the beauty in this “unmentionable” object: its sculpted, curvaceous lines; its pristine white like precious china; even its ergonomic response to human bodies and their needs. What a remarkable work of creativity and ingenuity, hidden away unseen. Even in our privies, Duchamp was saying, we find feats of human imagination.

In the same way, consider a visit to the decorative arts gallery an exercise in perception therapy, retraining your eyes to see the delights of design all around you, each of them its own tiny pleasure twinkling with the allure of artifice. It might be the handle of a chef’s knife, or the leathery sculpture of your best friends’ boots; you might notice the minimalist

beauty of a Bauhaus lamp or the pleasing lines of your favorite writing instrument; you might find a special joy in the kerning of typography or the careful piecing of an heirloom quilt. When we become attuned to the artfulness of the objects closest to us, a living room or a sanctuary or even a stock exchange floor can blaze like a constellation of imagination.

Calvin Seerveld calls this “encapsulated” art or “double-duty” art. If fine art is the art we contemplate, double-duty art comprises things artfully fashioned to accomplish some other function like sitting or slicing or dwelling. Today we might simply call this design. But at the end of the nineteenth century, in a manifesto for the significance of the decorative arts, Oscar Wilde called it the “art we live with.”

In his Socratic dialogue “The Critic as Artist,” Wilde’s stand-in Gilbert considers the qualifications of a “true critic”—one who not only recognizes beauty but makes art in the very work of criticism. The “primary requisite for a critic,” says Gilbert, is “a temperament exquisitely susceptible to beauty.” But how to acquire such a temperament? Well, says Gilbert, it’s caught more than taught. It’s less about a curriculum than immersion in the right surroundings. Such an education is possible, Gilbert goes on to argue, even in dreary industrialized England:

even for us, there is left some loveliness of environment, and the dullness of tutors and professors matters very little when one can loiter in the grey cloisters at Magdalen, or listen to some flute-like voices singing in Waynfleete’s chapel, or lie in the green meadow, among the strange snake-spotted fritillaries, and watch the sunburnt noon smite to a finer gold the tower’s gilded vanes, or wander up the Christ Church staircase beneath the vaulted ceiling’s shadowy fans, or pass through the sculptured gateway of Laud’s building in the College of St. John.

A sentimental education can be had, Wilde suggests, simply by moving about such marvelously designed spaces.

But such an education is not only for the privileged elite who can attend Oxford and Cambridge, Gilbert emphasizes. Such susceptibility to beauty can be carried in wallpaper, he avers. “Certainly, for the cultivation of temperament, we must turn to the decorative arts: to the arts that touch us not to the arts that teach us.” In wallpapers and vases, draperies and floor coverings, the soul is schooled by design.

[T]he art that is frankly decorative is the art to live with. It is, of all our visible arts, the one art that creates in us both mood and temperament. Mere colour, unspoiled by meaning, and unalloyed with definite form, can speak to the soul in a thousand different ways. The harmony that resides in the delicate proportions of lines and masses becomes mirrored in the mind. The repetitions of pattern give us rest. The marvels of design stir the imagination.

Fine art doesn’t have the corner on either the imagination or beauty, because we inhabit a workaday world that is suffused with design. These quotidian arts that touch us, the arts we live with, evoke the imagination more subtly while also serving us in other ways. Their embedded artfulness is like a soundtrack for everyday life, in the background, unnoticed, yet

affecting us. Just because these designed objects serve a function doesn't mean their form doesn't pluck the strings of our imagination.

It's exactly why our souls shrivel and shrink from the hideous pragmatism of so much of late-modern culture: the corrugated metal boxes of retail stores (and far too many churches); the cinder-block doldrums of too many classrooms; the ubiquitous plastic chic of hotel lobbies and glass tower condos; the stamped metal cutlery in cafeterias; the garish visual noise of billboards.

In many ways we are prepared and primed for encounters with artworks by the environments we come from. Our everyday surroundings furnish the imagination—or not—for encounters with art. Decorative art, Wilde argues, “not merely prepares the soul for the reception of true imaginative work, but develops in it that sense of form which is the basis of creative no less than of critical achievement.” The furnishings of a living room are subtly training the soul to encounter the nuances of color in a painting. Putting your feet up on a Noguchi coffee table over time is its own apprenticeship for an encounter with a Calder sculpture. A young person is prepared for poetry by the song of speech carried even in a parent's admonitions.

But notice: Wilde's point isn't just about the reception of art; it is also a claim about its creation. This cultivation of the soul's sensibility doesn't just prepare us to encounter fine art; he suggests this is a subtle formative factor for those creating fine art. Which is an occasion for those of us who aspire to be artists to ask: How are we furnishing our imaginations? What does the wallpaper of our lives look like?

Our challenge is not that of late-Victorian Britain. We find ourselves facing a different kind of bleakness—one born of a certain kind of visual saturation. We are trying to create in a world where fine art has been commodified and now is papered ad infinitum on coffee mugs and throw pillows and tote bags. The fate of “the work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction,” as Walter Benjamin put it, is to become a deracinated decoration in which the likes of Van Gogh and Picasso are rendered kitsch by Ikea, and the alluring tropes of Sexton and Plath are hollowed out by insta poets. When fine art becomes decoration, it doesn't thereby become art we live with: it just becomes one more thing we consume. Indeed, furnishing our imaginations will require a certain kind of constraint, an intentionality that carefully chooses what will constitute the backgrounds of our creating, the soundtracks of our making.

So, what might it look like to furnish a creative life? And more specifically, what might it look like today, when the pursuit of creativity at a serious level usually requires that we forego more lucrative endeavors that might allow us to adorn our living rooms and studios with the kind of beauty we find in the decorative arts wing?

Wilde is once again ahead of us here. You'll note that many of his examples of spaces that can hone our aesthetic temperament are public, shared—recalling, one must admit, an era in which public architecture and design reflected a democratic commitment to beauty that was



accessible to all. Perhaps one strategy for intentionally furnishing our imaginations is seeking out such spaces and dwelling in them.

For years, one of my favorite spaces to write in was the periodicals room at the main branch of the Grand Rapids Public Library, built in 1904. To get there I would climb a veined Carrara marble staircase surrounded by Corinthian columns and vermillion walls that were so striking I felt like I was walking through a tunnel to another world. The tall, arched windows poured light into the space, and the amber-colored walls were soothing under cathedral-high ceilings. On the long oak tables stood Tiffany-ish desk lamps, friendly to literary ambition. And here it all was for me, each day, for free: a somber but delightful space in which to make, I hoped, pleasing but serious things.

If one way to furnish our imaginations is to find shared spaces bequeathed to us by generations that have gone before, another strategy takes me back to that coffee table in my son's living room. Suffice it to say, my BFA-degreed son has not won the venture capital lottery. Instead, he has cultivated a Wildean aesthetic temperament, developing an uncanny eye for finds at garage sales and thrift stores. That Noguchi coffee table was an estate sale steal. A marble Angelo Mangiarotti bowl that sits atop it was twelve bucks at an out-of-the-way thrift shop. His home is more Apartment Therapy than *Architectural Digest*, but that hasn't stopped him from creating a space that is characterized by exactly what Wilde celebrates. Whenever I visit, it always feels like a room where I am inhaling with my imagination.

While we creatives apprentice ourselves to various crafts, aspiring to art that is "fine," we might also look for subtle ways to decorate our daily lives with new intentionality. There is a training of the soul in the arts we live with.

**“Ode to Things”**  
**By Pablo Neruda (1959)**

I love crazy things,  
crazily.  
I enjoy tongs,  
scissors.  
I adore  
cups,  
rings,  
soup spoons,  
not to mention, of course,  
the hat.

I love  
all things,  
not only  
the grand ones  
but  
the  
infinite-  
ly  
small  
the thimble,  
spurs,  
plates,  
flower vases.

Ay, soul of mine,  
the planet,  
is gorgeous,  
full  
of pipes  
taken  
by hand  
amid the smoke,  
of key rings,  
salt shakers,  
in short,  
everything  
made  
by the hand of man, all things:  
the curves of a shoe,

fabric,  
the new birth  
of gold  
without blood,  
eyeglasses,  
nails,  
brooms,  
clocks, compasses,  
coins, the soft  
softness of chairs.

Ay, how many  
many  
pristine  
things  
man  
has built:  
of wool,  
wood,  
glass,  
ropes,  
marvelous  
tables,  
ships, staircases.

I love  
all  
things,  
not because they  
blaze  
or are fragrant,  
but because  
I don't know,  
because  
this ocean is yours,  
is mine:  
buttons,  
wheels,  
small  
forgotten  
treasures,  
feathered fans  
on whose feathers  
love spread

its orange blossoms,  
cups, knives,  
scissors,  
everything rests  
on the handle, in the contour,  
the trace  
of finger,  
a remote hand  
lost  
in the most forgotten of oblivions.

I wander through  
houses,  
elevators,  
touching things,  
spotting objects  
I secretly covet:  
one because it chimes,  
another because  
it is as soft  
as the softness of a hip,  
another for its color of deep water,  
another for the thickness of its velvet.

