THE IMAGINED PILGRIMAGE OF SIR JOHN MANDEVILLE’S LATE MEDIEVAL

BOOK OF MARVELS AND TRAVELS

by

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Abstract

This thesis investigates two main topics: the medieval practice of *imagined pilgrimage* and a Middle English text called the *Book of Marvels and Travels* (1350s). While recent historical and literary scholarship has helped to uncover how English monastic audiences engaged in *imagined pilgrimage*, which is the act of going on a holy journey in spirit rather than in body, less work has been done to explore how secular English audiences turned to texts to undertake non-physical journeys. The focal point of medieval European pilgrimage, Jerusalem was largely out of reach for many medieval English men and women due to a variety of personal, political, and economic reasons. *Imagined pilgrimage* texts such as the *Book* fulfilled a need in readers for an alternative means to attain the same spiritual benefits that physical pilgrimage offered its participants. Employing an interdisciplinary approach to the study of the literary history of *imagined pilgrimage*, in this project I offer a new reading of the *Book* and investigate both the history of pilgrimage writing and the complex monastic and secular debates surrounding the shifting benefits, dangers, and definitions of physical and imagined holy travel. Presented by a narrator who identifies himself as a knight named “John Mandeville,” the *Book* provided its medieval English reader-pilgrims with the information needed to make imaginative pilgrimages to the Holy Land and the Eastern world that lies beyond it.
Lay Summary

The key goals of this thesis are: to provide a broad overview of medieval pilgrimage writing; to trace the history of the medieval practice of *imagined pilgrimage*, which is the act of going on a holy journey in spirit rather than in body; and to offer a new interpretation of the Middle English *Book of Marvels and Travels* (1350s) as a text that helps facilitate such an imaginative journey.
Preface

This thesis is the original, unpublished, and independent work of the author, Kyla Helena Drzazgowski.
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To Mom, Dad, Angelica, Sarah, Mataya, and Colin:

Thank you for your endless love and support; I could not have done this without you.
Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to Romeo.
Introduction

In 2012, Pope Benedict XVI issued a plenary indulgence to participants of the Lourdes Virtual Pilgrimage Experience, a spiritual journey organized by Our Lady of Lourdes Hospitality North American Volunteers. This is the first time a plenary indulgence has been granted for such an undertaking (“What is a Virtual Pilgrimage?”). The organization’s mission is to bring seriously ill and disabled persons to Lourdes and to offer those unable to travel physically a “virtual experience as equal to an actual experience (emphasis added)” (“What”). Virtual pilgrims participating in this experience undertake a sacred journey that lasts ninety minutes and is aided by images, music, a Eucharist blessing, a candlelight procession, and physical devotional aids such as an actual Grotto rock and water from the Grotto spring in Lourdes. All of these elements are incorporated into an experience that simulates an actual physical journey by offering participants the sensorial and spiritual benefits that can be acquired from physically travelling on pilgrimage. In our technology-driven age, the popularity of the practice of virtual pilgrimage—which is also known as cyberpilgrimage—continues to grow, with numerous online platforms, including Google Street View, being utilized by virtual pilgrims as a viable means through which to access the sacred.

The medieval practice of imagined pilgrimage will seem perhaps less strange in light of these twenty-first century iterations and recent efforts by the Vatican to incorporate non-physical means for the devout to undertake spiritual journeys.¹ As is still the case today, in medieval

¹ The question of which terminology to use when referring to this practice is a complex issue, and is taken up in more depth on p. 14.
Europe the word *pilgrimage* could refer to a physical journey to a place imbued with religious significance; a metaphorical, life-long journey; and an inner or *imagined* voyage facilitated through the reading of devotional texts. While virtual pilgrimage today varies greatly from medieval imagined pilgrimage due to the use of technology such as the internet, the concerns that would have held medieval men and women back from undertaking physical journeys are the same concerns pilgrims have today: a lack of money, a lack of energy, or a lack of interest to undertake the physical passage. This thesis is both an examination of the medieval origins of the practice of imagined pilgrimage and a study of how one of the most popular texts of the late Middle Ages—the *Book of Marvels and Travels*—engaged with the phenomenon.  

Written in the late 1350s by a narrator who not only purports to be a well-travelled pilgrim but also offers his readers the necessary directions for their own journeys to the Holy Land, India, and China, the *Book* emerged in England as an engaging text concerned with the pragmatic concerns of holy travel. Christian Zacher argues that the *Book* is written for “two audiences, the pilgrim and the expectant armchair reader,” and credits its phenomenal success to its dual purpose to “entertain curious readers . . . as much as to instruct potential pilgrims” (134). This distinction between *curious reader* and *potential pilgrim* has been made by several prominent Mandeville scholars, but it can be complicated by the idea of an imagined pilgrimage in which the reader becomes more than simply curious as they take on a more active role as an imagined pilgrim within the text. Late medieval pilgrimage texts were saturated with the

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2 I have adopted the title used by Anthony Bale over other titles, such as *Mandeville’s Travels* (its modern title), and *The Book of John Mandeville* (its medieval designation), in order to highlight the text’s two sections: its travels to the Holy Land and the marvels that lay beyond it. For a discussion of titles, see Bale pp. xxix-xxx and Iain Higgins *Writing East* pp. 64-65.
pragmatic details involved in physical journeying, and despite the fact that relatively few medieval men and women undertook literal pilgrimages to the Holy Land, such writings made up an important literary corpus in fourteenth and fifteenth-century Europe. How did medieval audiences understand and use such texts?

My purpose is two-fold: firstly, to explore how the Book facilitates an imagined pilgrimage enacted through the process of reading and secondly, to examine what function the pragmatic issues more often associated with physical peregrinations that are raised in the text might have served for an audience that was far from likely to travel physically. The Book is told by a narrator who captivates our attention as he continually offers practical pilgrimage advice, attempts to establish a close relationship to his readers and please his audience, and desires to appear as a knowledgeable, authoritative guide to his reader-pilgrims on their imaginative journeys.

Pilgrimage scholars working within the fields of History, Art History, Anthropology, and Literary Criticism have focused on the Book in relation to the wider corpus of pilgrimage writing, with Iain Higgins, who remains the definitive source on Mandeville, and Rosemary Tzanaki offering fresh insight into the significant contributions the text made to the canon of pilgrimage texts. Despite this recent work, however, the role that imagined pilgrimage plays in the Book has suffered from a lack of sustained scholarly examination.

The Book enjoyed a wide readership from the mid-fourteenth to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; from the Middle Ages alone, iterations of the text exist in over three hundred manuscripts and fragments, and in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, seventy-two editions were printed (Tzanaki 1). Despite being, in essence, a type of medieval bestseller, this text has sustained far less critical attention than Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales and William
Langland’s *Piers Plowman*, two other late medieval texts that offer insight into the state of pilgrimage in fourteenth century England. By the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the *Book* became increasingly devalued, with scholars discrediting the text after having realized that it is composed largely from the work of other writers (Zacher 154-5), principally the factual itinerary of William of Boldensele’s *Liber de quibusdam ultramarinis partibus* (*Book of Certain Regions beyond the Mediterranean*) and Odoric of Pordenone’s *Relatio* (*Account*), both of which were written in the 1330s. The text is so much an amalgamation of numerous texts that the original author of the *Book* may be better understood as a “compiler” (Kohanski and Benson 4), rather than a writer, let alone a pilgrim who *literally* travelled to the Holy Land.

Throughout the late Middle Ages the *Book* was altered through translations into German, Flemish, Czech, and even Latin, among other languages, and has consequently been referred to by Higgins as a “multi-text” (*Writing* viii) for which no true “authoritative” version exists (*Writing* 17). In spite of the complex manuscript history of the *Book* and the fact that in this study I will draw from pilgrimage scholars who explore the Continental monastic uses of imagined pilgrimage, my chief focus is the development and secular uses of imagined pilgrimage within England. In accordance with this, I have chosen to focus on the Defective version of the *Book*, which Ralph Hanna has referred to as the only version that “has any real claims to be the English Mandeville” (qtd. in Kohanski and Benson 13). The *Book*’s complex history has led to numerous unanswered questions, with scholars surmising that while the text was more than likely composed in England, the original text was written in either French or Anglo-French. The true identity of both the author of the *Book* and its narrator (hereafter referred to as the Mandeville-persona) has also not been determined. But although we cannot, to the chagrin of many literary scholars, be certain of who may have written the text, the narrator presents himself
as “John Maundevyle knight,” and claims to be “bore in Engelond in the toun of Seynt Albones” (57-59). It is in light of this “Englishness” of the narrator and the Book that I would like to focus on English secular imagined pilgrimage.

In Chapter 1 I provide a broad overview of pilgrimage as a social practice and pilgrimage writing as a literary genre. I begin by examining the current scholarship on pilgrimage from a literary, sociological, and art-historical perspective. I then survey the development of imagined pilgrimage from its origins in the eleventh and twelfth centuries as an alternative means for cloistered individuals to attain spiritual rewards without breaking their vows of enclosure up until its use by mystics in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. My chief focus here is on the monastic reading practices of imagined pilgrimage.

In Chapter 2 I shift focus to the monastic and secular writing practices of imagined pilgrimage, exploring how religious and laypersons engaged in the process of writing such texts. I pay particular attention to Francesco Petrarch’s Italian imagined pilgrimage the Itinerarium (1358) as well as William Wey’s English imagined pilgrimage the Itinerari (1450s). I then focus on the Book, examining key aspects of the narrative shifts that make the text so different from the source texts it draws from and the monastic texts that it is related to. I also explore the topic of authority and how writers of imagined pilgrimages tackled the issue of authorizing their journeys with claims to eyewitness experience without having actually been there.

In Chapter 3 I turn my attention back to the reading practices of imagined pilgrimage but focus on secular rather than monastic reading. I focus solely on the Book and explore such issues as textual versions, images and marginalia, as well as authorial intentionality and medieval reading practices that offer a glimpse into how late medieval audiences engaged with and understood the Book. The text is at times concerned with the pragmatics of physical travel, and I
suggest that such details have often been misinterpreted by scholars as random or even irrelevant; far from being so, they actually played a vital role in the imagined pilgrimage facilitated by the *Book*.

Lastly, I gesture to the central importance of the element of *interactivity* in imagined pilgrimage texts such as the *Book* and end my study by offering further avenues of investigation into the important connections between the *Book* and English secular imagined pilgrimage.
A Note on the Text

All quotations that appear in Middle English are from Tamarah Kohanski and C. David Benson’s TEAMS edition of British Library MS Royal 17 C. xxxviii, a derivative of a version of the Book called the “Defective,” which lacks what is referred to as the “Egypt Gap” due to a missing quire from the original (Kohanski and Benson 13). In my discussion, however, I also paraphrase parts of the text missing from this manuscript from Anthony Bale’s modern English translation (2012), which includes text from the Egerton manuscript of the Book. These supplemented parts that I discuss include the Saracen selling of fake balm to pilgrims, and the relics of St Katherine on Mount Sinai, among others.

My rationale for choosing this edition of the Book is that it is widely regarded as the most popular version of the Book written in English, of which around thirty-five or thirty-eight manuscripts are extant and from which all subsequent English editions originate (Kohanski and Benson 13; Tzanaki 16). According to Kohanski and Benson, the Defective Version was translated from an Insular French manuscript sometime between 1377 and 1385, and served as “the basis for the first printed text of the Book in English by Richard Pynson (1496)” (13). Despite this, a critical edition of some form of the Defective Version of the Book was not published until 2001; Kohanski has corrected this by offering an edition of Pynson’s print. It is my hope that the following thesis will contribute to this important and ever-evolving scholarly work.
Chapter 1: Enclosed Reading as Journey: the Monastic Context of Imagined Pilgrimage

1.1 A History of Pilgrimage and its Textual Forms

Pilgrimage in the Middle Ages was a diverse practice. The most important physical pilgrimage destinations in the medieval world were Santiago de Compostela in Spain, Rome, and Jerusalem, while within England itself, local shrines also flourished, with English pilgrims flocking to Canterbury and Walsingham among other religious sites. In physical pilgrimage the relationship between the pilgrim’s body and the natural world often dictated the journey’s success or failure: pilgrims faced perils on land and at sea, and as we shall later see, even the prominent Italian writer and pilgrim Francesco Petrarch was not immune from the seasickness so often induced by physical travel. Pilgrimage as a practice prompted medieval men and women to venture from their homes to local and international shrines, often in hopes of receiving the healing powers derived from saints’ relics. From the reign of Constantine in the fourth century to the twenty-first century, pilgrimage has helped foster tourism and allowed people to discover exotic customs in far-off countries. The religious significance of the practice, however, remains centered on the physical proximity of pilgrims’ bodies to spiritually significant space. The acquisition of indulgences, which offered time off temporal punishment for sins, was a primary impetus for medieval pilgrims. First attached to relics, these holy rewards were soon amplified to papal plenary indulgences that offered complete and total remission of sins by Pope Urban II, who, at the Council of Clermont in 1095, prompted the first crusade and offered would-be pilgrims an attractive spiritual reward in exchange for their participation in military efforts.
Given that pilgrimage took on a multiplicity of meanings within medieval daily life, it follows suit that it did the same within the corpus of medieval textual culture. Texts that treated pilgrimage allegorically as a journey towards God, such as Dante Alighieri’s *Divina Comedia* (1308-1320), were clearly intended to be read as recreational literature; other pilgrimage texts, such as William Wey’s *Itinerari*, which will be discussed in Chapter 2, were more concerned with the pragmatic concerns of religious travel and the logistics involved in travelling from England to Palestine. Some pilgrimage itineraries were written in a narrative voice that strove to appear highly authoritative and trustworthy, as is the case with the *Book*, while others were more fantastically envisioned, and were told by highly unreliable narrators, as is the case with the pilgrim-narrator in Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* (1387-1400). Whether these texts operated within the realm of fact or fiction—those two slippery categories in the Middle Ages—pilgrimage texts often proposed to document factual travel, and served the dual purpose of recording the pilgrim-author’s journey while providing the reader with a pragmatic guide through which to enact their own.

