

Haven: Yale University Press, 2007); Jill Casid, *Sowing Empire: Landscape and Colonization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005); and Dian Kriz, *Slavery, Sugar and the Culture of Refinement* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), to name only a few among many recent works.

6. See, for example, Jean Le Rond d'Alembert, *Preliminary Discourse to the Encyclopedia of Diderot*, trans. Richard Schwab (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 40-43, 147.

7. Although many Aztec objects were plundered, the mosaic Farago analyzes was actually a gift to the pope.

8. Linda Nochlin, for example, treats this aspect of Gérôme's art in *Realism* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971).

9. Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Random House, 1978), and Linda Nochlin, "The Imaginary Orient," in *The Politics of Vision: Essays on Nineteenth-Century Art and Society* (New York: Harper and Row, 1989), 33-59.

10. See Hochstrasser essay in this volume.

11. Greg Denning, *Performances* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 64.

12. See Farago essay in this volume.

On The Peripatetic Life of Objects in the Era of Globalization

CLAIRE FARAGO

Introduction: Whose Renaissance?

We usually associate economic globalization with the rise of industrial capitalism in the nineteenth century, but in fact, a global network of trade and commerce was already established in the sixteenth century.¹ Works of art and other cultural products from all parts of the world were imported into Europe, where they formed prize specimens in collections and made an impact on European ideas of art and on the practices of European artists over several hundred years. The present volume is devoted to studying these processes through a series of strategic case studies. For art history, a discipline traditionally organized in terms of national cultures, it is a relatively recent phenomenon to investigate how art in Europe was shaped by contact with societies outside Europe. What enabled processes of cultural appropriation and exchange? How did Europeans' experiences with non-Europeans affect individual artists, larger artistic movements, and even the writing of history itself? In addressing such questions, the present volume is intended to encourage methods of inquiry that produce not only new information but different kinds of knowledge.

In her introduction, our volume editor Mary Sheriff maintains that art history should retain its dominant categories (such as "European art" and "national culture") while revising the ways in which we understand these categories to operate. In doing so, Sheriff argues, we will come to understand how extra-European art and artifacts contribute to our understanding of European art. Indeed, there is a practical advantage to retaining

enough of the discipline's existing categories to allow our archives, our databases, and our professional modes of being in the world to continue to function in recognizable ways.

The *intellectual* attractiveness of intercultural approaches stems from their ability to institute a more pluralistic historical vision. The binary model of center and periphery implied in constructs that privilege European civilization deserves to be replaced with a dialogical model. By this I mean an approach that considers different cultural traditions, representational systems, worldviews, and contexts of use on equal footing. The give and take between cultures merits our attention, but the realities of political and economic domination cannot be ignored. Since the 1970s, critics like Edward Said, Henry Louis Gates, Jacques Derrida, Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, and numerous others have charged that contemporary scholarship keeps itself pure by not taking certain kinds of contexts into account. They advocate making the history of our categories part of our subject of study, so that the values attached to these differences are exposed. To better understand how the categories of art and culture are historically constructed, we must develop what Joan Kelly called a "double vision" by looking both "inside" and "outside" the frameworks of art history traditionally associated with Europe.²

Whether the existing categories into which our discipline is subdivided are suited to analyzing questions of cultural exchange is therefore not an easy matter to resolve. Nor can nineteenth-century assumptions about what constitutes knowledge—the epistemological foundations of the discipline—be effortlessly accommodated to changing research agendas. Against an Enlightenment notion of truth as universally given is the relativist concept of situated knowledge limited to its places and conditions of emergence.³ Sometimes the political engagement of historians with inherited values is interpreted as a lack of objectivity, but I think the question today is how to acknowledge and deal with the bias in every text.