Oh irrevocable  
river  
of things,  
it should not be said  
that I loved  
only  
fish,  
or the jungle plants and the prairie,  
that I not only  
loved  
what jumps, ascends, survives, sighs.  
It isn't true:  
many things  
told me everything.  
They not only touched me  
or were touched by my hand,  
but they accompanied  
my existence  
to such an extent  
that they lived with me

and were so full of life for me  
that they lived with me half a life  
and would live with me for half a death.





Shelf Menagerie, photograph from Alice Melvin's home (used with permission)

*Cabinet of Curiosities*, by Domenico Remps, c. 1690







*Christina's Teapot*, by Andrew Wyeth, 1976

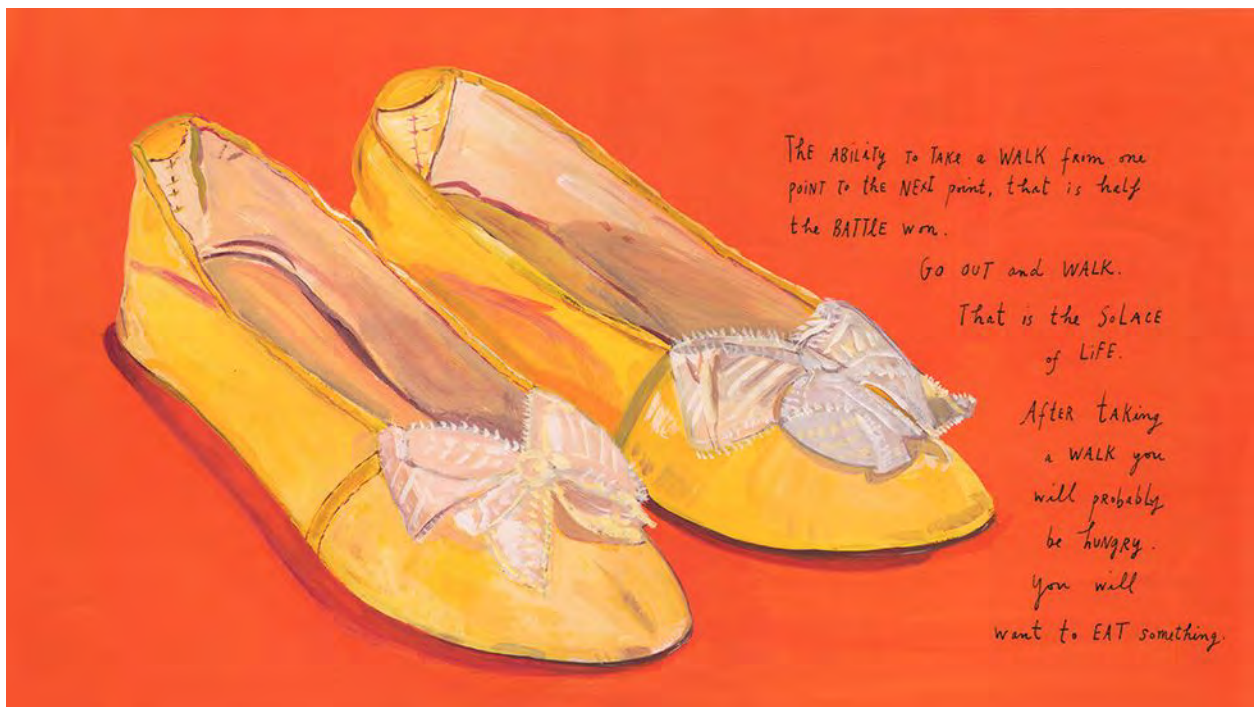
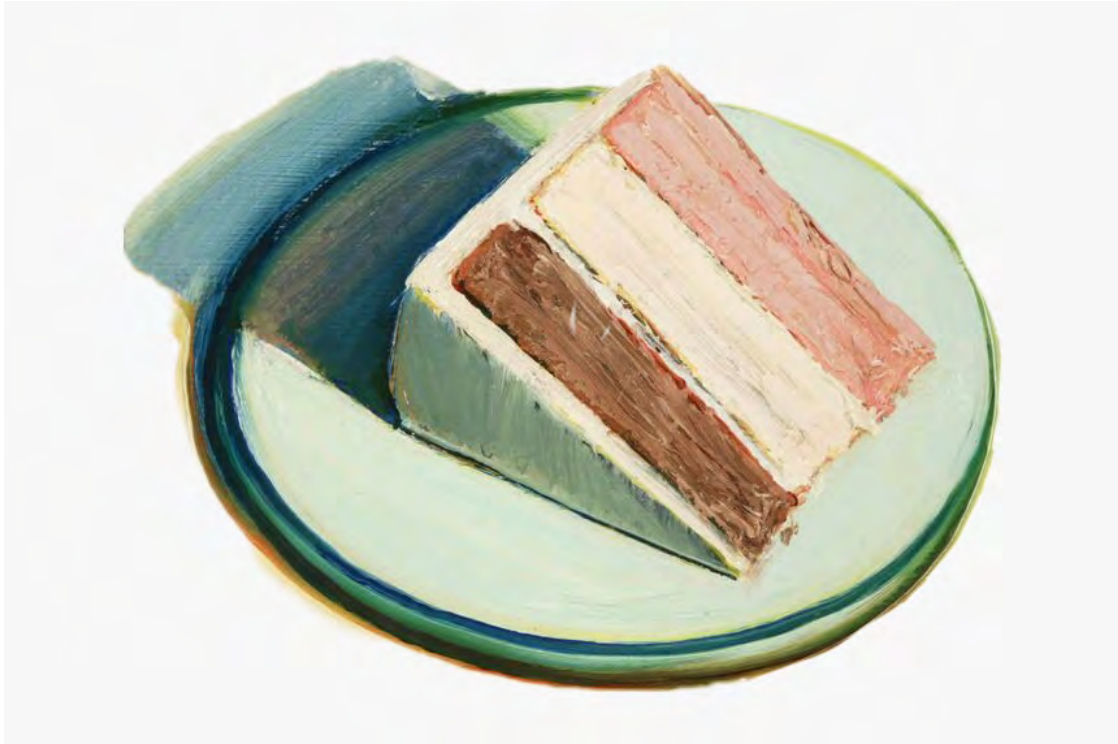


Illustration from *The Pursuit of Happiness*, by Maira Kalman, 2010



*Cake Slice*, by Wayne Thiebaud, 1979

Mending Socks,  
By Archibald J. Motley,  
1924







*Campbell's Soup* (1965)  
and *Living Room* (1948),  
by Andy Warhol







"Musei Wormiani Historia", the frontispiece from the *Museum Wormianum* depicting Ole Worm's cabinet of curiosities, 1655



*Enthroned Virgin and Child with Angels*,  
By Vittore Crivelli,  
1481, at the Philadelphia  
Museum of Art



## Session II

# THE SACRED, THE MUNDANE, AND HOLY OBJECTS

Excerpts from *Our Lady of Charity in Miami*  
By Thomas A. Tweed (1997)

### *Introduction*

A small sign in Spanish—*Ermita de la Caridad*—announces the location of a shrine in Miami that rests on Biscayne Bay just south of the downtown skyscrapers. The conical shrine dedicated to the patroness of Cuba, Our Lady of Charity, sits several hundred yards from the road that leads to the downtown area (figure 1). Most non-Latino residents do not know it exists, yet it is the sacred center of the Cuban Catholic community in exile. It was dedicated on 2 December 1973, and it has attracted increasing numbers of visitors since then, the majority of them mature, middle-class whites of Cuban descent. By the 1990s, it had become the sixth largest Catholic pilgrimage site in the United States, annually attracting hundreds of thousands of pilgrims. In this book I analyze devotion to Our Lady of Charity at this urban shrine.<sup>1</sup>

I first encountered the shrine in 1991. I had been researching the history of religion in Miami, and in my travels around the city to uncover sources I stumbled upon it. I was perplexed and intrigued. Who was this Virgin to whom the building was dedicated? Why were she and the shrine so important to the visitors? Who were these visitors anyway? If they were mostly Cubans, as it seemed, how did the symbols function in their lives?

This book began as an attempt to answer these and other questions. In this task I was helped by my early religious experience. I was raised in an Irish Catholic family in Philadelphia, and the power of popular devotions to virgins and saints was made clear to me at an early age. I had watched the women of my church moving their lips, their eyes filling with tears, as they knelt beneath the image of Mary to offer personal petitions. At the kitchen table my mother told stories of saints, as some families—those with more respectable lineages, I suppose—tell tales about living relatives and dead ancestors. Saint Francis, Saint John Bosco, and Saint Anthony were more familiar to me than my aged Aunt May, my grandmother's sister, whom we visited every other year or so, mostly—it seemed to me—to gorge ourselves on butterscotch candies.