The canon of medieval pilgrimage writing was composed of literary texts; *itinerari* that listed the loci or stops on pilgrimage routes and the lengths of travel in between them; diaries; journals; and *libri indulgentiarum* or “books of indulgences” that listed the holy rewards to be gained while abroad and that became increasingly popular beginning in the mid-fourteenth century (Tzanaki 55; Rudy *Virtual* 59). While indulgences were a primary incentive of physical pilgrimage and were well advertised in *libri indulgentiarum*, their role in imagined pilgrimage began as early as the mid-1300s in the work of Matthew Paris and took on an ever-increasing role in the practice throughout the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The oldest known Christian itinerary is the *itinerarium Burdigalense* (Bordeaux Itinerary), written by an individual simply
known as the “Pilgrim of Bordeaux” who documented his journey to the Holy Land in 333-334. Composed shortly after this is the itinerary of the female pilgrim Etheria or Egeria, a Spanish Abbess who travelled to the Holy Land in the early 380s and who reported back on her travels to her enclosed sisters who could not travel themselves. Writing in first-person past tense, Egeria in her *itinerarium* makes mention of the logistics involved in pilgrimage, recounting how “[w]hen I had got back to Antioch, I stayed there for a week, while the things that were necessary for our journey were being prepared” (qtd. in Whalen 24). The next important *itinerarium* comes from Jerome, who describes the travels of his fellow pilgrim Paula, with whom he had travelled to the Holy Land in 386. Like Egeria’s account, the text records the emotional and religious response that the pilgrim has when encountering the Holy Land, but it is highly impersonal in nature and told in the third-person past tense, with Jerome writing such phrases as “[s]he arrived next at …” and “Paula entered Jerusalem…” (qtd. in Whalen 27). The nitty-gritty details, so to speak, of Egeria’s and Paula’s pilgrimages are subsumed by a firm focus on the biblical events that imbue the Holy Land with religious significance, and accordingly, as Mary B. Campbell contends, “we tend not to *see* place description in the tissue of anecdote and scriptural quotation that constitutes these pilgrimage accounts” (qtd. in Cachey 193n150). The *Book* is both a descendent of and a significant variant to this canon of early and somewhat mundane pilgrimage writing.

In focusing on later medieval pilgrimage writing, Dee Dyas offers what comes closest to a comprehensive understanding of pilgrimage and a synthesis of its diverse forms as they appeared in the practice of medieval life and corresponding texts. She sets out in *Pilgrimage in Medieval English Literature 700-1500* (2001) to explore the “inherent tensions within the pilgrimage concept as Christians struggled to reconcile aspects of interior, moral and place
pilgrimage within an overall commitment to the pilgrimage of life” (246). Dyas defines what she sees as three categories of pilgrimage as follows:

1. **Interior Pilgrimage**, which roughly corresponds to the Contemplative Life and includes monasticism, anchoritism, meditation and mysticism.

2. **Moral Pilgrimage**, which corresponds to the Active Life, manifesting itself in a life of daily obedience to God in the place of one’s everyday calling and a commitment to avoid, in particular, the pitfalls of the seven deadly sins.

3. **Place Pilgrimage**, which includes journeying to saints’ shrines or other holy places to secure forgiveness for specific sins or more general indulgences, to seek healing and other material benefits, to learn and to express devotion. (6)

Literary scholars have favored the study of, in Dyas’s terms, *Moral* rather than *Place* and *Interior* pilgrimage, and have tended to view the former as simply a literary motif that symbolizes the journey of life. This is not surprising given that Middle English writers have been continuously fascinated by this form of pilgrimage. The *Canterbury Tales*, itself framed by its pilgrimage to St. Thomas Becket, whose shrine (like Rome in the jubilee years) offered a plenary indulgence to pilgrims seeking aid “whan that they were seke” (*GP* 18), is often read in this light, while *Piers Plowman* is often similarly read as an allegory of spiritual pilgrimage that delegitimizes physical pilgrimage, evident in the Prologue’s stinging criticism of pilgrims whose “tonge was tempred to lye” (51) and Piers’s declaration in Passus XI that “pylgrymes ar we alle” (242). Dyas offers a similar interpretation on this issue of what Middle English writers chose to emphasize when she concludes that “surviving Middle English literary texts do not incline towards the practice of place pilgrimage, preferring instead to emphasise the pilgrimage of life and, in the case of the mystics, the quest for the interior Jerusalem” (244). Her study focuses
largely on fourteenth-century mystical writings, which, as she argues, fall within the category of *Interior* pilgrimage that includes such texts and writers as the *Ancrene Wisse*, Walter Hilton’s *Scale of Perfection*, Richard Rolle, the *Cloud*-author, and Julian of Norwich. Focusing mainly on *Piers Plowman*, Dyas suggests that “[w]ithin medieval spirituality, interior pilgrimage and the popular practice of place pilgrimage stand at opposite ends of the pilgrimage spectrum, with the daily life of obedient service advocated by Langland in between” (206).³ She takes issues with modern critics who read pilgrimage literature as either one of two things—documents of literal travel or texts in which pilgrimage is little more than a metaphor for the human journey of life—and suggests instead that “this perspective may not in fact be in accord with that manifested within medieval spirituality” (Dyas 245). Nevertheless, despite this nuanced approach and the fact that the categories of *Interior*, *Moral*, and *Place* pilgrimage are helpful in that they offer a synthesis of pilgrimage’s many forms, Dyas’s categories leave little room for laypersons to engage in the practice of *Interior* pilgrimage. Indeed, while Dyas at times seems to suggest that laypersons might belong within the category of *Interior* pilgrimage (she, for example, says “monks, anchorites, mystics, and lay [people] were encouraged to withdraw from the world around them in order to travel inwardly” (206)), her categories are inextricably bound up with questions of vocation.

Pilgrimage scholars continue to minimize the significant role that secular writers and readers played in imagined pilgrimage, in addition to the contributions the *Book* has made to the

³ In arguing that *Place* and *Moral* pilgrimage are polar opposites, Dyas draws from Victor and Edith Turner, who suggest that “[p]ilgrimage may be thought of as extroverted mysticism, just as mysticism is introverted pilgrimage. The pilgrim physically travels a mystical way; the mystic sets forth on an interior spiritual pilgrimage” (qtd. in Dyas 215).
canon of pilgrimage writing. Despite the unprecedented popularity that it enjoyed throughout the Middle Ages, Dyas devotes little more than a footnote to the Book, opting to explain only that the work is relevant to her argument insofar as it is evidence of the widespread appeal in the Middle Ages of hearing stories about the Holy Land (232n1). That the Book misses Dyas’s categorization, and even resists it, is unsurprising given the text’s hybridity and its engagement with all three forms of pilgrimage.

Although scholars have tended to focus on pilgrimage as a literary motif that symbolizes the transitory nature of human life, pilgrimage was far from merely allegorical. It was equally a pragmatic enterprise whose dual-nature was materially reinforced and authorized (both in literary texts and historically) through miracles, which offered help in this world, and indulgences, which offered help in the next. In light of this fact, my analysis of the Book is consequently heavily influenced by Michael Camille’s theory of “psychological materialism,” which avoids the “abstracting and idealizing” (392) critical practice of iconography that has long influenced the reductionist study of depictions of pilgrimage in both literature and historical texts. As I will show, medieval pilgrimage literature encompassed imaginative texts that monastic audiences as well as secular readers throughout medieval Europe used as a means of travelling to spaces that were previously unavailable to them due to a range of social and economic constraints. In assessing competing definitions of pilgrimage within peripatetic texts we invariably expand our understanding of pilgrimage beyond the culturally-significant social practice and literary motif that still continues to dominate scholarly discussions of pilgrimage and that has a significant impact on the study of its correlated practice: imagined pilgrimage.
1.2 The State of Imagined Pilgrimage Scholarship

Scholars of medieval non-physical journeys have referred to the practice by various names: *Interior, Virtual, Imagined*, and *Mental* pilgrimage, among others. Continuing in the critical direction suggested by Daniel K. Connolly, I adopt the term *imagined pilgrimage* in order to convey the individualized, creative thought processes and imaginings involved in this form of travel. A wealth of criticism has been written on art/imaged-based imagined pilgrimages, with Connolly exploring the “performative potential” (Maps 90) of the work of the thirteenth-century Benedictine monk and artist Matthew Paris, who, working from the monastery at St Albans, created important maps that preface the *Chronica Majora* (1250). Connolly argues that “[t]he Benedictine brother who perused these pages understood this map primarily through its performative possibilities, as a dynamic setting, the operation of whose pages, texts, images, and appendages aided him in effecting an imagined pilgrimage” (“Imagined” 598). Focusing his attention on Corpus Christi College Cambridge MS 26, he argues that Paris’s maps helped monastic viewers at St Albans enact an imagined pilgrimage that allowed them to travel from the cloister to the New Jerusalem through a sequence of pilgrimage routes visually depicted on manuscript pages. Paul Binski similarly sees the potential of Paris’s maps to help aid the viewer on an imagined journey, suggesting that “the proximity of images of mental *peregrinatio* to Matthew’s mapmaking and unfolding of history was more than fortuitous” (92).

Due to a lack of explicit instructions for imagined pilgrimage artifacts and the fact that imagined pilgrimage has only recently been studied, just what purpose imagined pilgrimage texts served remains an unresolved issue in scholarly criticism. Despite recent interest in the *Chronica Majora* as a tool for imagined pilgrimage, the prefatory maps and itineraries have sparked
unresolved debate about their initial construction and subsequent use.\textsuperscript{4} Paris’s monastic audience at St Albans was given a visual tool for imagined pilgrimage in the form of a map of Britain and itinerary maps whose interactive quality emerges through appended flaps that extend past the manuscript pages of the \textit{Chronica Majora}. While scholars such as Katharine Breen have interpreted Paris’s input into medieval cartography as significant, and have suggested that the chronicler and artist’s map is an artifact that is important in its own right due to its being “now considered the earliest known map of Britain, and perhaps the earliest map of a European region produced in the Middle Ages” (59-60), complicating further the issue of what purposes these objects served is the fact that the material evidence for this imagined pilgrimage is slight in comparison to the massive historical chronicle that follows it.\textsuperscript{5}

Indeed, it is only the first seven pages of Paris’s codex that include the itinerary maps that so famously lead the reader from London to Rome and Jerusalem. Like the \textit{Book}, these seven pages offer multiple paths for the reader, guiding them from London to Rochester, Canterbury, Dover, Calais, Wissant, and so on, all the way to Jerusalem, which contains visual components of both the earthly and heavenly city. Cities are connected by script that documents the distance between sites much like the \textit{Book} elucidates the distances between sites worthy of visiting in the Holy Land. Place names, according to Michel de Certeau, function as “liberated spaces that can be occupied” due to their “rich indetermination [that] gives them, by means of a semantic

\footnotesize

\textsuperscript{4} Connolly and Suzanne Lewis have different opinions: while Lewis argues that the itinerary maps were originally part of a “strip-map” that was pasted back-to-back and placed in a codex, Connolly argues that the maps had been conceived of in their original codex orientation due to the multiple versions of his itineraries that include appended flaps. For a discussion of this, see Connolly “Imagined” pp. 601-2 and Lewis p. 332.

\textsuperscript{5} Here, Breen refers to the map found in BL Royal MS 14 C VII.
rarefaction, the function of articulating a second, poetic geography on top of the geography of the literal, forbidden or permitted meaning” (105). A type of de Certeauean “poetic geography” was afforded to enclosed men and women by artists such as Paris who worked within a monastic culture that reinforced the importance of historical sites in the Western world by ingraining into their brethren the importance of place names; this, in turn, made imagined pilgrimage both a spiritual and semantic journey.