For example, in recent years there has been a great deal of attention paid to collecting practices in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, particularly to the phenomenon of the humanist *wunderkammer* and *kunstammer*, with their emphases on strange and exotic objects. Yet the extra-European artifact itself is routinely interpreted from an exclusively European perspective as enriching the stylistic vocabulary of the Italian Renaissance, for example, or as encouraging accurate modes of visual doc-

umentation and scientific classification. I say "extra-European" rather than "non-European" because in many cases, such as the examples discussed in this chapter, the object produced outside Europe is already touched by European ideas. It is not exactly a non-European object. The approach used here, developed to deal with just such complexities, considers the entire arc of cultural production from point of origin to ultimate destination. To understand how extra-European art shaped European artistic ideals, we must also understand how European values shaped the production of art and culture outside Europe. The following discussion looks closely at the peripatetic histories of two prize *wunderkammer* objects that made the trip in both directions: that is, they were made outside Europe by artists who used European models, but also incorporated indigenous elements. By the mid-sixteenth century, these two objects might have been prize specimens in European collections, where they are still located today. The question I want to explore is how these "hybrids" of previously unrelated systems of artistic representation outplay the codes and conventions on which they rely for their overt subject matter, style, and cultural identity.

Sapi-Portuguese Ivories in the European Imaginary

From the mid-fourteenth to the mid-seventeenth century, the period broadly designated by the term "Renaissance," painting, sculpture, and architecture "rose" from their medieval association with the manual or mechanical arts. They became associated with theoretical branches of knowledge, such as optics, anatomy, and poetry. This intellectualization of the manual arts was based on a neo-Aristotelian model of cognition that privileges vision above all the other senses. As the new literature on the three "arts of design" (*arti del disegno* is Vasari's term) developed in Europe, writers put increasing emphasis on the exclusively human ability to think abstractly. Predictably, writers emphasized the involvement of the visualizing powers of sight in combination with the imagination. As increasingly rational powers were granted to the artist's mental deliberations, fiction and fantasy remained subordinated. As a result, tension developed in the discussions about art between the important role granted to the imagination in the creative process and its relatively low position among mental operations. Non-Western cultural products were judged in these terms that have nothing to do with the function of art in their

cultures of origin. In assessing processes of cultural appropriation and exchange, it is also important to bear in mind that the word "art" did not yet mean what it does today. "Art" most often signified skill or procedures and, as such, was the equivalent of terms like "method" or "compendium." Both skill and procedures were, however, associated with the mental activity of artists, particularly their ability to invent new things out of their imaginations.

While the definition of art is only one thread in a complex weave of changing attitudes toward human knowledge during this period, perhaps a concrete example can suggest the negative implications in the new sixteenth-century understanding of art for non-European artifacts. The appearance of a work of art—its style—did not yet signify its cultural or national identity. Yet the style of an object was thought to reflect the mentality of its maker. Certainly, a sixteenth-century humanist collector would have appreciated a magnificent ivory object, commissioned from Sapi artists by Portuguese traders, for its precious material, skillful carving, and especially the figures as products of the artist's fertile imagination (fig. 2.1).⁴ But at the same time, for the same audience, the figures' elongated proportions and disproportionately large heads may have signified the artist's deficient knowledge of anatomy and ignorance of classicizing principles of proportion.

Consequently, the maker of this object, that is, the Sapi carver, might have been characterized by his or her European humanist collectors as possessing an active but irrational imagination, unaccompanied by the rational powers exemplified in contemporary Italian painting and sculpture, where the artists' knowledge of the scientific principles of anatomy and perspective was manifest in the work. For the inhabitants of Sierra Leone, as Suzanne Blier has shown, such carved images belonged to an entirely different conceptual framework.⁵ Portuguese traders brought European models for African artists to imitate.⁶ Yet the large, seated figure at the top, despite its Negroid physiognomy, was probably meant to represent an ancestral spirit incarnated in the form of a Portuguese trader (since both were white in the Sapi imaginary), made by artists who may not have had access to a living Portuguese model. In Blier's reconstruction of the Sapi artist's cultural imaginary, the severed heads and the main figure's seated position can be connected specifically with Sapi burial traditions.⁷ By contrast, the same scene is likely to have encouraged European