Having read about the history of Catholicism in Europe and Latin America, I also



*Figure 1.* The Shrine of Our Lady of Charity in Miami.

was somewhat familiar with the function of the cult of the saints in forming collective identity. I knew, for instance, that Polish and Mexican Catholics had their national Virgins; but nothing I had read or experienced prepared me for the intensity of nationalistic feelings I would find at the shrine in Miami. Even on that first visit to the shrine a hunch began to form: maybe this has something to do with Cuban exiles' attachment to their homeland. That is embarrassing to confess now, since the signs were everywhere, as I learned on subsequent visits. As early as the second visit I noticed—how had I missed it the first time?—that a Cuban flag was painted on stones to the left of the shrine exterior, a bust of the leader of Cuban independence watched Castro's Cuba from a pedestal on the rear exterior wall, and the large mural inside narrated Cuban political, military, and religious history.

As I visited the shrine regularly and read widely in Cuban and Cuban American history, I became convinced that a study of devotion at the shrine in Miami might allow me to see things that had been obscured when I stood at other locales. Narrators always stand at a particular geographical site and social space as they tell their stories. Positioned at that immigrant shrine in a diverse city, a city of exiles, near the geographical center of the Americas, new sights opened for me. I began to see more clearly the significance of locality for identity and religion.

This book, then, is about religion, identity, and place. I hope to make several contributions. First, some scholars have begun to compare the religious history of the United States with that of other nations in the Atlantic world, the Pacific world, or the Western Hemisphere. This can open new angles of vision. By centering my narrative in Miami, near the geographical midpoint of the Americas, and considering

developments in Cuba, I indirectly contribute to scholarly attempts to situate religious developments in the United States in a wider geographical context. Second, scholars in a number of fields have been concerned with how groups form collective identity, including nationalistic forms of it. Here I consider the complex relations between collective identity and place, focusing on the identity of the involuntarily displaced, or “diaspora nationalism.” Finally, I explore the interconnections of religion, identity, and place by studying the religion of the displaced. More narrowly, I add to the literature on “new” immigrants, in this case Latino Catholics. Robert A. Orsi, Jay Dolan, Paula M. Kane, James S. Olson, and others have authored insightful studies of Catholic immigrants, although none of them have focused on the theme of displacement as fully as I do here. Latino Catholics have received more attention in recent years. Only one history of the Latino church in the United States has appeared, yet two new book series on Latino religion help fill some gaps. Part of one of those volumes focuses on Cuban American Catholics, but for the most part Cubans remain understudied. Cubanists have underemphasized religion, especially Catholicism; and Americanists have underemphasized Catholicism and overlooked Cubans. More broadly, a few scholars have speculated about religion and displacement, including cultural geographer Yi-Fu Tuan and religion scholar Jonathan Z. Smith. For all the recent concern for international migration, and more specifically the new Latino and Asian migration to the Americas, surprisingly little has been written about transnational religion. This case study, I suggest, offers insights about—to introduce terms I develop later—diasporic religion and its transtemporal and translocative symbols.<sup>2</sup>

## Sources and Methods

Authors care more about what they did than readers do. That makes sense. I have spent five years of my life trying to understand the shrine and the people who go there. Unless you are a Cuban from Miami, you probably just now have begun your encounter with the Virgin and her shrine. Yet most readers want to know something about the author’s sources and methods—but not too much—so that they can form judgments about the trustworthiness of the account. For that reason, and others, I think it is helpful to volunteer just a bit about what I did and why, to say something about why I feel confident enough about my interpretations to write a book.

I had the chance to live in Miami for five years while I taught at a local university, so for three of the five years of this project, which I began in 1991, I had easy access to sources and abundant opportunities for interaction. After I moved to North Carolina in the summer of 1993, I returned regularly for research, with stays that lasted from several days to several weeks. While I lived in the southwest section of metropolitan Miami from 1988 to 1993 I listened to Spanish-language radio, read Spanish-language periodicals, forked *arroz blanco y frijoles negros* in Little Havana, and chatted with Cuban exiles, whom I saw regularly at my office and in my neighborhood. Much of this did not directly inform this book. However, it shaped it indirectly by helping me place activities at the shrine in a wider cultural context.

As I began to study devotion at the local shrine, which was about fifteen miles

from my home and six from my office, I turned for help first to those I knew and then to the prominent lay and clerical members of the Cuban community. Excited and perplexed by what I saw at the shrine, I asked Cuban American students, professors, and secretaries at my university what they knew about it. One of my coworkers, an administrative assistant who had migrated from Cuba as a teenager, became an important conversation partner. I asked neighbors, acquaintances, and strangers. The father of one of my son's friends had been exiled as a child, and as we watched our young sons chase balls around the soccer field he gave me my first clues about how important the Virgin was, even to those who did not affiliate formally or attend mass regularly. Another man I met in a Spanish-language bookstore in Little Havana provided a number of useful leads. Early on I interviewed the auxiliary bishop who has responsibility for the shrine, The Most Reverend Agustín A. Román, and I also talked with him many times after that. Other clergy, too, volunteered stories and analyses about Cuban American religiousness. I contacted the lay leaders of the Confraternity of Our Lady of Charity, who offered their own perspectives. I also read everything I could find. After months of this research, I became increasingly aware of the distance between me and those I wanted to understand. That meant, I decided, that I was ready to begin.

As I started more systematic study, I decided that I would use both historical and ethnographic methods and consider a wide range of sources. To quantify what might be quantified, I looked at census figures, documentary records, and survey data about Cubans and Cuban Americans. Those figures told me, for example, how many exiles lived in Miami and how many went to mass in prerevolutionary Cuba. It did not tell me what religion has meant to them. For that, I consulted the more traditional sources of historians. Those included periodicals and pamphlets published by the shrine and the Archdiocese as well as newspapers, poetry, nonfiction, and fiction. I also read devotional letters written to the shrine from Cuba and the United States, although all of those written before 1992 were lost when Hurricane Andrew washed Biscayne Bay into the storage area in the shrine's basement.

These textual sources highlighted beliefs, as most scholarship on religion in the United States has, yet I was convinced that artifacts also inscribe meanings. For this reason I studied the community's material culture as well—architecture, yard shrines, photographs, paintings, key chains, holy cards, and plastic statues—for clues about how those express and shape attitudes about religion and place.

Scholars of American religion also have privileged beliefs over behaviors. To understand what devotees at the shrine *did*, and what that might have meant to them, I drew on participant observation and conducted interviews. I observed and participated in every type of ritual practice at the shrine—masses, rosaries, blessings, vigils, and processions. My fieldnotes, which I constructed from the field jottings scribbled on small notepads during the day, record my experiences at these rituals and my recollections of informal conversations participated in and overheard at the shrine. I consulted these bound and indexed fieldnotes again and again as I wrote this book. I also did taped unstructured interviewing, sitting down with lay followers and clergy to talk for an hour or more, but without any fixed list of questions.<sup>3</sup>

Most important, I conducted 304 structured interviews in which visitors to the shrine were asked to respond to twenty questions on a questionnaire. I conducted

research at all days and times. I stood outside on the steps near one of the three exits. As visitors left the shrine I told them that I was writing a book about devotion to the Virgin at the shrine, and I asked if they had time to answer some questions. This method did not assure a random sample, of course, even though it yielded responses from a diverse group in terms of gender, region, and age (see tables 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3); but it did provide rich detail about how some visitors understood devotion at the shrine. That supplemented what I learned from textual sources, material culture, and participant observation. Except in the few instances when visitors preferred English (all of those informants were under age thirty), the questionnaires and the conversations were in Spanish. At one point, I stopped carrying the English version of the questionnaire because it had been six months since anyone had asked for it. Even when visitors would turn to English along the way, as some did, they often returned to their native language to express a deeply held belief. Half of the twenty questions they answered, in Spanish or English, were open-ended (appendix B). I asked, for example, not only about their arrival date and native region but also about their impressions of the mural and the reasons for their devotion. Most of these questionnaires were self-administered, but occasionally those who were infirm, aged, or illiterate asked me to read the questions to them. In either case, I stood beside them as they answered. This allowed me to clarify ambiguities in the questions and encouraged them to explain their answers. It also led to a very high response rate. As we went along I often asked them for elaboration or clarification, and often they volunteered more than I requested, sometimes telling long, and usually sad, stories about their life in Cuba and their exile in America. After they finished answering the standard questions I asked visitors if they had time to talk further. Many did. I spoke with most pilgrims once, except the members of the confraternity whom I saw very often; and the conversations lasted approximately thirty minutes. Some were shorter, as devotees rushed home to make dinner, scurried to gather relatives, or hurried back to the office. Other conversations lasted much longer, even several hours.