I draw attention to the *Chronica Majora* because Paris and the author of the *Book* bear similarities in their fervent devotion to compiling historical, political, and geographical information and because both of their artistic projects “take the model of travel and pilgrimage as an organizing principle through which to understand time and place” (Bale xv). The interactive quality of imagined pilgrimage artifacts, a topic I will explore in more detail later on, also strengthens the connection between the *Chronica Majora* and the *Book*. Like the Mandeville-persona, Matthew Paris addresses his readers directly and offers his monastic pilgrims an engaging itinerary composed of several routes to Jerusalem, with no described route taking priority over another. In the form of a codex with appended vellum flaps that could be opened and closed by the reader to enact the readerly voyage, it is, like the *Book*, a kind of *choose-your-own-ending* text that invariably leads to the Holy Land. Connolly notes an annotation, in Paris’s hand, in which the monk addresses his reader directly, stating that:

> At this sign . . . where the ship is painted, at such a sign is the route to Acre in Apulia. That is to say as far as Otranto, which is toward the Sea of Venice, the closest city to Acre in Apulia. On the other route by sea to arrive at the place of the house of the patriarch of Acre, are islands. The first, Messina, and one leaves Sicily at the left and
Malta at the right, which is [off] the Barbary Coast. Then one finds Crete. And then there is Cyprus at the left. (qtd. in “Imagined” 617)

Connolly suggests that reclaiming the tactile experience of undertaking imagined pilgrimage is of utmost importance given that Paris’s manuscripts demonstrate a “dynamic and participatory design” and that “[t]his interactive quality has been completely overlooked by modern scholarship” (“Imagined” 598). While outside the scope of this thesis, more close analysis of the manuscript material is needed in order to determine whether or not these materials were originally conceived of by Paris for use in an imagined pilgrimage to Jerusalem in the form of a devotional exercise, as Connolly suggests, or if they were a physical pilgrimage guide that demonstrates the Benedictine monk’s sophisticated knowledge of geography, as Breen suggests they are. Works like the *Chronica Majora* urge us to wonder how imagined pilgrimage texts were used, and prompt us to investigate such objects more closely within their historical context, to reveal what Bill Brown refers to as “a secret life of things” (207).

That Matthew Paris was interested in the idea of movement and the promotion of imagined pilgrimages is evidenced by his creation not only of geographically-sophisticated tactile maps but also indulgenced images that allowed viewers to attain the spiritual benefits of pilgrimage without leaving the monastery. Paris painted what is known as the “Holy Face,” an image of Christ that is related to the Veronica, Vera Icon, or *sudarium*, one of the most popular indulgenced images of medieval Europe. He is credited as painting the first depiction of the Veronica in the West (Rudy *Postcards* 46). The relic is described in the *Stacions of Rome*, an

6 Rudy suggests that Paris probably acquired the original image from which he made his own versions of the Holy Face in the form of a postcard sent to St Albans by an English brother visiting Rome (*Postcards* 47).
English pilgrims’ guide from 1370, as a holy image imbued with the power to grant believers between three thousand and twelve thousand years’ indulgence for sins (Belting 221). Before this, the image was displayed as one of the *mirabilia urbis* for pilgrims who visited Rome during the first Jubilee year of 1300, and it is during this time that the number of pilgrims visiting the relic was said to be so great that an English Benedictine monk was crushed to death while trying to catch a glimpse of it (Lewis 130). Cited by Lewis as a plausible reason for Paris’s creation of the Holy Face images, additional indulgences were previously issued in the papal Office of the Veronica by Pope Innocent IV (1243-1254) (129-130). Years before this, the Vera icon was put on public display in Rome during the time of Pope Honorius III (1216-27), who carried it in procession in an ornate reliquary (Belting 220).

Paris offered his monastic audience a combination of text and image when he painted his Holy Face image alongside an indulgenced prayer. In doing so, he claimed power over the sacred relic by offering Innocent’s indulgence through a viewing of the Benedictine monk’s image. The Holy Face parchments are important for understanding the ways in which aspects of pilgrimage—such as the acquisition of indulgences and the viewing of holy images—could be made available to religious men and women through the practice of imagined pilgrimage. Kathryn Rudy has suggested that Matthew Paris’s Holy Face parchment paintings were created with the primary aim of developing the cult of Veronica (*Postcards* 44); however, the *Chronica Majora*, one of the codices that contains one of his Holy Face images, never left his hands during his lifetime, and its contemporary audience was therefore comprised of monastic brethren at St Albans (Lewis 49). Paris made a copy of the Holy Face for a manuscript referred to as Arundel 157, which made its way to Oxford as an independent parchment diptych, but Paris’s Holy Face images did not circulate widely, and the private context of his chronicle suggests that the
inclusion of the Vera icon in the text may be better understood as a move that, rather than promulgating the image’s cult, allowed its monastic viewers to attain indulgences by viewing the image-copy instead of having to undergo physical pilgrimage to Rome to see the original icon.

In contrast to the image/art-based imagined pilgrimages of Matthew Paris, textual imagined pilgrimages have suffered from a lack of scholarly analysis. Recent work by Robert Rouse has shed light on the importance of understanding the Middle Ages as a period of time in which men and women conveyed and understood geographical information not through image, but through text: as he contends, “[t]he medieval spatial imagination was primarily noncartographic” (16). Medieval texts, he argues, often show modern readers “not so much the power of the visual map, but rather the power of narrative description” (26). In exploring fifteenth-century Northern Netherlandish manuscripts clearly (and often explicitly) commissioned and/or used for mental peregrinations by religious women, Rudy, like Rouse, cautions against privileging the visual over the textual. In Virtual Pilgrimages in the Convent (2011), she draws a distinction between Paris’s (male) monastic audience and female viewers who “did not produce or consume linear maps such as those of the English monks two centuries earlier,” but who “like the Benedictine brothers, [favored] interactive devotions” (20). According to her “[n]uns and religious women explored the themes through a plethora of images and texts, whose very bounty reflects the centrality of pilgrimage and its proxies in pre-Reformation devotional schemes” (Virtual 20).

Continental textual imagined pilgrimage has recently been explored by Kathryn Beebe, who examines the work of Felix Fabri, a fifteenth-century Dominican pilgrim and preacher who documented his factual travels and repurposed them into several devotional texts used by the cloistered women at the Observant Reformed houses of Medingen and Medlingen in Germany.
As opposed to physical pilgrimages, which were well-documented in the late Middle Ages due to the legal documents involved in authorizing journeys and testamentary wills, there is scant extant evidence for the practice of imagined journeys. Fabri’s text the *Sionpilger* (1492) is a rare example of an imagined pilgrimage text whose intended use is not unclear, as is the case with Paris’s *Chronica Majora*, but explicit.

A text that describes the author’s physical ambulation and outlines the spiritual benefits that could be attained through reading his pilgrimage text instead of actually embarking on physical travel, Fabri’s *Sionpilger* allowed its monastic readers to gain indulgences and to experience, through an affective reading process, the wide range of physiological sensations common to pilgrimage, including seasickness and fatigue. Through a metanarrative of pilgrims within the text read by stationary pilgrims outside of the text, the *Sionpilger* elicited actual physiological symptoms, and such effects were not only discussed, but urged by the Dominican preacher. As Beebe shows, the cloistered Observant women were invited to imagine themselves as pilgrims actually inside of the text through the manipulation of their bodies outside of the text: “the enclosed Sion pilgrims are encouraged not just to read about the textual Sion pilgrims feeling seasick and woeful—they are encouraged to feel seasick themselves, thereby undergoing the same difficult and penitential aspects of the real journey that led to spiritual reward” (44).

The affective reading practices required here recall the *Imitatio Christi* tradition, which imbues thirst, discomfort, illness, pain, and suffering with a positive understanding, and results in a transformation that is supposed to align one’s own experience with that of Christ’s. The intense mental, emotional, and bodily engagement required on the part of the reader of imagined pilgrimage results in an interactivity that differentiates it from other literary forms in the Middle
Ages such as the *visio* or dream vision, a type of narrative that is marked by its detachment of the narrator from his/her corporeal form.

In spite of this important scholarship, English textual imagined pilgrimages have suffered from a lack of scholarly attention, and a text such as the *Book* raises many questions as to how it relates to other imagined pilgrimage artifacts such as the *Sionpilger* due to the fact that no such harsh physiological effects are urged by its creator as a means of establishing a connection with the divine. What are we to do with a text like the *Book*, in which readers remain in relative comfort and are not asked to simulate the hardships of physical travel?

1.3 A History of Imagined Pilgrimage

In 2009 Connolly declared that “[a] history of imagined pilgrimage has yet to be written,” noting that “[t]here has been little formal investigation into these devotional practices, and the primary sources have not yet been compiled” (*Maps* 29). What follows is a brief overview of the history of imagined pilgrimage in response to this lacuna in studies of medieval pilgrimage texts that invite, either explicitly or implicitly, the reader to partake in an imagined voyage.

In imagined pilgrimage, the outside world is not available to pilgrims as a source of edification, and the focus is instead squarely on interiority, on thoughts, on the mind. Rather than a bodily performance or ritual, as is the case with physical pilgrimage, in imagined pilgrimage readers remain stationary, but these two forms of travel bear similarities as journeys with the goal of achieving an internal transformation. The importance of seeing and touching in physical travel is replaced in written accounts by vivid mental images created in order to foster religious growth, with the creation of such mental images being necessary in order to transport readers to the places described within the text. Until about the thirteenth century, most pilgrimage accounts
were written in Latin by clerics, and according to Rosemary Tzanaki, earlier texts by such writers as Saewulf (1102-3), Daniel the Abbot (1106-8), and Pseudo-Fetellus (c. 1130) were “relatively impersonal, listing the holy places and their histories” and in them “[p]ilgrimage was seen as a strictly moral and religious undertaking” (40).

Dyas argues that imagined pilgrimage is deeply tied to mysticism, for “the writings of the Middle English mystics represents a further stage along the road which the anchorites and spiritual writers of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries had already begun to explore” (214). She suggests that writers such as Richard Rolle “[encourage] those who wish to draw close to God to meditate upon the Passion of Christ, visiting through the imagination the events and places which feature in the biblical narrative” and contends that “[t]his type of meditation . . . is designed to evoke the emotion, compunction and desire to imitate Christ which should also accompany a literal visit to the Holy Land” (214). Rudy similarly states that “[u]nlike pilgrim’s diaries . . . texts for virtual pilgrimage were written in the pleading language of prayer rather than the descriptive language of a pilgrim’s journal” (Virtual 119). In mystical writing Dyas sees “the prioritisation of person over place” (215), for, as Dinzelbacher noted earlier, “the characteristic feature of the later mystics is the ecstatic meeting with God, rather than the ecstatic visit to eschatological spaces (which exist in their spiritual world as well but are clearly of less importance)” (qtd. in Dyas 219).

Focusing on the earlier years of imagined pilgrimage, Connolly makes a clear distinction between his definition of imagined pilgrimage as it developed in the thirteenth-century work of Matthew Paris and later iterations of imagined pilgrimage that have “the explicit instructions or the suffusing, affective textures that belongs to the later devotio moderno, a lay movement itself built upon monastic spiritual practices” (Maps 29). He argues that
[h]istorians of medieval spirituality have usually assigned that first spiritual pilgrimage to the late-14th / early-15th-century theologian and mystic, Jean Gerson (1363-1429) whose work *Modus quidam, quo certis ex causis Romam ire non valentes in anno jubilee spiritualiter peregrinationen eadem perficere possint* (A way, so to speak, in which those who, for certain reasons, are not able to go to Rome might in the Jubilee Year make the same pilgrimage spiritually) was written in 1400 and deals only with a pilgrimage to Rome. (Connolly *Maps* 29)

Connolly suggests that Gerson’s “later influence on the *devotio moderno* movement helped to solidify our misconception that detailed and emotive descriptions belong to, or even originated in, the later fourteenth and fifteenth century” (*Maps* 30). Rather than focusing on, as Dyas does, fourteenth-century mystical writing, Connolly locates the origins of imaginative journeying with the work of one of the monastic founders, Flavius Cassiodorus (490-585), who once wrote:

> if a noble concern for knowledge has set you on fire, you have the work of Ptolemy, who has described all places so clearly that you judge him to have been practically a resident in all regions, and as a result you, who are located in one spot, as is seemly for monks, *traverse in your minds that which the travel of others has assembled with very great labor*. (qtd. in Connolly *Maps* 32)

The imaginative freedom permitted by imagined pilgrimage was a way of accessing holy sites that were unattainable to enclosed men and women due to their vows of stability, their physical infirmity, or both. In the Saint Peter Martyr legend of the *Legenda Aurea*, a compendium of saints’ lives, a nun travels to a tomb in spirit in order to attain the spiritual benefits that are otherwise unavailable to her for these very reasons:
In Germany, at the monastery of the Order of Saint Sixtus at Ottenbach in the diocese of Constance, there was a nun who for a year or more had suffered from painful gout in her knee, and no remedy had been found to cure it. She was unable to visit Saint Peter’s tomb bodily both because she lived under a religious rule and because her serious physical condition forbade such a journey; so she thought of traveling to the tomb in her mind at least, and to visit it with sincere devotion. She learned that it would take thirteen days to go from Ottenbach to Milan, so for each of the next thirteen days she recited one hundred Our Fathers in honor of Saint Peter. Wonderful to relate, as she continued this journey in her mind, day by day and little by little she felt better, and when the last day was done and her mental stride carried her to the tomb, she knelt as if she were there in the body and with wholehearted devotion read the entire Psalter. When she had finished that, she felt freed of her infirmity to the degree that only a little pain was left. She then made the return trip just as she had made the outward one, and before she had completed thirteen days, she was entirely cured. (264)

The *Legenda Aurea* was compiled around 1260, and the fact that it includes such a legend suggests that by this time imagined pilgrimage was an established practice. While according to Connolly, “[p]eregrinatio in stabilitate is not a documented, institutionalized practice (it is not a phrase used by medieval authors)” (“Imagined” 598), it most certainly originated from monastic contexts, and its texts allowed enclosed readers to negotiate the constraints put on the ascetic body, which included, among other things, abstaining from outside contact and worldly travel. The appeal of imagined pilgrimage stemmed from the sensory and tactile experience and imaginative benefits it offered to those who could not otherwise experience them in the cloistered world.
While imagined pilgrimage was seen as a spiritually meritorious monastic practice, place pilgrimage, despite the significant economic benefits it brought the medieval Christian Church, was commonly seen as a threat to the stability and structure of religious life. As Zacher argues, the earliest pilgrims had been monks, but as pilgrimages became morally doubtful enterprises, religious orders and in fact all clergy were discouraged from joining them. Monasticism in time abjured pilgrimage for its proximity to the world just as it had previously rejected eremitic homelessness as an unproductive withdrawal from the world. During the twelfth century, as Jean Leclercq has explained, monastic *peregrinatio*—which before that had served as a means of seeking *stabilitas* in an unstable, imperfect world—was gradually supplanted by a stricter emphasis on residence within the monastery. Against the older search for *stabilitas in peregrinatione* was a belief in *peregrinatio in stabilitate*. (49)

The inherent tensions between place and imagined pilgrimage is explored by Saint Bernard of Clairvaux (1090-1153) who suggests that “the object of monks is to seek out not the earthly but the Heavenly Jerusalem, and this is not by proceeding with [their] feet but by progressing with [their] feelings” (qtd. in Connolly “Imagined” 598). This dichotomy was elaborated on in the subsequent century by Bonaventure (c. 1217-74), who wrote the *Itinerarium Mentis in Deum*, which charts the spiritual path necessary to reach the Heavenly Jerusalem, and later in the late fourteenth century by Walter Hilton, who, in *The Scale of Perfection*, argues that “[t]here is no need to run to Rome or Jerusalem to look for [Jesus] there, but turn your thought into your own soul where he is hidden” (I.49 qtd. in Dyas 214).