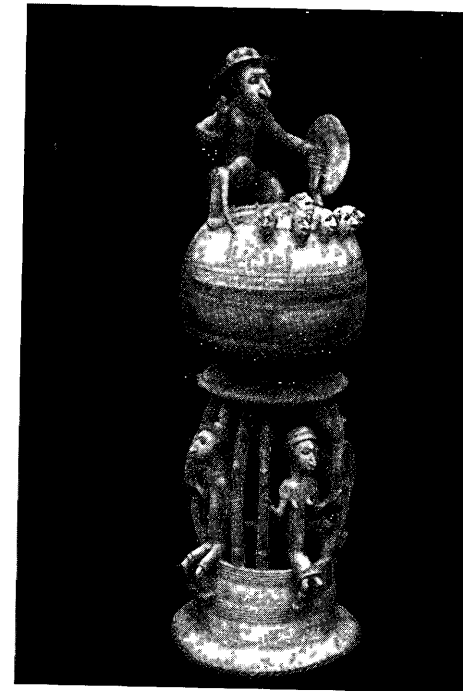


FIGURE 2.1. Sapi-Portuguese, saltcellar. Ivory, ca. 1490–1530. © Soprintendenza al Museo Nazionale Preistorico Etnografico L. Pigorini Roma EUR—Su concessione del Ministero per i Beni e le Attività Culturali. (Photo by Sergio Rossini, courtesy of the museum)

fantasies of decapitation and cannibalism among "savages"—to judge from the popularity of such stories in sixteenth-century travel literature.⁸ Sensationalizing fantasies may even have prompted the commission of the object, although we are likely never to know because no such records survive. The lack of documentation is characteristic of the entire class of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century African Portuguese ivories (referred to as saltcellars only since the nineteenth century). This circumstance further suggests that these objects were valued primarily as exotic collectors' items, not as representations of Sapi beliefs, by the Europeans who owned them and assimilated them into their own frames of reference.

Of course exotic objects did not carry just one set of connotative meanings. Nonetheless, a wide range of artifacts, regardless of their cultural origins, may have evoked similar responses from European audiences. I would argue that the desire to possess such unusual objects was fueled by

the apparent connotations of the grotesque inherited from ancient writers and developed in contemporary artistic practice and the new literature on art. *Grotteschi*—the word refers literally to a kind of pictorial embellishment composed of playful, monstrous figures in ancient painting and architectural ornament—had long been associated with the active powers of the imagination.⁹ For some sixteenth-century writers, *grotteschi* were practically synonymous with the artist's unlimited ability to invent.¹⁰ For others, such as the archbishop of Bologna Gabriele Paleotti, the manner in which artists embellished their work might have branded them as irrational.¹¹ Understood in this sense, the concept of the grotesque has a long, contested, and culturally specific history. What signified the grotesque or what corresponded to *grotteschi* for those familiar with this tradition would have been meaningless to others unfamiliar with it—and that is crucial to keep in mind as the following argument unfolds. As early as the sixteenth century (much earlier, in fact), European viewers thought it was possible to read the mentality of the artist out of his or her artistic productions. Moreover *grotteschi* signified in a double-handed way. On one hand, they signified artists' freedom and capacity to invent images out of their imaginations. On the other hand, *grotteschi* were associated by some writers with an active imagination unrestrained by human reason.

By describing the Sapi-Portuguese carvings under discussion here in terms of their hypothetical European reception, I do not mean to suggest that African audiences could not or did not appreciate the aesthetic qualities of their cultural productions.¹² What I want to stress is that European viewers recontextualized exotic objects within their own, loaded frame of reference.¹³ In fact, although Blier does not dwell on its implications, these ivory objects were made for export. Despite the resonance of their imagery within a Sapi context of belief, they did not serve any function in their culture of origin aside from their production for export. Sapi-Portuguese ivories are an early type of art object made for export—what anthropologist Nicholas Thomas refers to as “entangled objects.”¹⁴

Upon entry into the early modern *wunderkammer*, imagery that could be associated with the grotesque became part of a larger European category of exotic objects. Nearly all such items sought by European collectors were originally valued as trophies, gifts, or souvenirs, that is, objects that confer status on their owners—but not necessarily on whoever made them. Anthropologist Serge Gruzinski argues that the category of

the grotesque enables indigenous pictorial traditions to coexist comfortably with ancient European mythological signs.¹⁵ It is important to bear in mind, however, that this “coexistence” positions indigenous truth values in a subaltern relationship to European knowledge. Far from providing insight into cultural differences, the monstrous and the grotesque construed in the cultural terms I have described are projections of European ideas. Extraordinarily interesting hand-carved boxes were made by African artists working for Portuguese slave traders who saw additional opportunities for profit in these curiosities. This was hardly an exchange conducted on equal terms. Ultimately, Sapi-Portuguese ivories defeat attempts to distinguish between colonizer and colonized in binary terms. An adequate explanation requires a more complex understanding of the relationships that historically existed. In this case, where documentation is scarce, one can only speculate on their reception in Europe; but in the case that follows, a Mexican featherwork mosaic depicting a Christian subject, there is enough evidence to launch an extended historical inquiry into its intended significance for its original audience.