Throughout the project I identified myself and my purpose and was welcomed with uncommon generosity, although at first a few pilgrims wondered about my political views and personal motives. Although there are differences of viewpoint among them, the overwhelming majority of visitors to the Miami shrine are political conservatives, fervent anticommunists who despise Fidel Castro and support the U.S. blockade and all other policies to isolate and weaken the socialist government on the island. As Spanish-language talk radio and periodicals in Miami indicate, however, there are passionate disagreements between the anticommunist exiles who predominate (in the city and at the shrine) and those Cubans (or “Anglos”) who advocate—as one group of Cuban and Cuban American intellectuals put it—building “bridges to Cuba.” It is in this political context that some pilgrims initially were suspicious of me. And, in fact, my political views are to the left of most pilgrims at the shrine. Yet I was interested not in condemning Cuban exiles’ political culture but in understanding their religious practice. To my surprise, the pilgrims I spoke with eventually seemed to be convinced of that. For example, one middle-aged woman I encountered on a weekday afternoon seemed wary until she inspected the questions and concluded that I did not openly profess any worrisome political views. In particular, she



seemed relieved to find that my questions did not imply that I advocated “dialogue” with the government of Castro (although they did not condemn it either). Like many other visitors with whom I spoke, after she satisfied herself about my motives—that I was trying to understand devotion to the Virgin at the shrine—she freely volunteered story after story. Considering the passionately held political views of shrine visitors and the history of ethnic tension in Miami, some pilgrims’ initial suspicion did not surprise me. In fact, that was one reason I not only promised them anonymity, as is usual in such studies, but also refrained from recording the names of those who participated in the structured interviews.<sup>4</sup>

As I became more and more welcomed by the clergy and laity over the years, I found that warm reception more curious than their initial skepticism. Some of the Cuban pilgrims’ openness seems to have been grounded in simple human kindness. With my name badge, university affiliation, and imposing clipboard, I also must have looked authoritative and thus elicited the usual responses to authority. After several years of thinking and inquiring about the high level of cooperation I received, I concluded that at least four other factors also informed it. In a city that has had its share of ethnic tensions, many Cubans appreciated that *any* representative of the Anglo community cared enough to ask them about their patroness and shrine, or about anything. They also appreciated that I asked them in their native language, however imperfectly I did so at times. As studies of interviewing indicate, middle-class informants in the United States with higher levels of education tend to be more willing to participate in interviews, and many of the visitors fit that social profile. Finally, they knew that I was writing a book that would record part of their history, for them and their descendants.<sup>5</sup>

We had our reasons for interacting, then, and both the observer and the observed were changed in the process. No matter how sensitive, unintrusive, and empathic I might like to think I was, Cuban visitors were bound to notice an Anglo professor with name badge and clipboard incessantly asking and scribbling. My presence changed things in participant observation in ways that are hard to document, although that was much less significant in rituals that draw thousands of participants, like the annual festival. Also, as studies on interviewing show, differences in the age, gender, ethnicity, and class of the interviewer yield differences in informants’ responses. This is unavoidable.<sup>6</sup>

As the years passed, my presence and its effects on the Cuban devotees became more visible. For instance, at the first annual festival I attended in 1991 I sat toward the top of an outdoor stadium, making my jottings in a sea of anonymity. By the 1994 festival mass, however, I sat on the main aisle five rows back from the stage, behind the confraternity leaders and in front of the seminarians, as the photographer I brought with me crouched conspicuously on stage by the altar to record the event for this book. My position changed further, and my visibility grew, when Bishop Román asked one member of the confraternity to describe my project at one of their regular meetings. Spanish-language archdiocesan communication systems—newspaper and radio—also described my project. In subsequent visits to the shrine a few Cubans indicated that they had noticed the announcements, and some seemed even more eager to help, now that official Catholic sources had appeared to give the project their imprimatur.

Not only had I changed some visitors in unintended ways; gradually my experiences at the shrine shaped me too. I often found myself trying to fight back tears as I listened to compelling tales about exile from older men and women, prompting me to reflect on the effects of displacement in all of our lives. Those emotional encounters also led me to be much less concerned with the political differences between us, and more sympathetic to Cuban pilgrims' struggles to ease their sadness and explain their loss through religion. I was affected in other ways too. I was surprised and moved when the Cuban-born bishop told me in 1993 that he had prayed for me on a recent trip to the Vatican, handing me a small crucifix blessed by the pope that he had carried from Rome. I became entangled in the emotional lives of two visitors when I observed, and later interviewed, a mother who pushed her ten-year-old daughter in a wheelchair to the Virgin's altar to ask for help because the doctors had told her that none was available. More than a decade earlier I had stopped practicing Catholicism, but I felt the emotions of my childhood piety stir as I watched extended families kneeling at the altar on Sunday afternoons and scrubbed children processing in spring's subtropical sun, with the Virgin leading the way.

One incident brought home to me how much I had been shaped by years of participation, reading, and conversation. Three years into the project I had been attending a conference in Washington, D.C., and decided to visit Our Lady of Charity at the Basilica of the Immaculate Conception, a national center of American Catholicism that enshrines more than seventy national saints and virgins linked with immigrant groups. As I located the familiar white marble image, I found myself—spontaneously and inexplicably—praying in Spanish to Our Lady of Charity for the liberation of Cuba: “Virgen Santísima, salva a Cuba.” Even after thinking about the religious and political implications of this for some time now, I am not sure what I did and why I did it. Had I “gone native,” at least for that one moment, identifying with a political viewpoint that I did not share? Had my childhood piety resurfaced temporarily? Was it simply an act of respect and empathy for those who had been so kind to me and told me so many sad stories? Readers might have more clues than I. In any case, I had to let go of any notion of myself as an unengaged and immutable observer.<sup>7</sup>

That does not mean, however, that ethnographic knowledge is unwarranted or unreliable. As one philosopher of science has argued persuasively, all knowledge is “situated.” It is always a sighting from a particular location, but it not less warranted for that reason. In fact, self-conscious reporting of what an observer can see from a particular site is as much knowledge as is available to us. My reports from the shrine are not views from everywhere at once or nowhere in particular; but, then, no observer's writings ever have been that. This text, however, is one imaginative yet disciplined construction of the meanings of devotion at the shrine, as reported by a male, middle-class, Anglo professor with a particular life history.<sup>8</sup>

Nor does letting go of notions of an unengaged and immutable observer mean that ethnographies are, or ought to be, nothing more than autobiographies, although they are that too. By trying to be reflexive—the root meaning of the word is “capable of turning or bending back”—I can do as much as possible to be aware of the effects of my experiences on my research. That awareness can, and sometimes should, enter the text as I report on the engaged interactions of fieldwork, or even

the situated knowledge constructed from reading. In this introduction, and in what follows, I sometimes include personal narrative. Sometimes my reaction, or the interpersonal context, seemed important to convey. Generally, however, I have tried to pull back from unrestrained autobiography. At this historical moment, when many interpreters in the humanities and social sciences are advocating first-person narratives as a way of acknowledging that they are engaged and mutable observers who report located knowledges, it is also helpful to consider the ways in which our interpretations can—and ought to—be more than diary. The confessional mode, too, introduces epistemological and moral problems. It claims authority just as it pretends to undercut it. It does so by implying that the author has privileged information about his or her own motives and location, persuading the reader that the writer has come clean. My autobiographical referents in this introduction, for instance, obscure as much as they illumine. They might give the impression that I am self-conscious about how I am located as an observer. I try. But what have I not told the reader? What is inaccessible to me? No matter how forthright and vulnerable authors might appear in such confessional passages, more always remains hidden—to author and reader. That is inevitable. That does not mean that persuasive interpretation is impossible or the autobiographical voice is inappropriate. I already have shown that I do not mean that. Yet personal narrative in the confessional mode is not the solution to all the epistemological or moral problems facing interpreters. It, too, has its limits.<sup>9</sup>

Interpreters, then, are engaged participants in the construction of the situated knowledges reported in books like this one, but one of the aims of ethnography, and history, surely ought to be to report what we see, not just who we are and where we stand. As one cultural anthropologist, Robert J. Smith, has reminded us, “The subjects of ethnographies, it should never be forgotten, are always more interesting than their authors.” I find Cubans at the shrine interesting; I am less sure about me. This has implications for research and writing. “If we are to continue to do ethnography at all,” Smith has argued persuasively, “I cannot see that we have any other option than to listen carefully to what people say, watch what they do, and keep our voices down.”<sup>10</sup>

## Argument and Organization

Keeping my voice down most of the time, in this book I argue that exiles struggle over the meaning of symbols, but almost all Cuban American visitors to the shrine in Miami see it as a place to express diasporic nationalism, to make sense of themselves as a displaced people. There, exiles map the landscape and history of the homeland onto the new urban environment. Focusing on the ways they do this in rituals and artifacts, I suggest that through transtemporal and translocative symbols at the shrine the diaspora imaginatively constructs its collective identity and transports itself to the Cuba of memory and desire.

My argument unfolds in six thematically organized chapters. In the opening chapter I trace the history of Cuban and Cuban American devotion to Our Lady of Charity, emphasizing its locative or nationalistic character (figure 2). I suggest that the



*Figure 2.* The interior of the Miami shrine, with the small statue of Our Lady of Charity in the center. The statue rests on a pedestal above the altar and below the painted image of the Virgin on the mural.