Bishop Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109) and abbot Geoffrey of Vendôme (1093-1132) cautioned monks who desired to go on physical pilgrimages about the dangers of *curiositas* and
moral corruption that the journey posed, as well as the disruptions that would occur from
breaking their vows of stability without proper authorization. In the Letters of Saint Anselm, the
bishop, addressing one “bishop Osmund,” describes how

[m]any ill things are being said about the abbot of Cerne [in Dorchester], including
among them the fact that he encourages his monks to go to Jerusalem—and has already
sent one who is but a young boy—and that he wickedly takes away church properties and
pawns them, and also that he wanders about various places like a frivolous youth,
gambling, passing through villages even with women and only a single companion, so
that he has become a shameful joke in people’s eyes. (Letter 195, qtd. in Whalen 197)

For Anselm, venturing forth to Jerusalem is synonymous with going “into confusion and
damnation” (qtd. in Whalen 197) and leads to not only moral but also legal ramifications. He
advises bishop Osmund to strictly enforce rules so that “no monk should presume to set out on
the journey to Jerusalem, and [to] prohibit this on pain of excommunication” (qtd. in Whalen
197). In his Letter 410, addressed only to “his beloved brother P., monk at the monastery at Saint
Martin at Sées” (qtd. in Whalen 197), Anselm cautions the addressee directly because he desires
to travel to Jerusalem. He chastises brother P. by saying “right up front that your desire is not a
good one and will do nothing for the salvation of your soul. For it is contrary to your vow,
whereby you made a promise openly before God to remain steadfast in the monastery, in which
you accepted the habit of a monk” (qtd. in Whalen 197). Anselm here references the fact that the
Apostolic see of Rome banned the unauthorized pilgrimages of monks, ordering that “a monk
should not presume to set out on this journey, unless there remains behind some other religious
person who is capable of watching over the church of God and teaching the people—and this
should be done only by the council of one’s bishop and in obedience to him” (qtd. in Whalen
In these letters, pilgrimage for the wayward monk is both an object of “desire” and “a danger to [his] soul” (qtd. in Whalen 198).

Geoffrey of Vendôme voices similar concerns over monastic physical pilgrimage. In Letter 21 he addresses abbot Odo and chastises him for desiring to go to Jerusalem for a second time, having travelled there already once before. Vendôme says:

it is hardly possible to observe the faith of the monastic profession when one is going to Jerusalem; rather, one violates it. . . . In truth, those who render their profession in a certain place, where first they professed themselves, carry the cross of the Lord, for it is necessary to follow the Lord, not to seek a pilgrimage to his sepulcher. Therefore, let us not deviate from the path of our profession under the excuse of taking the path to Jerusalem, lest, while we seek a false happiness, we find misery for the body and the soul. (qtd in Whalen 198)

To combat the worldly contamination that place pilgrimage posed for monastic brethren, pilgrims such as the Russian abbot Daniel, who travelled to Jerusalem between 1106 and 1107, offered his readers imaginative texts written in the first-person past tense “so that, upon hearing the description of the holy places, they might be mentally transported to them, from the depths of their souls, and thus obtain from God the same reward as those who have visited them” (qtd. in Whalen 207). When Daniel ends his pilgrimage text with a prayer asking that “all who read this work in faith and love receive the blessing of God and the holy tomb of the Lord and all the holy places and may they receive a reward from God no less than that of those who have visited these holy places” (qtd. in Connolly Maps 37), one may be prompted to ask: what was the relationship between the length of travel and the pilgrimage’s spiritual reward?
While the answer to this question is invariably complex, it appears that place pilgrimage was often seen as easier than imagined pilgrimage by these earlier writers. Daniel critiques those, “of whom I am the chief, [who] after having visited the holy city of Jerusalem and the holy places, pride themselves as if they had done something meritorious, and thus lose the fruit of their labor” (qtd. in Whalen 207). He further chastises “others who have made the pilgrimage [who] return without having seen many valuable things, so eager were they to return home; for this journey cannot be made quickly, nor can all the holy places in Jerusalem and other localities be hurried through” (qtd. in Whalen 207). In support of the argument that a longer journey resulted in a greater spiritual reward is the fact that indulgences for visitors to Rome varied according to distance travelled (Bell and Dale 604). The aforementioned *Stacions of Rome*, for example, lists holy places and the indulgences to be gained at certain sites, with indulgences for local pilgrims differing significantly from those offered to overseas pilgrims. Highly meditative and impersonal in nature up until about the mid-fourteenth century, imagined pilgrimage texts grew from a need for an alternative form of holy travel that allowed monastic men and women to attain the spiritual rewards that physical enclosure made otherwise beyond reach.
Chapter 2: Secular Writers, Spiritual Journeys: Providing Texts as a Means of Travel

2.1 Writing Petrarch’s *Itinerarium*

Monastic men and women were not the only ones to have documented physical pilgrimages; laypersons, including Margery Kempe who in the 1430s travelled to Jerusalem, Rome, and Santiago de Compostela, also commissioned scribes to record their journeys. Tzanaki summarizes this greater diversity in authorship when she suggests that while “[f]rom the end of the thirteenth century to the end of the fourteenth century there were still many clerical author[s,] . . . [f]rom the fourteenth century onwards, pilgrimage literature was also increasingly being written by laymen from all walks of life, often in the vernacular with the rise of vernacular prose literature” (41). Imagined pilgrimage texts from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, in contrast to the monastic imagined pilgrimage texts of the twelfth and thirteenth, were also becoming increasingly more personal and practical in nature.

The imagined pilgrimage guide *Itinerarium ad sepulchrum domini nostri* (1358), a text the secular writer Francesco Petrarch presented to his friend Giovanni Mandelli as an alternative for visiting the Holy Land in the flesh, bears many similarities to the *Book*. What is of particular interest is the fact that Petrarch presents not only the act of *reading* as a spiritual equivalent to physically travelling, but also the act of *writing* as an alternative for pilgrimage; for Petrarch, writing the journey is concomitant with undertaking it, and he makes this connection clear throughout the *Itinerarium*, such as in instances when he addresses Mandelli in saying “I will complete a very long journey in a concise style” (1.0). I draw attention to Petrarch’s *Itinerarium*
due to the fact that, like the *Book*, it features a strong narrative presence, calls into question the distinctions between pilgrimage and travel, and offers insight into the state of place and imagined pilgrimage in fourteenth century Europe.

Like with the *Book*, in the *Itinerarium* the narrator’s presence permeates the text to such a great degree that, according to Theodore J. Cachey,

Petrarch immediately puts the reader on notice that his contribution to a genre of medieval travel usually characterized by a lack of originality and individuality will be anything but anonymous or short of personality. The proem turns the impersonal generic characteristics of the *itineraria* upside down by displaying prominently the temperament and forceful presence of the work’s celebrity author, and might even be taken to question the very institution of pilgrimage that the author purports to promote. (18-19)

Petrarch refuses to travel physically by stating that “[a]lthough numerous causes hold me back, none is more powerful than fear of the sea” (Pr. 3), and he begins his text by claiming that he fears “slow death and nausea worse than death itself” (Pr. 5). In the *Itinerarium* he suggests that his “pen describes more clearly than what [Mandelli’s] eyes will show [him]” (1.0) in the Holy Land, and he legitimizes this preference for imaginative travel in other works such as *Seniles* 9.2, in which he says imaginary travel offers more benefits than physical:

I decided not to travel just once on a very long journey by ship or on horse or on foot to those lands, but many times on a tiny map, with books and the imagination, so that in the course of an hour I could go to those shores and return as many times as I liked to those distant shores, not only unscathed, but unwearied too, not only with sound body, but
with no wear and tear to my shoes, untouched by briars, stones, mud, and dust.\(^7\) (qtd. in Cachey 22)

Despite Petrarch’s inability—or perhaps, refusal,—to travel physically, he tells Mandelli that “[n]evertheless I shall be with you in spirit, and since you have requested it, I will accompany you with this writing, which will be for you like a brief itinerary” (Pr.7), and then hurries to let him set forth on the journey, admitting that “I am delaying too long you whom your companions await, whom the tranquil aspect of spring and favorable winds beckon, whom all of us, sighing at your departure, wish were already returning” (Pr. 8). But although Petrarch here says goodbye to his friend, he subsequently goes on to follow him in the narrative, beginning his itinerary not by stating that Mandelli will arrive at Genoa if he physically follows his advice in the Itinerarium in real life, but rather that “we come to Genoa” (1.1). While Mandelli “will reach the ends of Italy as easily brought by favorable winds and smooth sailing” Petrarch will be brought along “by a simple and swift style” (12.0). Further on in the Itinerarium, Petrarch steps out of the narrative to announce that “[b]y now, as if I shared with you in the danger and the difficulty, I am happy we have reached land” (16.0). He repeatedly states that his form of pilgrimage is faster than Mandelli’s, such as when he says his companion has “come this far by oars and by foot on sea

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\(^7\) As Cachey notes, this passage “finds its Renaissance echo in Ariosto’s celebration of virtual travel in the third Satire” (46n93):

Without ever paying an innkeeper, I will go exploring the rest of the earth with Ptolemy, whether the world be at peace or else at war. Without ever making vows when the heavens flash with lightning, I will go bounding over all the seas, more secure aboard my maps than aboard ships. (qtd. in 47n93)
and on land: I, plowing this paper with a swift pen” (21.0). Petrarch ends the *Itinerarium* with the declaration that “[y]our journey of three months I have completed in three days” (21.0), yet despite this increased efficiency in his chosen form of imaginative travel, Petrarch does not devalue Mandelli’s physical pilgrimage in the process; while he does state that “[w]hat I have done at great speed, it remains for you to accomplish with a little bit more effort, happily with the help of Christ” (21.1), he does not condemn physical travel, and in this way, both parties are satisfied. Mandelli increases his piety by physically venturing forth to the Holy Land, and Petrarch does the same while remaining at home.