The *Mass of St. Gregory* Featherwork: Circumstances of the Commission

The *Mass of St. Gregory* featherwork in the Musée d'Auch (plate 1) is another early product of cultural interaction made for export that draws on both indigenous and European sources. It was crafted by indigenous artists working under the direction of ecclesiastics in early colonial Mexico. Although grotesque imagery is conspicuously missing from this object, it can be linked with the same European ideas about the imagination as the Sapi-Portuguese ivories.

In this case, we know the names of both the commissioning patron and the person for whom the commission was intended. A Latin epigraph dates this remarkably well-preserved feather mosaic (*amantecayotl*) to 1539, making it the earliest dated work of art surviving from New Spain.¹⁶ Although the Latin contains minor errors, the inscription in Roman capital letters that borders the image clearly states that the object was made in Mexico City under the supervision of Pedro de Gante (1486–1572), the Franciscan lay brother who in 1524 established the famous mission school of San José de los Naturales, where the mechanical and liberal arts were

taught to Amerindians. Many of its students came from native families of high social rank, continuing in this transformed Christian setting the Aztec custom of selecting artist/scribes (*tlacuilos*) from the nobility and training them at state expense.

Mexican featherwork, traditionally made into ceremonial objects such as capes and fans, was the most highly prized form of artistic production in the Aztec Empire (this name itself for a complex political alliance of three cultures is problematic) at the time of the Spanish conquest, and the technique was immediately used by missionaries to produce objects with Christian imagery. Both pre-Columbian and colonial featherwork objects were highly prized in Europe, where they circulated as rare gifts at the highest levels of society. By the nineteenth century, when the first public art museums came into existence, these, like many other exotic items prized in Renaissance humanist *wunderkammers*, were relegated to ethnographic museums and storerooms. Only quite recently, with the self-conscious celebration of multiculturalism, have scholars and the viewing public shown interest in these objects.¹⁷

The consecutive recontextualization of featherwork mosaics over several centuries, from their point of origin where the Nahuatl-speaking people of Mexico lost their cultural heritage to their point of final destination in public and private European museums, provides a key example of the complex ways in which non-European culture has contributed to European ideas of art. The following discussion explores these complex resonances on both sides of the cultural divide between Europe and the Americas.

The subject of the Gregorian Mass was depicted numerous times in the early years of the Spanish conquest, when it was painted on *convento* walls and depicted on ceremonial objects, including gifts of state such as a featherwork miter that is still in the Escorial Palace.¹⁸ The iconography of the Gregorian Mass includes the arms of Christ, a favorite devotion of the earliest Franciscans in Mexico, and a motif that can be associated with a utopian concept of the universal Christian church. It has been suggested that the feather mosaicist (*amanteca*) responsible for the featherwork mosaic of the Gregorian Mass was Don Diego de Alvarado Huanitzin, nephew and son-in-law of Moctezuma II who was appointed governor (*tlatoani*) of Tenochtitlan/Mexico City in 1538 by the viceroy Don Antonio de Mendoza.¹⁹ The basis for this claim is the dedication to Pope Paul III

inscribed around the border of the image, which states that the work was made during the governorship of "D[omi]no Didaco." It is highly unlikely, however, that during his tenure as governor Don Diego, who is not known to have been an *amanteca*, would have been a student at the Franciscan convent school working under de Gante.