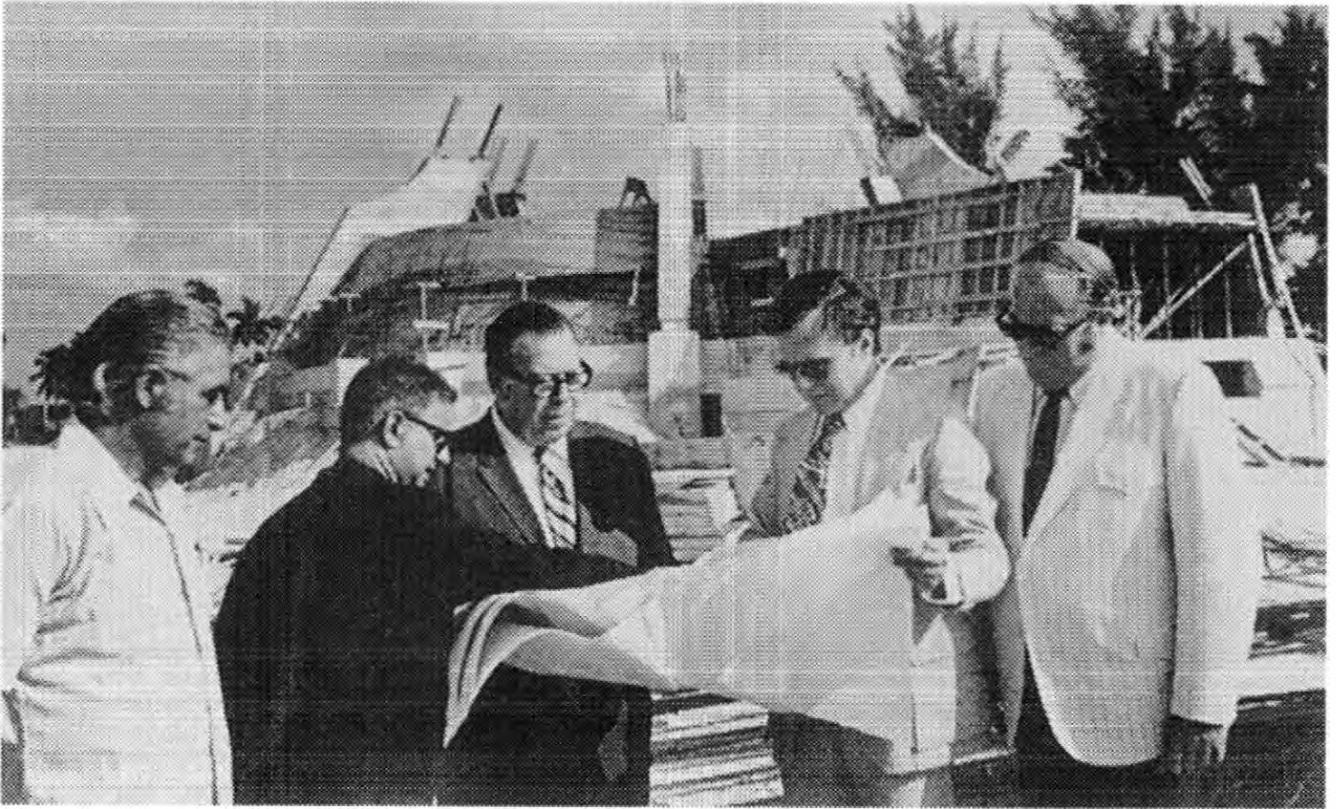
majority of prerevolutionary Cubans were relatively “unchurched,” especially in rural areas. Popular devotion to the Virgin, however, has been strong since the seventeenth century, and she has been intimately linked with national identity since the nineteenth-century wars for independence from Spain. Devotion to the patroness of Cuba intensified in exile as the diaspora turned to her to help them make sense of who they were, now that they were displaced from the places that shaped their identity. The shrine of Our Lady of Charity in Miami is one site in the urban landscape that has special significance in this regard. I offer an overview of the exodus to Miami and the founding of the American shrine.<sup>11</sup>

In the second and third chapters I emphasize the *contested* meanings of symbols at the shrine. In chapter 2 I suggest that laity and clergy struggle over meanings. The clergy (and lay elite) have seen the shrine as a place to “evangelize” the nominal Catholics in the exile community. They hope to “purify” Catholicism by removing the residue of Santería, the Afro-Cuban religion that survives in popular devotions. Lay followers also struggle among themselves over the meaning of symbols, and in chapter 3 I consider the diversity of people and practices at the shrine. Although race, class, and region are less important sources of difference among Cuban pilgrims than they were in the homeland, gender and age do divide visitors in important ways. The mature, white, middle-class Cubans who visit the shrine in the greatest numbers offer prayers and make vows for a variety of reasons—especially for healing, childbirth, and family.

In the final three chapters I turn to the heart of my argument as I identify the *shared* meaning of the translocative and transtemporal symbols. In chapter 4 I provide a theoretical framework for the chapters that follow. I sketch the outlines of a theory of religion and place that emerges from the Cuban American case, emphasizing some common features of diasporic or transnational religion. The religion of the displaced draws on transtemporal and translocative symbols that transport followers to another time and bridge the homeland and the new land. In chapter 5 I consider how diasporic nationalism is inscribed in artifacts at the shrine. In the sixth and final chapter I show how Cuban exiles express diasporic nationalism in several organized rituals. Summarizing what we can learn from the Cuban case and drawing on examples of other diasporic groups, in the postscript I speculate about the wider implications of this study for narrating the religious history of the Americas and understanding the religion of displaced peoples.



# I ✱ *Devotion to Our Lady of Charity*



*Figure 3.* Planners examine the architectural drawings for the new shrine in 1972, a year before the building was dedicated: *from left to right*, Teok Carrasco, the muralist; the Reverend Agustín A. Román, the shrine director; José Miguel Morales Gómez, a leading lay Catholic; Maurice Ferré, a Puerto Rican-born businessman who donated concrete and later would serve as Miami's mayor; and Robert C. Saunders of Standard Dry Wall Products, who donated materials. (Courtesy *The Voice*; photo by Tony Garner.)

# 1 ✱ *The Virgin's Exile*

## The Cuban Patroness and the Diaspora in Miami

The story of Cuban exile Catholicism begins on a rainy Friday in 1961 as Our Lady of Charity travels from an airport in Havana to a baseball stadium in Miami on her feast day, 8 September, a day when the Cuban patroness herself would become an exile. The statue of Our Lady of Charity that journeyed from Havana to Miami had sacred power for her dispersed devotees, even though it was not the original image, which remained in the shrine in the easternmost province of Cuba. It was a replica that had been pedestaled in a parish church in Guanabo Beach, a section of Havana. In other years that same diminutive Virgin had been carried from the church in the annual processions on her feast day. That day in 1961, however, concealed in a small suitcase, she traveled by airplane across the Straits of Florida to be reunited with the Cuban diaspora.<sup>1</sup>

The events that led to the Virgin's exile began a month earlier, in August 1961, when Cubans in Miami contacted Italy's ambassador to Cuba. Agreeing to their request, he granted asylum for the Virgin from Guanabo Beach. The Italian ambassador, acting on the exiles' behalf, then asked Elvira Jované de Zayas, a member of the diplomatic corps of the Republic of Panama, to smuggle that statue of Our Lady of Charity to Miami. During the first days of September, then, the image found safe haven in the Panamanian Embassy in Cuba. The Panamanian diplomat, who was linked to Cuba by profession and marriage, managed to get a safe passage for a friend's son, Luís Gutiérrez Areces, who became an unwitting participant in the Virgin's migration. After much difficulty, the diplomat from Panama gave the young man bound for Miami a satchel or valise (*un maletín*) containing the small statue of Our Lady of Charity. As he boarded the plane at the Havana airport, the diplomat told him only that he should not lose the satchel; he did not tell the young man what it contained. Meanwhile, back in Miami, an overflow crowd of 25,000 Cuban exiles—most of whom had arrived in the two years since Fidel Castro's revolutionary army had marched victoriously into Havana—congregated in a baseball stadium to celebrate her feast day. Organizers of that Catholic ritual grew more and more worried when the Virgin still had not arrived at six o'clock, an hour before the

rosary and mass were scheduled to begin. Although they did not know it at the time, however, the Cuban patroness had already landed at the Miami airport. The young migrant who unknowingly had aided her escape delivered the satchel to St. Patrick's Church in Miami Beach, as he had been instructed. From there she was hurried by car to the stadium in downtown Miami. At seven o'clock, just ten minutes before the rosary would start, a Cuban migrant rushed into the stadium and handed the satchel to Father Armando Jiménez Rebollar, who had been the priest in the Virgin's home parish in Havana. The priest took the Virgin from the satchel and prepared her for the first of many festival masses that she would preside over in exile. When the Miami crowd finally could see their national patroness, they wept and waved, shouted and sang. Our Lady of Charity's new life as an exile had begun, and that night the lives of other exiles in Miami changed in important ways as well.