The scholarly neglect that Petrarch’s *Itinerarium* has faced is largely the result of the devaluation of travel accounts written by individuals who have not physically travelled themselves. According to Cachey, “Petrarch’s relation to travel has been generally neglected by Petrarchian criticism, in spite of the fact that Petrarch defined himself as a ‘peregrinus ubique’ (a pilgrim everywhere), and one distinguished critic has characterized him as an ‘irrequieto turista’ (an anxious tourist)” (2). Although forty manuscripts of the *Itinerarium* survive, “Petrarch studies have suffered from the marginalization of [his] contribution to the medieval genre of the pilgrimage itinerary” (Cachey 2 and 70). Cachey offers a corrective to scholars who have historically overlooked the *Itinerarium* because the writer’s travels to the Holy Land have been disregarded as inauthentic as a result of him never having been to the places he describes, a biographical fact that “might seem to disqualify him from the annals of travel literature rigorously limited to the narratives of ‘real’ journeys” (4). As Cachey argues in relation to Petrarch’s *Itinerarium*, and as I argue in relation to the *Book*, “it is precisely the too rigid distinction between real and virtual travel that needs to be reconsidered” (4).
Despite lacking physical experience of sacred space, Petrarch legitimizes his imaginative knowledge of it. He tells Mandelli, who has requested letters in lieu of Petrarch accompanying him, that “[y]ou would hear from me who never saw those things and perhaps never will” (1.0). While Petrarch admits it is “[a] marvelous thing to say,” he states that “[w]e sometimes know many things that we have never seen and many things that we have seen we do not know” (1.0). He suggests that it is Mandelli too who already has knowledge of spiritual space, for he tells his friend that he has undertaken the “arduous labor” (16.3) of physical pilgrimage in order “to see with your own eyes in that city made sacred by the death of the Lord and in the places nearby the things that you have already seen with your mind” (16.3), and in his section on Jerusalem, he repeats a similar sentiment when he tells Mandelli that “already before setting out from home you had considered and frequented every place within your soul” (16.2). Throughout the Itinerarium Petrarch repeatedly expresses his familiarity with the landscape, saying “you will see” (2.0) and “when you arrive at the farthest cape of Italy . . . from there you will see, with a slight turning of your gaze . . .” (12.2). In the rare instances in which Petrarch appears to lack knowledge of holy space, he supplements his lack with a displayed knowledge of literary history. Cachey notes the lack of practical details in Petrarch’s section on the Holy Land, suggesting that the writer “makes little or no attempt to provide practical or detailed information about the Holy Land sites, as was typical in the descriptiones and itineraria of the late medieval period” (193n150). As Cachey argues, Petrarch in this instance “appears to revert to an earlier medieval pilgrimage mode more akin to that of Paula or Egeria (both to compensate for his lack of direct knowledge and, perhaps, as a literary homage to the classical literature of pilgrimage)” (Cachey 193n150).
The *Itinerarium* bears many similarities to the *Book* because in addition to being an imagined pilgrimage text composed by a secular narrator, it engages with secular interests and reveals much about the state of pilgrimage in the late fourteenth century. When discussing the Red Sea, Petrarch suggests to Mandelli that “[w]hen you arrive there, don’t stand thinking of Indian spices and the merchandise of the East which is brought from there to Egypt and then to our sea, but think of the people helped by God to pass there with dry feet amidst the waves. The former is the work of human cupidity and weakness, the second of piety and divine power” (18.5). When Petrarch encourages Mandelli to travel further still to Egypt, Alexandria, and the Nile, the line between pious and worldly travel is physically crossed in the *Itinerarium* as it is in the *Book* when the Mandeville-persona encourages his reader-pilgrims to push past Jerusalem, into the East. In this crossing, the text raises the issue of the “historical tension between the trajectories of travel and pilgrimage” (Cachey 24) whose tension is most clearly seen in the variety of titles that Petrarch’s work bared in the Middle Ages. Cachey notes that the *Itinerarium* was referred to as:

*Itinerarium ad Sepulcrum Domini Nostri Yehsu Christi* (Itinerary to the Sepulcher of Our Lord Jesus Christ), according to the Cremona manuscript; or *Itinerarium Domini Francisci Petrache de Ianua Usque Ierusalem et Alexandriam* (The Itinerary of Lord Francis Petrarch from Genoa to Jerusalem and Alexandria), according to Tedaldo Della Casa’s copy of the text. . . . The latter title . . . reflects a Petrarchan variation of pilgrimage understood as a return to the Center of the World. As soon as Petrarch gets there, he is anxious to move on.” (24)

Pilgrimage according to Cachey “traditionally represented a movement toward the Center of the World, while travel came to be associated with movement in the opposite direction, ‘toward the
Other, located beyond the boundaries of the cosmos, in the surrounding chaos”” (24), and according to anthropologists, “the Pilgrim’s journey to the Center, though perilous, is in traditional cultures and societies ultimately legitimate; the Traveler’s in these societies, is not” (24). Despite the inventiveness of Petrarch’s Itinerarium and its contribution to the genre of imagined pilgrimage texts written by secular men and women, the text did not remain popular for long, as according to Cachey, “[t]he end of the fifteenth century, when journeys of exploration and discovery increasingly displaced pilgrimage as a privileged and prestigious mode of travel, appears to mark an end to the Itinerarium’s late-medieval, early-Renaissance fortunes” (7). I now turn my discussion to the Book, a text that enjoyed a much longer popularity, and which engaged its readers in a highly complex iteration of legitimate pilgrimage and illegitimate exploration.

2.2 Writing the Book

The Book, as I have already shown, emerged at a time when pilgrimage itineraries were an already well-established genre; what, then, made the text unique from its predecessors? The power of the Book, I argue, derives from the strong presence of its narrator, as well as its unique combination of two sections: the pilgrimage to the Holy Land, and the world that lies beyond it. The sheer geographical scope of the journey in the Book sets it apart from the majority of pilgrimage texts, and the fact that it was written with an eye to physical travel despite the near
impossibility of readers actually physically mimicking a journey to Asia makes it not only highly unique but also an important text for the study of imagined pilgrimage.\(^8\)

The author of the *Book* evidently consulted many texts, including numerous Holy Land itineraries, the journeys of Marco Polo, Giovanni da Pian del Carpine, William of Rubruck, and the work of Vincent of Beauvais, from whose *Speculum historiale* and *Speculum naturale* (1256-59) he borrowed many passages to supplement his section on the Wonders of the East. However, his main source texts were William of Boldensele’s *Liber de quibusdam ultramarinis partibus* (*Book of Certain Regions beyond the Mediterranean*) and Odoric of Pordenone’s *Relatio* (*Account*). Iain Higgins offers a concise summary of these historical pilgrims: “William was a Dominican who in 1332 made a pilgrimage to the Holy Land and nearby regions, and then in 1337 in Avignon set down in Latin a first-person record, while Odoric was a Franciscan who in the early 1320s made a missionary journey to India and China and in 1330 in Padua dictated a first-person Latin account of his adventures” (*TBJM* xiv). That the *Book* is a text largely compiled from the work of others should come as no surprise in the history of pilgrimage texts, for as Rudy explains, almost all pilgrimage accounts are inherently paradoxical because “descriptions of holy places written with eye-witness fidelity become proof of the pilgrim’s first-hand experience, even though most diaries were copied from existing sources” (*Virtual* 39). Commenting on the dual-nature of pilgrimage narratives as documents of actual travel and guides for potential travel, she suggests that these texts “originally concretized the memories of actual pilgrims” but “came to help non-pilgrims concretize textual, rather than eyewitness,

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\(^8\) Zacher states that “as far as I know, it is the first ‘travel book’ of its kind to combine a pilgrimage itinerary with an account of worldly exploration” (154).
experience” (*Virtual* 41). This copying of texts worked both ways, for as Suzanne Yeager explains, the *Book* “was occasionally treated as a source text, suitable to draw from and to ‘top up’ one’s own pilgrimage account” (22).

Like Petrarch’s *Itinerarium*, the *Book* has a lot to tell us about the state of pilgrimage in the late fourteenth century. Zacher studies the shift from viewing curiosity or *curiositas* from a negative to a positive light, suggesting that “only at the end of the Middle Ages did widespread general curiosity and professional scientific study of the earth and its creatures override older medieval warnings about the need to suppress *curiositas*” (39). According to him, curiosity came to be viewed “less as something reprehensible and more as an attitude to be cultivated” (39), as “[p]ilgrims, inevitably, and historically, develop into curious wanderers” (154).

If few English readers travelled from their home country to the Holy Land, fewer still ventured past it in their travels, into Asia. Why, then, did the author of the *Book* include the second part of the text in his imagined pilgrimage? The two parts of the *Book* are undoubtedly meant to be read together, for as the Mandeville-persona proclaims in the Prologue, he has ventured through “many londes” and “many provinces and kyngdomes” (61-62), including Turkey, Lesser and Greater Armenia, Tartary, Persia, Arabia, Upper and Lower Egypt, Libya, Chaldea, Ethiopia, Amazonia, and Upper and Lower India, and he proposes to discuss the many islands near India “wher that dwelleth many diverse folk of maneris and diverse lawes and shappes. Of which londes and iles Y shal speke more plenerly” (66-67). This extended focus on pilgrimage and Eastern travels, established right at the beginning of the *Book*, puts the text, so to speak in uncharted literary territory.

The question of how the two sections of the *Book* work together has sparked much scholarly debate, with Tzanaki arguing against a reading of the second half of the *Book* as
digressive. She contends that in focusing on the Wonders of the East, the author of the *Book* suggests that “cultural diversity [should be] seen not as an example of fragmentation but as evidence of an underlying unity bestowed by the grace of God” (11). Zacher understands at least the first half of the *Book* to be written as a guidebook for future pilgrims to the Holy Land, but suggests that the text becomes progressively less instructive: after the Holy Land, he says, “Mandeville left the pilgrim to retrace his way home, while he pushed past Jerusalem” (140). In doing so, Zacher suggests the narrator transgresses from legitimate pilgrimage to illegitimate exploration as he “decentralizes Jerusalem (and the objectives of pilgrimly travel) because his mental map of the world is much larger and his reasons for travel are other than spiritual” (140).

The more fantastical elements of the *Book* appear mostly when the Mandeville-persona describes the Marvels of the East after he has concluded his extensive survey of potential routes to the Holy Land. Before discussing the Great Khan and the enigmatic and legendary Christian hero Prester John, he focuses on India, describing snails with shells so large that people could inhabit them, and, when he goes on to describe the fifty-four islands in this part of the world, he describes in rapid succession the multitude of island inhabitants that have only one eye, lack noses, eyes, or heads, and have eyes in their shoulders and mouths on their chests. Refraining from providing more details and ending his catalogue as quickly as it began, he concludes by simply stating that “[m]any other maner of peple beth theraboute, of wham hit were to moche to telle” (1896-97). Within earlier forms of monasticism and later forms of mysticism, the physical stability and contingent withdrawal from the world of the imaginative pilgrim leads to spiritual freedom, but in the *Book* we meet a narrator who is seemingly interested in everyone and everything. Like with Petrarch, about whom Cachey notes “the place names that make up Petrarch’s *Itinerarium* constitute a verbal map of Italy as a surface of memorable things, people,
and events, all of which bear and are certified by a Petrarchan signature” (26), the Book appeals
due to “the insistent presence of a narrator who interests us in him and his travel book because he
himself is so curiously interested in the world” (Zacher 131). While the Mandeville-persona’s
exploration may be illegitimate, his pilgrimage and keen interest in the world around him is not.

In addition to the curious fusion of the two parts of the Book, the seeming lack of
practical information in the text has been a subject of debate. Yeager suggests that in borrowing
from Odoric’s pilgrimage account, the author of the Book “favored devotional detail over the
practical” (130), as he “omits Odoric’s account of local foods and wines to focus solely on the
characters of biblical history associated with a specific locality, such as the Magi at Cassan or
Job at Hus” and in another passage “leaves out Odoric’s commercial information, such as the
price of dates, to highlight the birth and life of Abraham instead” (130-131). Tzanaki echoes this
sentiment when she says the Book stands apart from other late medieval pilgrimage guidebooks
that are saturated with practical details as the author chooses instead to provide more generic
descriptions of people and place and points out the differences between the foreign and the
familiar (49) rather than focusing on such topics as “rates of exchange for currency, the costs of
transport and equipment, and indulgences to be gained while abroad” (52).

The Book has often been compared to William Wey’s fifteenth century text, the Itinerari
or The Itineraries, which offered its readers a wealth of practical information that undoubtedly
would have proven helpful on physical journeys. Such details include advice on which types of
fruit to avoid while aboard in order to maintain digestive health. As Iain Higgins explains, it was
not until the beginning of the fifteenth century that “advice on distances, dispensations, or
diarrhea” (Writing 67) became a standard feature in pilgrimage texts. Wey, a Devonian priest,
went on physical pilgrimage not once or twice but three times, and thus was particularly well
suited for writing such a text. He set out in 1456 to Santiago de Compostela; in 1458 to Rome, Venice, Jaffa, and Jerusalem; and in 1462 again to Venice, Jaffa, and Jerusalem. His three pilgrimages are documented in a narrative voice comprised of a mixture of first-person past tense (“we arrived…”) and second-person imperative (“you must…”). The Itinerari offers information about such topics as foreign currency (Wey instructs his readers to “change your money at Venice” and suggests “[o]nce you have passed Venice you will [only] get twenty-six or twenty-four grossets in some places” (28)), and he gives advice to future pilgrims on topics such as what to bring on the galley for safety and comfort. He instructs his readers to hire a servant if possible and to “take with you a small cauldron and frying pan, dishes, platters, wooden saucers, glass cups, a grater for bread and such essentials” (28) and suggests that pilgrims ought to

follow the arrangement we must make before we leave Venice. First you should agree a price for a berth in his galley and for your food with a ‘patron’ who is going there. Choose a place where you will be able to have light and air. If possible put the agreements made between you and the ‘patron’ in writing and lay them before the lords of the city because then the ‘patron’ will keep his side of the bargain with you. Your agreement should include the following: (123)

Here, Wey lists numerous arrangements that should be made, including “that the ‘patron’ will take you to the Holy Land and bring you back to Venice,” “that, on the way, he will take you to certain ports for your benefit, and there obtain fresh water, meat, and bread,” and “that he will not delay at a port more than three days without the agreement of the pilgrims” (123). The

9 All of this practical information is surprising in light of the fact that, according to Francis Davey, Wey “[requested] that the book should remain in the monastery at Edington” (17).
inclusion of all this practical information has led scholars to surmise that Wey’s Interari, as opposed to the Book, was meant to be a tool helpful for physical pilgrims.