As Aztec royalty and the ranking native government official in the Republic of Indians, Don Diego might have been in a position to offer this extraordinary gift to Paul III, the pope who had recently published a series of declarations protecting the rights of Amerindians. Only two years earlier, on June 9, 1537, Pope Paul III had issued the bull *Sublimis Deus*, news of which reached Mexico in 1538/39.²⁰ This papal decree against enslaving the Amerindians and seizing their property pronounced "Indians and all other people who may later be discovered by Christians" to be endowed with the "nature and faculties" necessary to receive the Christian faith solely by "preaching of the word of God and by the example of good and holy living." In this decree, Pope Paul III specified the penalty of excommunication for those who violated imperial law.²¹ And although the penalty was nullified by another bull decreed two years later by the same pope, some jurists today consider Paul III's unprecedented position on human rights to be the true foundation of international law.²²

Iconography of the *Mass of St. Gregory and Politics*

In the following discussion, I draw connections between the *Mass of St. Gregory* featherwork and European understandings of the imagination's role in establishing memories. The 1537 papal bull proclaiming the human status of Amerindians was issued in direct response to an escalating contest over human and material resources in the Americas. It is within this politicized, ideologically freighted frame of reference that the significance of this particular *Mass of St. Gregory* must be sought. First, it is important to note that the Holy Roman Emperor and the Roman Catholic Church did not always act in concert. A central issue in what amounted to a complex power struggle was whether Amerindians had the ability to maintain dominion over their own property, a topic much discussed by theologians and jurists as dependant upon their humanness. The basis of their discussion was Aristotle's distinction between two types of enslavement:

through capture and in the form of creatures born "slaves by nature" who are constitutionally incapable of fully human powers of reasoning.²³

The outcome of the debate over the true nature of Amerindians had obvious economic implications: if they were not fully rational creatures, they were legitimately subject to enslavement, conveniently providing the Habsburg emperor and the Spanish crown with an ample labor force to extract silver and gold from Mexican and Peruvian mines. To speed the decision along, the Royal Council of the Indies encouraged Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda, translator of a highly respected edition of Aristotle's *Politics*, the text in which his crucial discussion of slavery appears, to justify war against the Amerindians (ultimately the council rejected his argument). Alternatively, if Amerindians were merely immature like children—so it was argued in their behalf—they possessed the capacity for fully rational thought and only needed the proper guidance. The initial step in this education process, as St. Augustine maintained, was to accept the Christian doctrine of salvation—in other words, to be baptized.²⁴

Paul III had addressed these complicated issues regarding the humanness of Amerindians in no uncertain terms in the 1537 bull. He sided with the Dominican Julián Garcés, the bishop of Tlaxcala; the Franciscan Juan de Zumárraga, the bishop of Mexico; and other missionaries, such as Bernardino de Minaya and Bartolomé de las Casas, who defended the Amerindians' capacity to be converted by teaching rather than conquered by force.²⁵ As is well known, this contest for Amerindian souls culminated in a famous debate with no clear outcome between Sepúlveda and las Casas, held in Valladolid, Spain, in 1550/51. The *Mass of St. Gregory* feather mosaic, however, was made eleven years earlier, immediately after Paul III's decree reached New Spain. At this time, an assimilated, Christianized government official of noble Aztec descent like Don Diego might have felt optimistic about the future and deeply grateful to a pope who recognized the intelligence of all Amerindian peoples.

What does this history have to do with the *Mass of St. Gregory* feather mosaic? The imagery on this featherwork mosaic was directly derived from a European print similar to, or perhaps even identical with, an engraving by Israel van Meckenhem, circa 1480–85 (Lehrs IX.288.353) (fig. 2.2), one of ten versions of the Gregorian Mass by the same artist.²⁶ A Latin inscription below the image in the European engraving indicates

that the sheet was intended as an indulgence granted to whoever recites enough prayers to the instruments of Christ's passion. According to a legend popular in the fifteenth century, as Gregory was celebrating mass in the Basilica of Santa Croce in Rome, one of his assistants expressed doubt that Christ was actually present in the host. At that moment, Christ miraculously appeared rising from the altar, surrounded by the instruments of the passion and displaying his five wounds.²⁷ Fifteenth-century popes attached indulgences to devotional images of the Gregorian Mass because they dramatically illustrate the doctrine of transubstantiation.