The passionate reception that the Virgin received makes it clear that Cuban affection for her did not begin that night in 1961. In this chapter, I trace the history of Cuban devotion to Our Lady of Charity, the national patroness, on the island and in Miami. In the first section I explore Cuban religious developments before the revolution of 1959, emphasizing the links between the national patroness and collective identity. Continuing to focus on those links, in the second section I consider the piety of Cuban Catholic exiles in Miami since 1959, tracing the beginnings of organized devotions to Our Lady of Charity and the origins of her Miami shrine, where the exiled Virgin finally found a home when the building was consecrated in 1973.<sup>2</sup>

Tweed, Thomas A.. *Our Lady of the Exile : Diasporic Re*, Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 1997. ProQuest Ebook Central, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/upenn-ebooks/detail.action?docID=272429>.  
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Excerpt from *Contrasts*  
By Augustine Pugin (1826)

CONTRASTS:  
OR,  
A Parallel  
BETWEEN THE  
NOBLE EDIFICES OF THE MIDDLE AGES,  
AND  
CORRESPONDING BUILDINGS OF THE PRESENT DAY;  
SHEWING  
THE PRESENT DECAY OF TASTE.

Accompanied by appropriate Text.

By A. WELBY PUGIN, ARCHITECT.

Edinburgh  
JOHN GRANT  
31 GEORGE IV BRIDGE  
1898

## PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION.

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THE author gladly avails himself of the opportunity afforded him by the publication of this edition, to enlarge the text, and correct some important errors which appeared in the original publication. When this work was first brought out, the very name of Christian art was almost unknown, nor had the admirable works of Montalembert and Rio appeared on the subject. It is not by any means surprising that the author, standing almost alone in the principles he was advocating, should have adopted some incorrect views in the investigation of a subject involved in so many perplexing difficulties: the theory he adopted was right in the main point, but indistinctly developed. He was perfectly correct in the abstract facts, that *pointed architecture was produced by the Catholic faith*, and that it was destroyed in England by the ascendancy of Protestantism; but he was wrong in treating Protestantism as a *primary cause*, instead of being the *effect* of some other more powerful agency, and in ascribing the highest state of architectural excellence to the ecclesiastical buildings erected immediately previous to the change of religion; as, although immeasurably excelling the debased productions of the Elizabethan period, they still exhibited various symptoms of the decay of the true Christian principle.

The real origin of both the revived Pagan and Protestant principles is to be traced to the decayed state of faith throughout Europe in the fifteenth century, which led men to dislike, and ultimately forsake, the principles and architecture which originated in the *self-denying Catholic principle*, and *admire and adopt the luxurious styles of ancient Paganism*. Religion must have been in a most diseased state, for those two monsters, revived Paganism and Protestantism, ever

to have *obtained a footing*, much less to have overrun the Christian world. We cannot imagine a St. Ambrose or St. Chrysostom setting up Bacchanalian groups and illustrations of Ovid's fables as decorations to their episcopal residences, nor a St. Bede or St. Cuthbert becoming Calvinists. If Henry VIII. exceeded Nero himself in tyranny and cruelty, had not the Catholic spirit been at an exceedingly low ebb, the Church of England, instead of succumbing, would have risen in glory and purity, for such has ever been the effect of persecution in the days of lively faith. But when the will of a schismatical king could so prevail with the whole clergy of this country, that they actually erased from their missal and breviaries the most glorious champion and martyr of the Church, St. Thomas of Canterbury, and even put out the commemoration of the holy father himself (only one bishop and a few abbots and priests being found true witnesses of the faith), it is evident that England's Church had miserably degenerated.

The so-called Reformation is now regarded by many men of learning and of unprejudiced minds as a dreadful scourge, permitted by divine Providence in punishment for its decayed faith; and those by whom it was carried on are now considered in the true light of Church plunderers and crafty political intriguers, instead of holy martyrs and modern apostles. It is, indeed, almost impossible for any sincere person to see all episcopal and ecclesiastical power completely controlled at the pleasure of a lay tribunal, without condemning the men who originally betrayed the Church, and feeling that in our present divided and distracted state, consequent on the *Reformation*, we are suffering severely for the sins of our fathers. This is the only really consistent view which can be taken of the subject. England's Church was not *attacked by a strange enemy and overthrown*, she was consumed *by internal decay*; her privileges and abbey lands were surrendered by dissembling and compromising nominally Catholic ecclesiastics, and her revenues and her glorious ornaments were despoiled and appropriated by so-called Catholic nobles. Both Protestantism and revived Paganism were generated by unworthy men who bore the name of Catholic; the former is, indeed, a consequence of the latter, as will be shown hereafter; and, strange as it may appear, there is a great deal of connexion between the gardens of the Medici, filled with Pagan luxury,

and the Independent preaching-houses that now deface the land ; for *both are utterly opposed to true Catholic principles, and neither could have existed had not those principles decayed.* When that great champion and martyr for the truth, Savonarola, the Dominican monk, preached his first sermon at Florence, he predicted the desolation about to fall on the Church ; and after portraying, in the most powerful language, the terrible danger in the then new rage for classic and Pagan styles, that were beginning to usurp the place of Christian art and feeling, he exclaimed, “ By your continued study of these things, and your neglect of the sublime truths of the Catholic faith, you will become ashamed of the cross of Christ, and imbibe the proud luxurious spirit and feelings of Paganism ; till, weak both in faith and good works, you will fall into heresies, or infidelity itself.”

Who cannot see this terrible prediction fulfilled in the desolating religious revolution of the sixteenth century, to which we owe the present divided state of religious parties in this country ?

Having explained and rectified the errors into which he had fallen, the author is quite ready to maintain the principle of contrasting Catholic excellence with modern degeneracy ; and wherever that degeneracy is observable, be it in Protestant or Catholic countries, it will be found to proceed from the decay of true Catholic principles and practice.

It may be proper to observe, that most of the reviewers of this work have fallen into a great error, by reproaching the author for selecting buildings of the modern style to contrast with the ancient edifices, when so many better buildings had been erected during the last few years in imitation of the pointed style. This objection may be answered in a few words : *revivals of ancient architecture*, although erected *in*, are not buildings *of*, the nineteenth century,—their merit must be referred back to the period from whence they were copied ; the architecture of the nineteenth century is that extraordinary conglomeration of classic and modern styles peculiar to the day, and of which we can find no example in any antecedent period.

## LIST OF PLATES.

### ENGRAVED TITLE.

PLATE 1. Contrasted Altars. Woodcut.

2. „ Residences for the Poor.
3. Selections from the Works of various celebrated British Architects.
4. Contrasted Royal Chapels.
5. „ Chapels.
6. „ Town Halls.
7. „ Episcopal Residences.
8. „ Public Inns.
9. A Catholic Town in 1440-1840.
10. Contrasted Public Conduits.
11. „ Crosses.
12. New Church—Open Competition. The Practice of Architecture in the 19th Century  
Satirised.
13. Contrasted Altar Screens.
14. They are weighed in the Balance and found wanting.
15. Contrasted College Gateways.
16. „ Sepulchral Monuments.
17. „ Episcopal Monuments.
18. St. Mary Overies, Southwark—Old and New Western Doorways.
19. Contrasted Parochial Churches.
20. „ House Fronts (not in Book).

# CONTRASTS:

OR,

## A Parallel

BETWEEN

THE NOBLE EDIFICES OF THE MIDDLE AGES, AND  
SIMILAR BUILDINGS OF THE PRESENT DAY,

*&c. &c. &c.*

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## CHAPTER I.

ON THE FEELINGS WHICH PRODUCED THE GREAT EDIFICES OF THE  
MIDDLE AGES.

ON comparing the Architectural Works of the last three centuries with those of the Middle Ages, the wonderful superiority of the latter must strike every attentive observer ; and the mind is naturally led to reflect on the causes which have wrought this mighty change, and to endeavour to trace the fall of Architectural taste, from the period of its first decline to the present day ; and this will form the subject of the following pages.

It will be readily admitted, that the great test of Architectural beauty is the fitness of the design to the purpose for which it is intended, and that the style of a building should so correspond with its use that the spectator may at once perceive the purpose for which it was erected.

*b*

## GREAT EDIFICES OF THE MIDDLE AGES.

Acting on this principle, different nations have given birth to so many various styles of Architecture, each suited to their climate, customs, and religion; and as it is among edifices of this latter class that we look for the most splendid and lasting monuments, there can be little doubt that the religious ideas and ceremonies of these different people had by far the greatest influence in the formation of their various styles of Architecture.

The more closely we compare the temples of the Pagan nations with their religious rites and mythologies, the more shall we be satisfied with the truth of this assertion.

In them every ornament, every detail had a mystical import. The pyramid and obelisk of Egyptian Architecture, its Lotus capitals, its gigantic sphinxes and multiplied hieroglyphics, were not mere fanciful Architectural combinations and ornaments, but emblems of the philosophy and mythology of that nation.

In classic Architecture again, not only were the forms of the temples dedicated to different deities varied, but certain capitals and orders of Architecture were peculiar to each; and the very foliage ornaments of the friezes were symbolic. The same principle, of Architecture resulting from religious belief, may be traced from the caverns of Elora, to the Druidical remains of Stonehenge and Avebury ; and in all these works of Pagan antiquity, we shall invariably find that both the plan and decoration of the building is mystical and emblematic.

And is it to be supposed that Christianity alone, with its sublime truths, with its stupendous mysteries, should be deficient in this respect, and not possess a symbolical architecture for her temples which would embody her doctrines and instruct her children? surely not, - nor is it so: from Christianity, has arisen an architecture so glorious, so sublime, so perfect, that all the productions of ancient paganism sink, when compared before it, to a level with the false and corrupt systems from which they originated.