Zacher is right to point out the shift perceivable in the Book from the section on the Holy Land to the world beyond, but he errs in suggesting that while the text “advertises a pilgrimage and something more . . . by the final chapter it is the curious journey and Mandeville’s curious speculations that have dominated the book” (152). He suggests that after Palestine, “[s]ince Mandeville’s exact itinerary in the rest of the book would have been of little practical use to readers, we do best to discontinue following his progress from one place to another” (Zacher 141). While the Book differs from other pilgrimage itineraries in that it is not “a list of places and the distances [which]—occurs in the fourth-century Bordeaux Itinerary” (Higgins Writing 67), it is unfair to say that the Book “contains no practical information” (Higgins Writing 67). Indeed, while the Book is interested in the world that lies beyond the Holy City, it is equally concerned with the pragmatics of pilgrimage and outlining the practical benefits of travelling with camel rather than horse, and the quickest route through the Holy Land for the pilgrim on a budget. As I contend, the Mandeville-persona provides his imaginary pilgrims with the information necessary to complete journeys that operate somewhere between the spiritual and the physical. He opens the Book by offering to give advice “speciali of hem that wole and beth in purpos to visite the holy cité of Jerusalem, and the holy places that beth thereaboute, and weyes which men shul holde thider” (68-70), and assures his reader-pilgrims on their difficult journey when he offers to outline “sum contreis and most principal stedes that men shul go thorgh to the ryghte way” (76-77), opting to provide a concise itinerary instead of exasperating his audience by listing all nearby cities and towns. This concern for the economy of words is similarly seen in the Itinerarium, in which Petrarch justifies his lack of verbosity by stating that “[t]here are many
other things that would be too long for me to enumerate (16.5) and in which, later on, he concedes to Mandelli that “I don’t know if you are at this point tired of traveling; certainly I am tired of writing” (21.0). If the Book was not meant to help facilitate physical travel, what purpose did such details serve?

Despite describing numerous routes to the sacred telos, the Mandeville-persona is perpetually concerned with providing his reader-pilgrims with directions to go the “ryght way” (1135) to Jerusalem, and although he outlines the longest and shortest route to Babylon, Mount Sinai, and other holy places, he cites common reasons for why certain individuals would favour a shorter journey: “som men wole noght passe hit for the defaute of costages, and som men for the defeate of companye, and many other causes,” he says, “therfore Y shal telle shortly how a man may go with litel costage and short tyme” (1135-38). A purportedly well-travelled pilgrim himself, the narrator stops the imaginative journey he facilitates to express why pilgrims choose certain itineraries over others, and again assures his imaginary travelers on their difficult journey by offering an additional way to Jerusalem by land that, although longer and more difficult, is suitable for those who will “noght suffre the savour of the see” (1155). The Mandeville-persona often references the distances between cities, such as when he states that “fro [Rhodes] to [Cyprus] is neyr five hundred myle” (359) and “in a day and in a nyght he that hath good wynde may come to the haven of [Tyre]” (377-8), and he similarly discusses the objects to be purchased there. Likewise, he describes the different ways to Babylon and Mount Sinai and comments that some pilgrims, in order to make their pilgrimages safer and less difficult, prefer to travel further abroad and return to Jerusalem on the way back.10 While advising that certain legs of the journey

10 This section is missing from the Royal MS. For a modern English translation, see Bale p. 30.
are to be completed by means of camel, which can survive without water for two to three days, rather than horse, which cannot, he also offers his readers practical travel information by describing the types of sustenance that can be found nearby for the animals. Similarly, upon visiting St Catherine’s and returning on their journey to Jerusalem, he lends another helping hand on the imagined voyage when he tells his pilgrims that, in exchange for acting with decorum, they will receive the physical nourishment necessary to complete their spiritual journeys: the reader-pilgrims, the Mandeville-persona suggests, should “take leve of the monkes and recommende hym into here prayers.” because they “geveth gladly vitaylis to pylgrimes that passith thorgh that wildernisse to Surry, which lasteth ney 12 journeys” (467-69).

Perhaps most pragmatically of all, the narrator of the Book also offers practical advice in order to protect his pilgrims from deception while abroad, as is the case when he imparts to his readers his knowledge of how to tell real balm from fake balm. Basing his knowledge on professed personal experience, he describes how men of all stations are deceived, and credits this trickery to Saracens who adulterate the balm for profitable gain and in order to deceive Christians. To combat this trickery, the Mandeville-persona offers instructions for how to test balm based on its appearance, smell, and consistency. Such details are consistent with the genealogy of pilgrimage texts discussed in Chapter 1: while pilgrimage texts were initially meditative in nature, they became increasingly personal and imbued with more and more practical information that enabled readers to replicate the journey. In a text that is, according to Higgins, full of “unpractical concerns” (Writing 67), and which seems less likely to encourage

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11 See Bale p. 32.
12 See Bale pp. xxxi-xxxii and 28.
physical travel due to its focus on not only the Holy Land but also the Eastern world beyond it, what purpose did the practical details of the *Book* serve for its readers?

Tzanaki offers the most convincing explanation for the puzzling inclusion of practical details in the *Book* when, in relation to the section devoted to identifying balsam, she suggests the text is “both following and by extension popularising the non-religious interests of late medieval pilgrimage guides” (60). After the Fall of Acre in 1291 and the Turkish victory at Nicopolis in 1396, physical pilgrimage to the Holy Land became increasingly difficult, and according to Connolly, “while there had been plenty of guides or pilgrim accounts written before the capture of Jerusalem, it was not until the Holy City’s possession did a sense of its historical necessity pervade the medieval culture, and, in consequence, were these pilgrim accounts written with the clarity and detail that could grant that possession to all who would read them” (*Maps* 36). Despite, then, a relative lack of pragmatic details in the *Book*, it is notable that the Mandeville-persona presents himself as a knowledgeable and authoritative guide who is conscientious of the economic pitfalls of pilgrimage. The *Book* undoubtedly would have struck a chord with an audience who could not fathom completing a long, treacherous, and costly journey.

Throughout the *Book* the narrator repeatedly mentions his desire to please his audience, and while most authors write with their intended audience in mind, the Mandeville-persona, more so than other narrative voices, appears particularly invested in this issue. The lack of first-hand knowledge of the Holy Land meant the narrator needed to find another way to please his audience and to authorize his journey without having physically been there. So, how was this achieved? The *Book*, Tzanaki suggests, was written at a time when the speaker held a prominent position in pilgrimage itineraries, and thusly, “the author’s authority is based not on the written
authoritas of his sources but on his traveller-persona of Sir John. . . . The author of the Book accordingly created a traveller with a consistently developed personality to give his unacknowledged compilation a voice” (7). The Mandeville-persona makes his intention to please clear when he informs us at the start of the Book that he is going to tell his story because “men desireth to hyre speke of the Holy Lond” (56). Repeatedly stating explicitly that he will tell the tale he does because “many man hath desier to here speke of diverse thynges” (279), he often provides justification for discussing the topics that he does, such as in instances in which, after describing the Greeks, he states that he includes his information as a point of comparison between “our feith” (278) and theirs, in one of many attempts to align his readers’ views and beliefs with that of his own. This keen interest in the reception of his work results in the narrator’s bridging of the secular and the religious in which he expounds the important places in Christian history in order to enlighten his Christian audience. The Book elucidates the interactivity between narrative voice and reader that is characteristic of a larger tradition of imagined pilgrimages that, although comprised of texts that are vastly different in nature and purpose, similarly illuminates the fact that the success of such texts hinges on the ability of the imagined pilgrimage guide to please his audience.¹³

The Mandeville-persona seems not only interested in pleasing his audience but also attempts to present himself as a knowledgeable pilgrimage guide throughout the Book. This is clear early on when he pronounces that he is qualified to outline routes to the Holy Land because he has “many tymes y-passid and ryden to Jerusalem in company of greet lords and other good

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¹³ For a discussion of the close relationship and interaction between writer-pilgrim and audience/commissioner in the creation of Fabri’s Sionpilger, see Beebe pp. 39-40.
companye” (70-72). Throughout the Book he reinforces his claim to intimate familiarity with the holy landscape by providing useful information about the popular pilgrimage churches and the saints’ relics that reside within them. One such example is his description of St Catherine’s church at Mount Sinai. Here, at the saint’s tomb, the Mandeville-persona describes how the bone relics of the virgin are displayed to pilgrims, from which a holy oil exudes that is given to pilgrims in small quantities, and the saint’s head, wrapped in a cloth, is displayed for all to see. As a real-life pilgrimage guide would, the narrator conflates present time with religious history in order to express the biblical importance of holy sites, as is the case when he describes how the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem is both the spot where Jesus was crucified, and the place where his empty tomb lies. Referring to it as a “fayr cherche” (613) that is “round up above and wel y-helid with leed” (613-14), the Mandeville-persona explains how this structure was once outside the city walls but has since been moved within them. He describes in exacting detail a tabernacle that is “8 foot long and 5 foot wyde and 11 foot of hythe” (617-18), and explains that while it was once open and available to fervent pilgrims to touch and kiss, it was later protected by a wall in order to prevent the further abuse of pilgrims who attempted to break off pieces of stone as Holy Land souvenirs.

Claims of authority, drawn mostly from purported eyewitness experience, in addition to a fervent desire to please his audience and the offering of information that shows him to be a knowledgeable pilgrimage guide further establishes the Mandeville-persona’s authority and appeal. Our guide is persistently concerned with developing his own unique textual experience

14 This section on St Catherine’s relics is absent from the referenced Royal MS. For the modern English translation, see Bale p. 33.
and establishing legitimacy for his *Book* through repeated claims to eyewitness experience, and such can be seen when he writes that “[t]her beth many other contrees and mervayles which Y have noght y-seye, and therfor Y can noght speke propurly of hem” (2827-28), and when, in further attempts to establish eyewitness authority, he repeatedly refrains from describing routes to the Holy Land that he has never taken. He contends that he cannot “speke properly” (2705) about the Earthly Paradise, “for I have nat be there, and that angoreth me” (2705-6), and in this instance, remedies his lack of experiential knowledge by offering his reader-pilgrims information “that I have herde [which] I shal say you. Men say that Paradyse Terrestre is the hyghest londe of the worlde . . .” (2706-7). The writer’s authority was a particularly important issue for the genre of imagined pilgrimage texts, as it was paramount for the writer to establish authority before having his/her text properly received by an audience. While Fabri in his *Sionpilger* addresses his readers directly, urging them to obtain permission from their superiors to go on the imagined pilgrimage (in exactly the same bureaucratic fashion that individuals wishing to go on physical pilgrimage went about securing permission) and, on the off chance that their superior does not consent, to embark on that imagined pilgrimage regardless (Beebe 51), the Mandeville-persona throughout the *Book* presents himself as having a similarly elevated and authoritative position. This is illustrated when he describes the beauty and inaccessibility to Christians and Jews of the Dome of the Rock in the Holy Land: “Y was therynne,” the narrator says, “and in other places wher Y wolde, for Y hadde letters of the soudan with his greet seel, and comonly other men haveth but a synet” (701-703). Anticipating that the validity of his claims might be called into question, he establishes legitimacy for his text by ending the *Book* with the suggestion that “many man troweth noght but that they se with her owen eye other that they may conseyve with her kyndely witte” (2838-39), and consequently makes his way to Rome to show his *Book* to the
Pope, in order to “telle to hym mervayles whoch Y hadde y-seye in diverse contrees, so that he, with his wise consayl wolde examine hit with diverse peple that beth in Rome” (2841-42). Shortly thereafter he tells his reader-pilgrims that the church authority “sayde me for certayn that all was soath that was therynne . . . [and] hath ratefied and confermed my book in alle poyntes” (2844-48). Granted exclusive access to sites guarded by Saracens and recording conversations with prominent religious figures, the Mandeville-persona throughout the Book fervently attempts to present a version of himself as an authoritative presence, and therefore a more than suitable pilgrimage guide for his imagined travellers.
Chapter 3: Secular Reading as Imagined Pilgrimage: the *Book of Marvels and Travels*

### 3.1 Versions, Marginalia, Illustrations

Versions of the *Book* popular in the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries offer insight into the medieval reception of the *Book*, with two versions, the Vulgate Latin and the Metrical, warranting particular attention. According to Yeager,

the English redactors of the *Book* are known to have changed their sources in order to make the text more religious in tone. For instance, the Latin Vulgate version, which developed first in England, is known for its ‘more orthodox’ modifications to the earlier text; such changes include the expansion of theologically based discussions in the Prologue regarding God’s love for the Holy Land, and more explicitly calling for crusade in order to regain that land. (130)

The Vulgate Latin version of the *Book* was created in the early fifteenth century and exists in forty-one manuscripts (Tzanaki 61), and in it, “[r]eligion is taken extremely seriously and the original author’s *curiositas* is silently condemned by exclusion” (Tzanaki 63). The tone of the *Book* is drastically changed in the Prologue in which “[t]he passage about the delight men have in hearing of diverse customs is accordingly omitted” (Tzanaki 62). In contrast, in the Metrical Version, composed somewhere between 1400 and 1425 in England, pilgrimage is “treated as an opportunity to observe marvels and collect indulgences” and according to Tzanaki, it seems to suggest that “some audiences were uninterested in the religious aspect and preferred the more exciting thrills of romance and the crudely marvellous” (61 and 65). The manuscript history of
the *Book* offers tangible evidence of “a particular interest in the pilgrimage and devotional character of the book in fifteen-century England,” for as shown by Tzanaki, iterations of the *Book* such as the Epitome version (a derivative of the Defective version) focus almost exclusively on the devotional pilgrimage to Jerusalem section of the text and leave only “a few lines to the rest of the East” (Tzanaki 65). Attesting to the *Book’s* wide and varied audience, the text was “popular among religious audiences as well as those seeking entertainment” (Yeager 130) as it was favoured by aristocrats and “circulated among male religious houses, where it was apparently popular among Canons Regular” (Rudy *Virtual* 40).