In this connection, it is relevant that St. Gregory the Great, a sixth-century pope and one of the four Latin church fathers, famously defended the religious use of images because they function as a "Bible for the illiterate."²⁸ There are significant differences, however, between an inexpensive broadsheet issued to pilgrims and a unique gift of state crafted in precious, exotic materials, intended for the chief representative of Christ on earth. Given the timing of the gift, the choice of subject suggests that Pope Paul III was to be praised as a latter-day St. Gregory, no doubt for his strong defense of the Indians' fully human capacities. Viewed in this context, this featherwork mosaic is a magnanimous gesture, eloquently rendered in a medium well-established in pre-Columbian times as a form of tribute that both the Amerindians and their European conquerors considered the most elevated form of Mexican art.²⁹

The choice of subject was strategic on several levels, as a close inspection of the manner in which it diverges from its print prototypes suggests. The most striking difference is an omission in the feather painting: representatives of the secular church—several cardinals and bishops standing around the sides of the altar—have been eliminated. In the feather mosaic, only the kneeling assistants and the officiating priest witness the miracle taking place behind the altar. Moreover, in the Mexican colonial image the priest and kneeling deacons could readily pass for tonsured Franciscan friars. Beneath their richly ornamented sacerdotal vestments the three religious wear simple cassocks exposing the soles of three pairs of bare feet—although the present condition of the feather mosaic prevents an absolutely certain identification of their footwear. Two tentative conclusions can be drawn from these iconographic additions: first, it is likely that the details of the ecclesiastics' costume allude to the first Fran-