Pointed or Christian Architecture has far higher claims on our admiration than mere beauty or antiquity; the former may be regarded as a matter of opinion, - the latter, in the abstract, is no proof of excellence,

but in it alone we find *the faith of Christianity embodied, and its practices illustrated.*

The three great doctrines, of the redemption of man by the sacrifice of our Lord on the cross; the three equal persons united in one Godhead; and the resurrection of the dead, - are the foundation of Christian Architecture.

The first - the cross - is not only the very plan and form of a Catholic church, but it terminates each spire and gable, and is imprinted as a seal of faith on the very furniture of the altar.

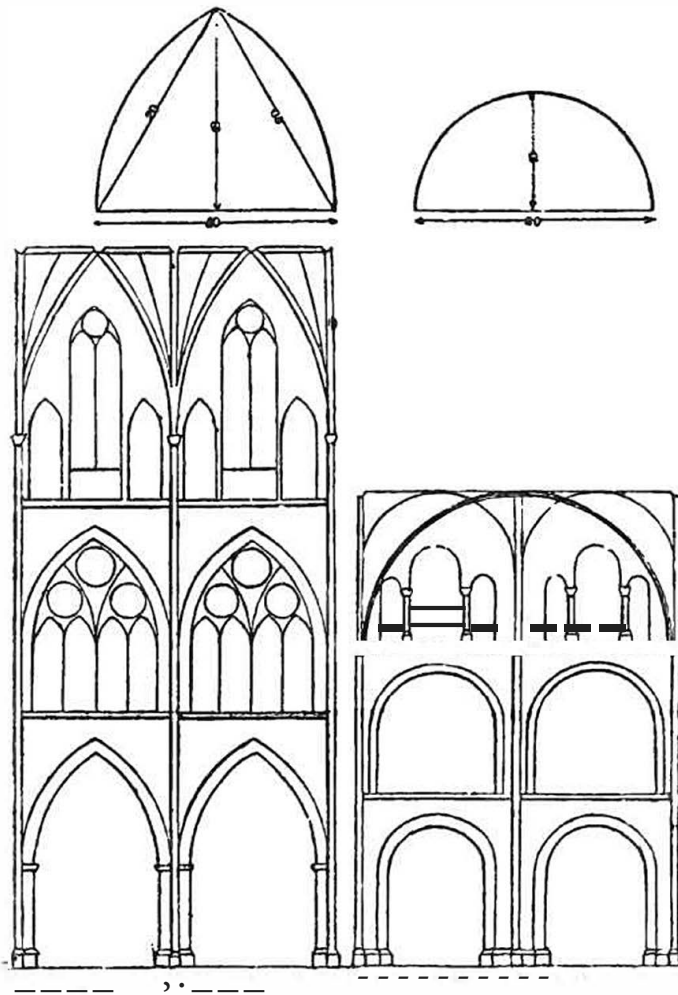
The second is fully developed in the triangular form and arrangement of arches, tracery, and even subdivisions of the buildings themselves.

The third is beautifully exemplified by great height and vertical lines, which have been considered by the Christians, from the earliest period, as the emblem of the resurrection. According to ancient tradition, the faithful prayed in a standing position, both on Sundays and during the pascal time, in allusion to this great mystery. This is mentioned by Tertullian and by St. Augustine. *Stantes oramus, quod est signum resurrectionis*; and, by the last council of Nice, it was forbidden to kneel on Sundays, or from Easter to Pentecost. The vertical principle being an acknowledged emblem of the resurrection, we may readily account for the adoption of the pointed arch by the Christians, for the purpose of gaining greater height with a given width. I say adoption, because the mere form of the pointed arch is of great antiquity; and Euclid himself must have been perfectly acquainted with it. But there was nothing to call it into use, till the vertical principle was established. The Christian churches had previously been built with the view to internal height: triforia and clerestories existed in the Saxon churches. But lofty as were these buildings, when compared with the flat and depressed temples of classic antiquity, still the introduction of the pointed arch\* enabled the builders to obtain nearly double the elevation with the same width, as

\* We may consider the introduction of the depressed or four-centred arch as the first symptom of the decline of Christian Architecture, the leading character of which was the vertical or pointed principle.



is clearly seen in the annexed cut. But do not all the features and details of the churches erected during the Middle Ages, set forth their



origin, and, at the same time, exhibit the triumphs of Christian truth? Like the religion itself, their foundations are in the cross, and they rise from it in majesty and glory. The lofty nave and choir, with still loftier towers, crowned by clusters of pinnacles and spires, all directed towards heaven, beautiful emblems of the Christian's brightest hope, the shame of the Pagan ; the cross, raised on high in glory, - a token of mercy and forgiveness, - crowning the sacred edifice, and placed between the anger of God and the sins of the city.

The images of holy martyrs, each bearing the instrument of the cruel death by which Pagan foolishness hoped to exterminate, with their lives, the truths they witnessed, fill every niche that line the arched recesses of the doorways. Above them are forms of cherubims and the heavenly host, mingled with patriarchs and prophets. Over the great entrance, is the dome or final judgment, the divine majesty, the joys of the blessed spirits, the despair of the condemned. What subjects for contemplation do not these majestic portals present to the Christian, as he approaches the house of prayer! and well are they calculated to awaken those sentiments of reverence and devotion, suited to the holy place. But if the

exterior of the temple be so soul-stirring, what a burst of glory meets the eye, on entering a long majestic line of pillars rising into lofty and fretted vaulting ! The eye is lost in the intricacies of the aisles and lateral chapels ; each window beams with sacred instructions, and sparkles with glowing and sacred tints; the pavement is a rich enamel, interspersed with brass memorials of departed souls. Every capital and base are fashioned to represent some holy mystery ; the great rood loft, with its lights and images, through the centre arch of which, in distant perspective, may be seen the high altar blazing with gold and jewels, surmounted by a golden dove, the earthly tabernacle of the Highest; before which, burn three unextinguished lamps. It is, indeed, a sacred place ; the modulated light, the gleaming tapers, the tombs of the faithful, the various altars, the venerable images of the just, - all conspire to fill the mind with veneration, and to impress it with the sublimity of Christian worship. And when the deep intonations of the bells from the lofty campaniles, which summon the people to the house of prayer, have ceased, and the solemn chant of the choir swells through the vast edifice, - cold, indeed, must be the heart of that man who does not cry out with the Psalmist, *Domine Deus, et locum habitationis gloriæ tuæ.*

Such effects as these can only be produced on the mind by buildings, the composition of which has emanated from men who were thoroughly imbued with devotion for, and faith in, the religion for whose worship they were erected.

Their whole energies were directed towards attaining excellence; they were actuated by far nobler motives than the hopes of pecuniary reward, or even the applause and admiration of mankind. They felt they were engaged in one of the most glorious occupations that could fall to the lot of man - that of raising a temple to the worship of the true and living God.

It was this feeling that operated alike on the master-mind that planned the edifice, and on the patient sculptor whose chisel wrought each varied and beautiful detail. It was this feeling that enabled the ancient masons, in spite of labour, danger, and difficulties, to

## GREAT EDIFICES OF THE MIDDLE AGES.

persevere till they had raised their gigantic spires into the very regions of the clouds. It was this feeling that induced the ecclesiastics of old to devote their revenues to this pious purpose, and to labour with their own hands in the accomplishment of the work; and it is a feeling that may be traced throughout the whole of the numerous edifices of the Middle Ages, and which, amidst the great variety of genius which their varied decorations display, still bespeaks the unity of purpose which influenced their builders and artists.

They borrowed their ideas from no heathen rites, nor sought for decorations from the idolatrous emblems of a strange people. The foundation and progress of the Christian faith, and the sacraments and ceremonies of the Church, formed an ample and noble field for the exercise of their talents; and it is an incontrovertible fact, that every class of artists, who flourished during those glorious periods, selected their subjects from this inexhaustible source, and devoted their greatest efforts towards the embellishment of ecclesiastical edifices.

Yes, it was, indeed, the faith, the zeal, and above all, the unity of our ancestors, that enabled them to conceive and raise those wonderful fabrics that still remain to excite our wonder and admiration. They were erected for the most solemn rites of Christian worship, when the term Christian had but one signification throughout the world; when the glory of the house of God formed an important consideration with mankind, when men were zealous for religion, liberal in their gifts, and devoted to her cause. I am well aware that modern writers have attributed the numerous churches erected during the Middle Ages to the effect of superstition. But if we believe the great principle of Christian truth, that this life is merely a preparation for a future state, and that the most important occupation of man in this world is to prepare for the next, the multiplicity of religious establishments during the ages of faith may be accounted for on far nobler motives than have been generally ascribed to them.