Marginalia and illustrations of the *Book* are another rich source of evidence for the medieval reception of the text. While versions such as the Vulgate Latin strove to emphasize the religious valence of the text and the Metrical version strove to de-emphasize it, the marginalia and illustrations of the *Book* offer similarly conflicting proof of the various interpretations of the work in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Tzanaki has shown how early manuscript annotations reflect an interest in the Holy Land pilgrimage guide section of the *Book*, while later marginalia suggest that readers were beginning to refute some of the narrator’s claims (137). Despite this, up until the sixteenth century, “[i]t is evident from the marginalia found in texts of the *Book* that the information on the Holy Land, its relics and sights, was considered extremely important by many readers” (Tzanaki 69). While early manuscript illuminations primarily depicted the biblical events described in the text or Mandeville as a pilgrim-guide, the Wonders of the East as a subject later became increasingly popular, and accompanying illuminations reflect this interest (Tzanaki 202). The famous woodcuts from Anton Sorg’s 1481 edition of the *Book*, for example, show how a “move away from the pilgrimage view of the *Book* towards an anthology of marvels has become even more evident” (Tzanaki 76). As Tzanaki contends,
“[m]ost illustrated editions copied Sorg’s woodcuts” and because of this, “the iconography of the book would become set at this point of stressing the exotic over the sacred” (76). However, according to Tzanaki, it is important to remember that while “[t]he wondrous elements so beloved of the illustrators would soon prevail over the more serious religious aspects of the [Book.] [t]he [marginalia] show that even when the work was seen as a source of marvelous material, the Holy Land, the relics of the Passion and Jerusalem itself were never completely ignored by Mandeville’s many audiences” (77).

3.2 Authorial Intentionality & Reader Reception

Closely related to the issue of the medieval reception of the Book is the issue of authorial intentionality. Despite the multiple readings that the Book lends itself to, how did the original author of the Book intend the text to be read? As cogently argued by Tzanaki, the author plays with genres and his audiences’ assumptions about how texts belonging to certain categories ought to look, as the text can be said to belong to the genres of pilgrimage, geography, romance, history, and theology writing. While Tzanaki explores all these generic categories related to the Book, she focuses largely on the “often serious discrepancies between authorial intentionality and the actual reception of the Book” (54). On the various methodologies employed in the study of pilgrimage texts, Beebe, like Dyas before her, suggests that “[m]odern scholarship concerning the medieval pilgrimage experience tends to see pilgrimage narratives either as a historical source to be mined for practical information about the journey, or as a literary genre to be described and classified” (emphasis added) (30). She further suggests that a text such as Fabri’s Sionpilger may prompt the modern reader to question if the work ought to be defined as a
pilgrimage guide or a devotional exercise (40); as I argue, this way of looking at pilgrimage texts pervades most studies of the Book.

The flawed belief that pilgrimage texts are either artifacts of physical journeys or explorations of a metaphoric abstraction has greatly influenced scholars of the Book who continue to question whether the Book is more suitable for those who read it as a pilgrimage guide for physical travel or those who read it as a guide for spiritual travel. Yeager, in discussing the Itinerari, suggests that “[o]f extant English pilgrim writing, Wey’s appears the most user-friendly for the pilgrim requiring guidance for both preparing for the journey and identifying places of interest in the Holy Land” (23). And Zacher contrasts Wey’s “handy (and more reliable)” (148) inclusion of foreign alphabets to the Book’s which “would have been of less real value to pilgrims” (148) and which, as he argues, is only included in the Book in order to draw a casual distinction between the Mandeville-persona’s (and the audience’s) world and the exotic. Yeager puts forth that the “precise directions” that Wey includes “suggests that [he] intended his guide for use by actual pilgrims,” however, she also contends that “[his] specificity would have provided ample description for those making a virtual tour in their minds, with Wey’s words creating images for those who had never been to the holy city” (32).\(^\text{15}\) As suggested by Yeager, “[e]ven though [Wey] offers practical advice, his information is useful to the ‘pilgrim’ reading at home, visualizing, for instance, the precise measurements of the size and shape of [Christ’s] tomb” (32). In contrast, the Book is seen by Yeager in a different light, as a text “not designed for practical use to aid the traveler on actual pilgrimage to the Holy Land” (109). The Book is

\(^{15}\) Despite the text’s many repetitions and seeming lack of organization, Yeager argues that the Itinerari has a “deliberate organization and clear marking of indulgences” (24).
sometimes read allegorically despite the fact that it invites its readers to cull practical information from its pages, but far from being problematic, this complexity instead makes the text what it is: irreducibly, and poignantly, a “hybrid thing” (Bale xi). Helping to facilitate travel that operates somewhere between the physical and the imaginative, the concrete and the abstract, it is firmly this hybridity that assures the text’s place within the canon of imagined pilgrimage texts.

Extant evidence suggests that the Book was read and used by actual pilgrims to the Holy Land and supports the reading of the Book as a guide for physical travel. According to Tzanaki, Mandeville’s “journey . . . was used not only by non-travellers but also by real pilgrims who journeyed to the Holy Land themselves” (69) as an owner of the Cotton version of the Book even “tore out those pages that could be used as a pilgrim guide—one suspects in order so to use them” (Moseley qtd. in Tzanaki 53-4). She concludes that the text’s medieval audience sometimes read the Book as an authoritative source as real-life pilgrims from the fifteenth century borrowed from the text; a fact that, to her, “seems to indicate that by this time Mandeville was an accepted authority on matters connected with the Holy Land, and that he was relied upon to provide specific information on the subject of pilgrimage places and sights of note” (Tzanaki 68). In certain cases, the text “was accepted as a true account of an actual pilgrimage and Mandeville’s tales were taken at face value” (Tzanaki 69), and as such, the Book permitted a reading as a guide for physical travel.

In support of a reading of the Book as a devotional rather than physical guide to the Holy Land, Yeager suggests that the text is part of a larger shift in fourteenth-century England in which “crusade and pilgrimage had turned inward, moving from a communal exercise to an individual quest for personal morality” (12). She reads the Book as a “devotional aid” (109) that
could be used in a meditative devotion centered on the biblical events of Christ’s passion. Rather than focusing on imagined pilgrimage, Yeager refers to the practice of what she calls “the crusade of the soul” (13) and suggests the Book “reflects a society whose biblical scholars and sermon writers prescribed spiritual pilgrimage and crusade as a solution for England’s political conflicts with France and the Avignon Papacy” (12). According to her, the Book provided readers with “textual images” that “had once been designed to inspire actual pilgrimage and crusading” but that by the late fourteenth century “[took] on a new role, encouraging these exercises to be performed not actually, but affectively” (12). Like Dyas, Yeager reads the Book mostly allegorically and focuses largely on Piers Plowman in her discussion. She turns to medieval collation practices, suggesting that the author of the Book consciously adapted “his sources to include more religious material” (129) and noting that “[o]f the devotional works, Piers Plowman appears several times with the Book in different manuscripts, often in works planned as a single unit” (130). She references a manuscript of the Book in which one reader has added the words “[a]nd oure holy fader hath graunted to al tho that redith or wrytith or heryth this boke with good devocion, an C dayes to pardon and goddiess blessynge an hye. Explicit Maundevyle” (qtd. in Yeager 130) as evidence of a devotional reading of the work in late medieval England.

While several scholars have mentioned in passing that the Book might be said to help facilitate some form of travel akin to an imagined pilgrimage, not a single scholar has explored this topic in any depth, and if they do mention this, they often criticize the lack of practicalities in the Book on the grounds that included details are inadequate for a work meant to inspire physical travel. If we read such details, however, as the Book’s medieval audience did—not as instructions for physical travel, but rather, as aids for imaginative travel—such details appear far
from insufficient, curious, or even worse, irrelevant. Bale mentions in passing that the Book stems from the tradition of traveler itineraries that instruct the reader how to undergo a proper pilgrimage and “[s]uch pilgrimages could be ‘real’, undertaken on foot, or ‘imagined’, contemplated from home through books, images, maps, and liturgy” (xxii). Due to the extended narrative space afforded to Jerusalem in the Book which “could have been used as devotional material for meditation on the Passion of Christ” as well as references to the True Cross, Yeager similarly argues that the Book permits pilgrims “at home [to] imagine Christ’s crucifixion and venerate the relic of the Cross in their mind’s eye” (113). Her interpretation of the lack of practical details in the Book accords with Rudy’s differentiation between “pilgrimage diaries [which] include an array of extraneous information” and “the virtual guides carved out from them [which] usually feature just the climactic part of the pilgrimage journey, the part along the via crucis in memory of Christ’s final walk to Calvary” (Virtual 119). Tzanaki likewise suggests that “[f]or the traditional seeker after real or vicarious religious experiences” in the Book, “there is the constant iteration of Old and New Testament stories along the road to Palestine,” which leads her to conclude that “[a]ny pilgrim, whether they actually set out on the journey or remained at home, as did Mandeville himself, could have drawn a wealth of spiritual treasure” (60) from the work.

Higgins similarly argues that “[i]f The Book is initially to be a pilgrim’s guide . . . it is going to be one that speaks to vicarious travelers as well—perhaps even primarily” (Writing 67) but goes further, suggesting that “[i]t would be a rare pilgrim indeed who could make use of an itinerary less concerned with the route itself than with, say, physical and political geography, imperial history, and remarkable natural phenomena” (Writing 67). Tzanaki, in contrast, posits that “it would be surprising if some of the book’s intended and actual audiences did not include
bona fide pilgrims to the Holy Land” as “[t]here were certain aspects of the early part of the book which would make the work attractive to such prospective travellers” (49). She then goes on to state that these “prospective travellers” are made up of those who “chose to make the journey themselves” and those who “simply enjoyed the vicarious experiences through reading or listening to the work” (49). In drawing this curious distinction, she comes closest to recognizing the fact that imaginary pilgrims reading the imagined pilgrimage of the Book held a liminal position and that accordingly, they would have read the text as something in between the physical and the allegorical, or what Beebe alludes to as the two categories that peripatetic texts are too often cast into: the pilgrimage guide and the devotional exercise.

3.3 Against an “Armchair” Reading

The apparent lack of practical details in the Book has led scholars to surmise that the text facilitates the travel of “armchair” pilgrims. Zacher, for example, suggests that “Mandeville was the armchair curiousus, whose satisfaction was gotten vicariously” (156), and several others, as I have already mentioned, allude somewhat vaguely to the notion that the Book helps “armchair” pilgrims venture to the Holy land. The concept that the Book facilitated a type of “armchair” travel is problematic given that the word armchair is often used as a pejorative that implies amateurism and denotes an easier—or even worse, lazy—method of acquiring knowledge and a way of speaking about a subject while one lacks any real experience of it. In essence, the armchair pilgrim is thought to have experienced something vicariously rather than first-hand, and while this sort of casual, detached interaction with the Book seems to be supported by Higgins who argues that the text is “capable of maintaining one’s continued interest without demanding sustained attention, making it an ideal work for desultory reading” (Writing 65), this
reading is complicated by the concept of imagined pilgrimage. While imaginary pilgrims of the
_{Book}_ in the later Middle Ages may very well have sat in literal or metaphorical chairs while
reading the text in their homes, the _Book_, in helping to facilitate such a journey, like the
_{Chronica Majora}_ before it, required participants to engage imaginatively with the material
presented before them and restricted them from becoming simply passive. This close
engagement means the imaginary pilgrim resists Zacher’s categorization of the _Book_’s intended
reader being either a “potential [pilgrim]” who read it as a source of instruction or an “expectant
armchair reader” who read the _Book_ to satisfy his curiosity and desire for entertainment. While
some readers absolutely may have been one such type or the other, this distinction is complicated
by the idea of an imagined pilgrimage in which the Mandeville-persona himself asks more from
his imaginative travellers.

Imagined pilgrimage in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries presented itself, as it did in
the twelfth and thirteenth, as an alternative means through which to access the sacred, and it
continued to call into question the efficacy of place pilgrimage as well as the concomitant social
disruption, corruption, and loss of time that resulted from it. According to Zacher, “the
widespread late-medieval denunciations of pilgrimage . . . in England reached a peak about
1400” with critics objecting to pilgrimage’s power to promote societal instability, moral
corruption through the stimulation of _curiositas_, and the flawed belief that God was not
omnipresent (55-56). If we turn back to Pope Urban II’s speech at the Council of Clermont in
1095, we see the potential of pilgrimage to disrupt the social structure of not only monastic but
also secular life. In his version of Urban’s speech, Robert the Monk recalls how “priests and
clerks of any order are not to go without the consent of their bishop; for this journey would profit
them nothing if they went without permission of these. Also, it is not fitting that laymen should
enter upon the pilgrimage without the blessing of their priests.” Geoffrey of Vendôme echoes this concern in his letters when he objects to not only monastics embarking on place pilgrimage, but also secular men and women “for,” as he says, “it is enjoined upon the laity to go to Jerusalem” (qtd in Whalen 198).

One may recall how Abbot Daniel distinguished between those who lived piously at home, those who returned from the Holy Land full of pride, and those who rushed through the Holy Land. For Daniel, secular imagined pilgrimage helped “[m]any virtuous people, by practicing good works and charity to the poor, reach the holy places, without leaving their homes, and so render themselves worthy of a greater recompense from our God and Saviour Jesus Christ” (qtd. in Whalen 207). Particularly in the case of secular life, the emphasis in discussions of late medieval pilgrimage centered on living virtuously. As Walter Hilton argued, ‘[t]here is no difficulty in . . . going to Rome and Jerusalem on your bare feet . . . But it is a very difficult thing for someone to love his fellow Christian in charity’ (1.65)” (qtd. in Dyas 217).

Dyas offers a glimpse into the distinctions made around this time between secular and monastic life when she explains that “[w]hile Rolle believes that only those committed to the solitary life are able to enjoy such communion with God, Hilton, writing nearly half a century later, is more flexible in his approach. His Mixed Life offers advice to a layman on combining elements of the Active and Contemplative lives” (216). In light of these shifting continuities and changes in monastic and secular discussions of pilgrimage from the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries, we ought to examine the other forms that pilgrimage took on in the later Middle Ages. Although Yeager mentions in general terms how, within imagined pilgrimage, “pilgrims followed the road to Jerusalem and journeys by means of mental pictures created for them in travel literature, devotional texts, maps, and sermons” (13), what more details can be said about the practice?
Jonathan Sumption contends that in the fifteenth century, a “new kind of devotional handbook became popular” that was akin to a “mental ‘stations of the cross’” (301) and that “explained to the reader how to follow each stage of an imaginary pilgrimage in his own home, and gain the same benefits” (301). This type of imagined pilgrimage recalls the one recorded in the Saint Peter Martyr legend of the mid-thirteenth century *Legenda Aurea* and is found in the example of a Franciscan manuscript that “begins by pointing out that one can win all the indulgences of the Holy Land without leaving one’s house, if one is prepared to follow in spirit every stage of Christ’s passion, reciting thirty-three *Pater Nosters* for each half on the road to Calvary” (Sumption 301). Far from being an isolated example, by the late Middle Ages this form of pilgrimage became so prevalent that it was parodied by Erasmus who said “I walk about my house. I go to my study. I check on my daughter’s chastity. Then I go to my shop and see what my servants are doing . . . These are my Roman stations” (qtd. in Sumption 301). Another related imagined pilgrimage guide, written in England as an alternative for physical travel to Rome for the 1423 Jubilee, suggests that if the pilgrim engaged in imagined travel is to “say the *Pater Noster* ten times daily to represent the ten leagues which he could expect to cover each day of his journey to Rome” and if he is to “visit a local church once a day and distribute alms equal to the offerings which he could have made in Rome,” he will “gain as much or more than he would have done by going physically to Rome” (Sumption 301). These types of imagined pilgrimage texts are significant for, as Sumption shows, “[m]any hundreds of such works, some of them of extreme naivety, circulated in northern Europe in the fifteenth century” (301).

While many pilgrimage scholars, notably Rudy and Beebe, turn to the fifteenth century in search of evidence of imagined pilgrimage, Connolly turns to the previous two centuries to explore texts that “encourage what we can call translocative thinking – an imaginative
repositioning of the viewer or reader to some other place and/or time different from that of her encounter with those materials” (*Maps* 30). He investigates “the kinds of practices that became popular in lay culture, having borrowed, no doubt, from the wealth of devotional and meditational literature developed previously in the monastic community” by examining an Italian pilgrimage text from the early fourteenth century that “provides a quite concrete example of the kinds of bodily engagements and practices that served the stay-at-home pilgrims in their quest to have some experience of the distant Holy Land” (*Maps* 31). Most notable of these new practices is the pilgrim-writer’s inclusion of “detailed measurements of the Church’s monuments and their relative positions” (*Maps* 31). This new type of detail is incorporated into the chapter on Jerusalem in the *Book*, in which the Mandeville-persona describes how “toward the est at the 8 score pace [one hundred and sixty steps] fro the cherche of the Sepulcre is Templum Domini” 697-8), and as discussed previously, the tabernacle of the Holy Sepulchre is described as being “8 foot long and 5 foot wyde and 11 foot of hythe” (617-18).

Connolly explores the “later devotional or pilgrimage practices in which the reader of a pilgrim's guide . . . is asked to map out his or her home with the imported dimensions of the topography of the Holy Land,” focusing on an example in which “the Holy Sepulchre is described as nine palms long and three and a half wide and standing four palms above the ground [and] the Chapel of Mary Magdalene is ten paces from the Sepulchre” (“Imagined” 610). Speaking to the lack of scholarly examination of imagined pilgrimage, Connolly mentions that this manuscript material dated to about 1335 has been examined by only one scholar, Kenneth Hyde, whom he suggests “noted that these descriptions are somewhat puzzling in that they do not follow the tradition of the travel description genre, but have rather a different motivation. They are so detailed and evocative of their locations and histories that they probably served as
aids to imagined journeys” (*Maps* 31). Luckily for us, the “puzzling” quality of this imagined pilgrimage artifact is remedied by a “key” or instructions written in the vernacular in a contemporaneous hand on the manuscript page that reads “these are the journeys that pilgrims ought to make . . . and that every person can do, staying in his own house and thinking of each place that is written below” (qtd. in Connolly *Maps* 31). As Connolly contends,

> [w]e should ourselves imagine the users of these accounts reading in their private homes, and picturing to themselves the various holy monuments and their layout – made so concrete in the embodied measures of the hand width. The perambulant pilgrim – for he or she is not really of the armchair variety – moves about the room, re-spatializing and emplotting that familiar space with the imported topographies of the Holy Sepulchre complex, travelling in his or her own imaginations to that distant and sacred place. (*Maps* 31-2)

While reader-pilgrims of the *Book* were not what Connolly terms “perambulant” pilgrims, it is important to consider yet other forms of imagined pilgrimage in the late Middle Ages that further called into question what constituted a *real* or authentic pilgrimage, as well as the relationship between physical movement and the acquisition of spiritual rewards.

Sumption identifies the mid-fourteenth century as the time in which, at least in London, men and women left testamentary bequests that included detailed instructions for surrogate pilgrims such as husbands, wives, or children to undertake pilgrimages on behalf of the deceased (297). As Sumption argues, “pilgrimages by proxy” that took place after a person’s death led to the practice of “vicarious [pilgrimage]” which enabled living men and women in the twelfth century to pay someone to embark on pilgrimage on their behalf; these so-called “[p]ure vicarious pilgrimages, by those who could have gone themselves but preferred not to” were
frowned upon in earlier centuries but were largely accepted in the fifteenth (298). Hiring a professional pilgrim to partake in physical pilgrimage during one’s lifetime was a complicated endeavor, and Sumption suggests that the proxy pilgrim was often not seen by the testator as being worthy of the journey due to the fact that “most vicarious pilgrims thought it necessary that the proxy should be of the same rank as themselves” (299). Accordingly, “several English testators of the fourteenth century envisaged the possibility that no pilgrim would be available, and made alternative dispositions of their wealth” (Sumption 299). Sumption suggests that “[v]icarious pilgrimages were never entirely respectable (298), and in support of his argument he cites the example of an English couple in London who while initially pledging to go on a pilgrimage to Rome later hired a proxy pilgrim to undertake the journey, prompting them in 1391 to apply “to a papal nuncio for absolution” (298). Other such forms of imagined pilgrimage abound, as Zacher suggests that “[t]hose pilgrims unable or unwilling to go even short distances could discharge pilgrimage vows by kneeling on labyrinthine church-floor designs, symbolically journeying to Jerusalem” (58). According to him, “it seems quite possible that some late medieval might have found the new popularity of the stations of the cross, a ‘counterfeit devotional pilgrimage,’ or the saying of the rosary, itself a miniature pilgrimage, even easier vicarious forms of legitimate holy voyaging” (58). Imagined pilgrimage in the late Middle Ages, then, was popular with secular pilgrims who turned to this form of travel not only because, in some ways, it was seen as more efficacious than physical travel, but also because it was simply a more convenient way of accessing the divine. This fact does not diminish the spiritual potential of the Book’s imagined pilgrimage.
Conclusion

The *Book of Marvels and Travels* ought to be read in light of the diverse forms of imagined pilgrimage that secular men and women engaged in throughout the late Middle Ages. The late medieval practices of vicarious pilgrimage, the act of paying someone else to go on pilgrimage during one’s own lifetime and testamentary pilgrimage, the act of willing someone to go on pilgrimage on one’s behalf after death, suggests that the spiritual benefits of pilgrimage could be transferred from one person to another. It is in light of this fluidity of what distinguishes pilgrimage from what it is not, the transferability of spiritual rewards from one person to another, and the independence of spiritual rewards from the act of physically travelling to religious sites that we ought to begin to re-examine the secular imagined pilgrimage of the *Book*.

An engaging and highly interactive nature is achieved throughout the work through the Mandeville-persona’s repeated proclamation to tell a tale that readers would want to hear, and such is highlighted in instances in which he invites his reader-pilgrims to compile their own pilgrimage experience: “Y wole say no more of mervayles that beth ther,” he says in one instance, “so that other men that wendeth theder may fynde many nywe thynges to say, of whiche Y have noght tolde nother y-spoke. For many man hath gret likyng and desire to hyre nywe thynges” (2830-32). This self-conscious interactivity is continued throughout the *Book* until the very end, where the pilgrim-guide concludes with the declaration that “alle thes that saith for me a *Pater Noster* and an *Ave*, that God forgif me my synnes, Y make hem partyners and graunt hem part of alle my good pilgrimage” (2850-52). Sometimes acting as a pilgrimage guide and at other times as a companion or “partyner,” the Mandeville-persona plays a far from passive role as he invites his imagined pilgrims to add to his dialogue on travel. Higgins has
shown how the author of the *Book* drastically altered his source texts by turning pilgrimage into a “plotless verbal journey” that is “potential rather than personal” (*Writing* 64) through “[transforming] their individual first-person, past-tense presentations (‘I went’) into a generic third-person tour in the perpetual present (‘one goes’) that—although aimed at a Latin Christian audience—can be taken by anyone at any time” (*TBJM* xiii-xiv). This drastic change in narrative voice allowed the author of the *Book* to not only make his source texts his own but also increased the powerful interactive nature of the imagined pilgrimage by implicating his reader-pilgrims in a journey that forced them into becoming active participants rather than passive readers. The Mandeville-persona of the *Book* is concerned with practical advice and consistently interacts with his audience, to whom he wants to appear as a knowledgeable and authoritative guide; “ye shal understonde” (902), he tells his companions over and over again throughout the *Book*, ever eager to help his reader-pilgrims make their way on the imagined voyage.

Although imagined pilgrimage is an important form of religious travel, it remains an underused and undervalued resource for understanding the ways in which monastic audiences negotiated the constraints placed on them from their withdrawal from the outside world. When Connolly writes that “[i]n monastic settings, contemplations on the earthly city of Jerusalem, which quickly evolved into focused meditations on the Heavenly Jerusalem, called for a projection into imagined spaces and so could serve as a substitute form of pilgrimage” (“Imagined” 598), he highlights the even greater lack of focus on secular users of imagined pilgrimage. English imagined pilgrimage texts in particular have not yet been satisfactorily studied for their use by secular audiences who turned to written texts to imaginatively travel to worlds previously unavailable to them due to a wide range of personal, social, and economic factors. As an alternative mode through which cloistered individuals could reap the spiritual
rewards of pilgrimage and secular audiences could visualize and visit exotic locales previously only dreamt of, imagined pilgrimage texts such as the *Book* encouraged readers to undertake physical pilgrimage while simultaneously offering the experience of an imagined pilgrimage, acting as a powerful textual vehicle through which the *microcosmos* could comprehend the *macrocosmos*.

While all texts facilitate some form of imagined travel (we read literature, of course, to be in some way transported to the world within the text), the *Book* is profoundly written with an eye to non-physical travel, and the sheer geographical scope of the text suggests such a reading. Yet, to continue to call it, following that old dichotomy that continues to haunt pilgrimage literature studies, either a *devotional exercise* or a *pilgrimage guide*, seems to suggest that we continue to misread the *Book*. Rather than continuing to value physical travel at the expense of devaluing imaginary travel, we might best read the *Book* as a *devotional pilgrimage*, one whose evoked sensory experiences were very much *real* to imagined pilgrims reading the text in the late Middle Ages. Indeed, the *Book* was more than simply a pilgrimage fiction, and through its engaging narrative and pragmatic concerns it mobilized the human mind and invited the reader to touch, taste, smell, hear, and most importantly, see the world both *beyond* and *within* the page.

Imagined pilgrimage is a practice that has a long and varied history, and the evidence of its existence is, by the very nature of the journeys it facilitates, primarily non-physical. While scholarship has made great strides in unpacking this multivalent subject, it is my hope that what I have written here adds to the dialogue on the *Book* and English secular imagined pilgrimage, a practice whose complexity, strangeness, and bewildering contradictions best exemplify medieval pilgrimage, and whose richness is only now beginning to be explored.
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