It may be objected, and with some apparent reason, that if pointed architecture had been the result of Christian faith, it would have been

introduced earlier. But if we examine the history of the Church, we shall find that the long period which intervened between the establishment of Christianity and the full development of Christian art, can be most satisfactorily accounted for. When the Catholic faith was first preached, *all art was devoted to the service of error and impurity*. Then the great and terrible persecutions of the first centuries, utterly precluded its exercise among the early Christians. The convulsion consequent on the overthrow of the Roman empire, which destroyed, for a time, all the practical resources of art, was a sufficient cause for the barbarous state of Architecture at that period : but when Christianity had overspread the whole of western Europe, and infused her salutary and ennobling influence in the hearts of the converted nations, art arose purified and glorious ; and as it had been previously devoted to the gratification of the senses, then it administered to the soul : and exalted by the grandeur of the Christian mysteries, ennobled by its sublime virtues, it reached a point of excellence far beyond any it had previously attained; and instead of being confined to what was sensual or human, it was devoted to the spiritual and divine. Christian art was the natural result of the progress of Catholic feeling and devotion ; and its decay was consequent on that of the faith itself; and all revived classic buildings, whether erected in Catholic or Protestant countries, are evidences of a lamentable departure from true Catholic principles and feelings, as will be shown in the ensuing chapter.

# Session III

## MATERIALITY AND DETACHMENT: OUR RELATIONSHIP TO THINGS

### “A Lot to Lose: The Privilege of Tidying Up”

By Cathleen Martin (2019 in *Image*)

Full Disclosure: If I wasn't a Christian, organization would probably be my religion, and I'd spend the high holy days at the Container Store—honoring (not purchasing) the holy vessels.

Nonetheless, when I read Marie Kondo's book, *The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up*, a little over two years ago, I found that her method went far beyond suggesting mere organizational tools. KonMari has significant spiritual consequences.

With the debut of *Tidying up with Marie Kondo* on Netflix, interest (genuine, playful and sometimes inexplicably hostile) in the KonMari Method has been rekindled. People are responding passionately—for and against—her particular approach to living more mindfully with our possessions.

As an African American woman, I've found recent concerns over the privileged position many think this method represents particularly interesting. While I occupy a solid place in the middle class, I'm nonetheless fascinated by this analysis, as it seems to misdiagnose the problem.

Kondo's method isn't really about being tidy or talking to your clothes, your house or other belongings. (By the way—these practices stem from Shintoism and Japanese religious and cultural understandings that we shouldn't mock). It's about discovering the proper relationship to your stuff. The new show reveals, episode after episode, how the benefits of doing so can be unexpectedly life enhancing—and not just for the person who is tidying.

If we lived in better relationship to things:

We might escape the cycle of deprivation that a lot of us live in—largely due to an advertising industry that perpetuates these feelings in order to sell us more stuff.

We might participate less in the fast-fashion industry that all but enslaves brown and black textile workers around the world and pollutes the environment. The industry also kills the textile industries in those brown and black nations, when the clothes that the West continually cycles through wind up in trash heaps of free stuff with which no local manufacturer can compete.

We might save money by not repurchasing things we didn't know we already had, and get more use out of the things we choose to keep. We might even figure out what our true

material needs are and reap happiness from making meaningful purchases that will actually make a difference in our lives and the lives of others.

We might save time. When everything we own is where it's supposed to be, we won't spend time searching. It will take significantly less time to clean, get ready in the morning, plan, pack and shop. We might find we are far more efficient at tasks that make up our regular routines. We might even have time to nap.

We might bring joy to others (locally) who can benefit now from the possessions that we discern aren't a part of our future.

We might process emotions and feelings that are associated with possessions that we are keeping for reasons that no longer serve us. Tidying up might help us to remove toxic patterns from our lives, not just unnecessary things.

We might reevaluate our goals and values—or reaffirm them.

We might experience a new serenity, calmness and, yes, even joy when we come home to a house appointed only with things we love and/or need. When a new need presents itself, we may be surprisingly less anxious, better able to clearly and rationally identify the need and fill it.

Mass consumption reflects a deep spiritual poverty regardless of socio-economic status. In the past, retail therapy was only available to the rich, but that's no longer the case. A decline in manufacturing costs has made it possible to purchase at every possible price point. While the rich have more expensive possessions, folks in any economic strata may very well have a lot of stuff. Many of us will benefit from considering the true meaning and value of our possessions, regardless of economic status or the extent of our material possessions.

Spiritually speaking, we might have both a lot to gain and a lot to lose.

For more on the cultural implications of KonMari, read Caroline Langston's Good Letter on Publishing, Marie Kondo, and the 30 Books Only 'Crisis.'

## Excerpts from *The Enchiridion* By Epictetus (135 A.C.E.)

3. With regard to whatever objects give you delight, are useful, or are deeply loved, remember to tell yourself of what general nature they are, beginning from the most insignificant things. If, for example, you are fond of a specific ceramic cup, remind yourself that it is only ceramic cups in general of which you are fond. Then, if it breaks, you will not be disturbed. If you kiss your child, or your wife, say that you only kiss things which are human, and thus you will not be disturbed if either of them dies.

[...]

11. Never say of anything, "I have lost it"; but, "I have returned it." Is your child dead? It is returned. Is your wife dead? She is returned. Is your estate taken away? Well, and is not that likewise returned? "But he who took it away is a bad man." What difference is it to you who the giver assigns to take it back? While he gives it to you to possess, take care of it; but don't view it as your own, just as travelers view a hotel.

[...]

26. The will of nature may be learned from those things in which we don't distinguish from each other. For example, when our neighbor's boy breaks a cup, or the like, we are presently ready to say, "These things will happen." Be assured, then, that when your own cup likewise is broken, you ought to be affected just as when another's cup was broken. Apply this in like manner to greater things. Is the child or wife of another dead? There is no one who would not say, "This is a human accident." but if anyone's own child happens to die, it is presently, "Alas I how wretched am I!" But it should be remembered how we are affected in hearing the same thing concerning others.

## **Excerpts from “Outline Teaching on Asceticism and Stillness in the Solitary Life” by Evagrius Pontikos (c. 345 AD – 399 AD)**

Do you desire, then, to embrace this life of solitude, and to seek out the blessings of stillness? If so, abandon the cares of the world, and the principalities and powers that lie behind them; free yourself from attachment to material things, from domination by passions and desires, so that as a stranger to all this you may attain true stillness. For only by raising himself above these things can a man achieve the life of stillness. [...]

Do not develop a habit of associating with people who are materially minded and involved in worldly affairs. Live alone, or else with brethren who are detached from material things and of one mind with yourself. For if one associates with materially minded people involved in worldly affairs, one will certainly be affected by their way of life and will be subject to social pressures, to vain talk and every other kind of evil: anger, sorrow, passion for material things, fear of scandals. Do not get caught up in concern for your parents or affection for your relatives; on the contrary, avoid meeting them frequently, in case they rob you of the stillness you have in your cell and involve you in their own affairs. 'Let the dead bury their dead,' says the Lord; 'but come, follow me' (cf. Matt. 8:22).

If you find yourself growing strongly attached to your cell, leave it, do not cling to it, be ruthless. Do everything possible to attain stillness and freedom from distraction, and struggle to live according to God's will, battling against invisible enemies. If you cannot attain stillness where you now live, consider living in exile, and try and make up your mind to go. Be like an astute business man: make stillness your criterion for testing the value of everything, and choose always what contributes to it.



## Excerpt from “To the Most Reverend Nun Xenia” by Gregory Palamas (c. 1342-6 AD)

...Thirdly, grief also arises from the shedding of possessions, that is to say, from poverty in worldly goods and in what we gather around us. This, we said, is to be conjoined with poverty in spirit, for it is only when all types of poverty are practiced together that they are perfected and pleasing to God. Now listen attentively so as to learn how from such poverty in worldly goods grief is produced in us along with the consolation that grief confers. When a person bids farewell to all things, to both money and possessions, either casting them away or distributing them to the poor according to the commandment (cf. Luke 14:33), and weans his soul from anxiety about such things, he enables it to turn inwards to self-scrutiny, free now from all external attachments.

54. And whenever the intellect withdraws itself from all material things, emerges from the turbulence they generate, and becomes aware of our inner self, then first of all it sees the ugly mask it has wrought for itself as a result of its divagations among worldly things, and it strives to wash it away through grief. When it has got rid of that uncouth guise, and the soul is no longer coarsely distracted by various cares and worries, then the intellect withdraws untroubled into its true treasure-house and prays to the Father 'in secret' (Matt. 6:6). And the Father first bestows upon it peace of thoughts, the gift which contains within it all other gifts. Then He makes it perfect in humility, which is begetter and sustainer of every virtue - not the humility that consists of words and postures easily taken by anyone who wishes, but that to which the Holy Spirit bears witness and which the Spirit Himself creates when enshrined in the depths of the soul.

55. In such peace and humility, as in the secure enclosure of the noetic paradise, every tree of true virtue flourishes. At its heart stands the sacred palace of love, and in the forecourt of this palace blossoms the harbinger of the age to be, ineffable and inalienable joy. The shedding of possessions gives birth to freedom from anxiety, this freedom to attentiveness and prayer, while attentiveness and prayer induce grief and tears. Grief and tears expunge passion-imbued predispositions. When these are expunged the path of virtue is made smooth, since the obstacles are removed, and the conscience is no longer full of reproach. As a consequence joy and the soul's blessed laughter break through.