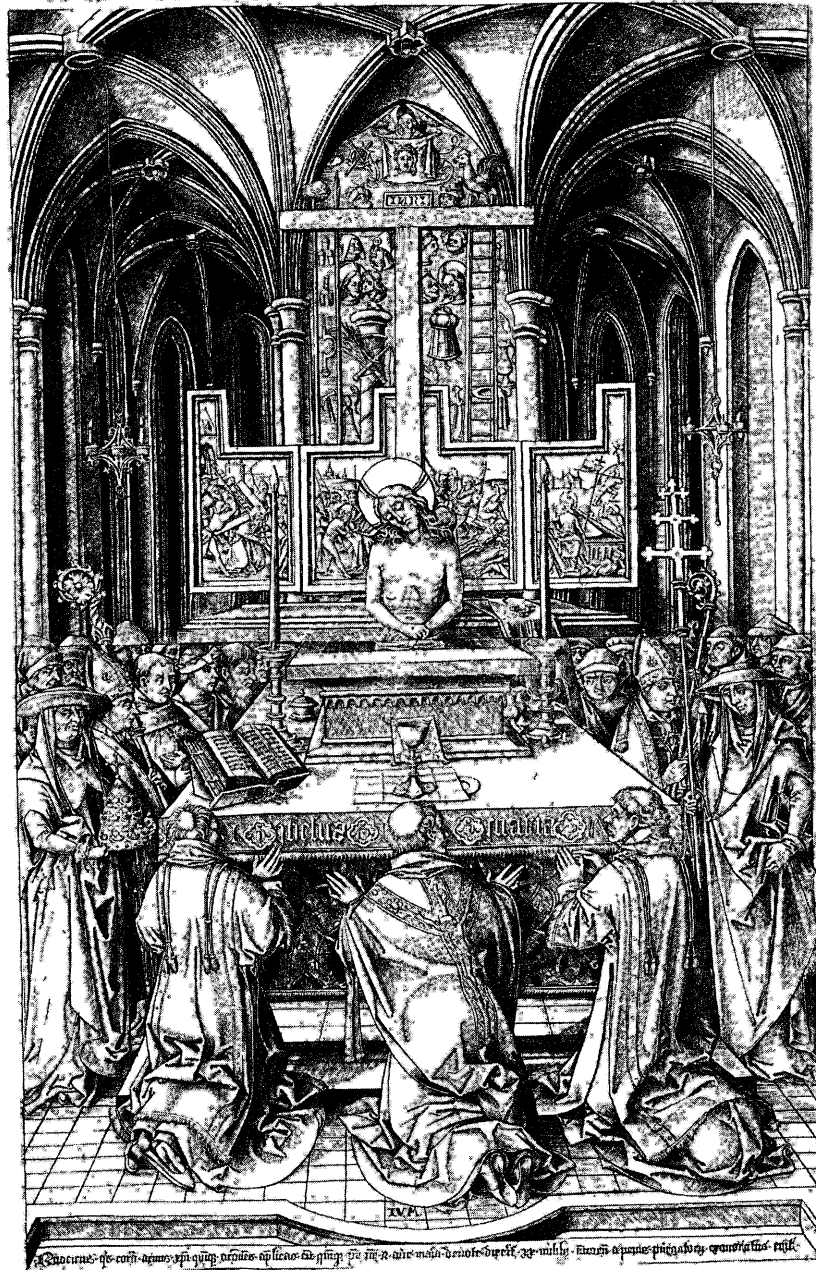


FIGURE 2.2. Israel von Meckenhem, *The Mass of Saint Gregory*. Engraving, ca. 1490–1500. Louvre, Paris, France (photo by Madeleine Coursaget). (Réunion des Musées Nationaux/Art Resource, N.Y.)

ciscan missionaries—which included the supervisor of this mosaic, Pedro de Gante—whose ascetic lifestyle figured prominently in their program of evangelization.

Second, during the first few decades of spiritual conquest by the regular clergy, in imitation of the original apostolic era of the “primitive church,” a mission system was established without accountability to the secular church hierarchy. Tension between the regular and secular clergy over the right to claim Amerindian souls soon developed, however.³⁰ Two years later, in 1539, the date of this mosaic, the first in a series of general assemblies was called to resolve difficulties and disagreements over the administration of baptism and marriage. Could a reference to contemporary events, even a trace of escalating disputes between the regular and secular clergy, be detected in the elimination of cardinals and bishops in this Spanish colonial version of the *Mass of St. Gregory*? It is tempting to think so but impossible to substantiate. Nonetheless, subtle though the changes in subject matter are, given the historical circumstances just described, they are sufficient to render contemporary understanding of the iconography to a certain degree unresolvable and open-ended—characteristics typical of many artistically and culturally hybrid colonial works of art.

A Colonial Manual of Christian Rhetoric with Double Meanings

The previous discussion dealt mainly with European contexts for understanding the *Mass of St. Gregory* mosaic. In this and the following section, additional evidence supports a reading of the mosaic as a form of indigenous resistance to European understandings of Amerindians as mentally inferior creatures. There is no doubt that Pedro de Gante established innovative methods for teaching Christian doctrine to his Amerindian neophytes.³¹ The arms of Christ were a popular devotion among the first Franciscan missionaries, though the iconography is by no means unique to the Order. De Gante and other missionaries used visual images extensively during the early years of the conquest when language difference was a barrier to communication, as is known from numerous sources, including the 1579 Italian publication of an important pedagogical text, *De rhetorica christiana*, written and illustrated by de Gante’s pupil Diego Valadés,

another Christianized, assimilated Aztec nobleman like Don Diego. From his testimony, and from other material evidence such as the atrial cross that stood in the forecourt of the Capilla de los Indios of the Basilica de Guadalupe in Mexico City, we know that rebus-like signs, specifically the arms of Christ, were used to teach the catechism.³² In his book, Valadés provided engraved illustrations of catechism classes being taught in the open-air atrium of the Franciscan mother church at San José using similar visual signs. He also introduced a sort of pictographic syllabary (fig. 2.3) of his own, involving signs in the shape of sacred hearts, a symbol with connotations on both sides of the cultural and linguistic divide. Some of Valadés's heart signs include recognizable elements from Nahuatl pictograms. Although their exact meaning has never been deciphered, the manner in which they function in his text makes the important point that they are a culturally hybrid means of communication.

The arms of Christ are visual signs of the sort that missionaries widely understood as a pictorial language comparable to Nahuatl pictograms. The Franciscans in particular were interested in Indian hieroglyphics. They invented a hieroglyphic system of their own based on the pre-conquest rebus-style script of Aztecs and Mixtecs, believing that Amerindians would be more receptive to Christian catechism communicated in pictures and symbols.³³ This fact in itself is perhaps less significant in the present context of discussion than the method of learning through pictograms. In the feather mosaic, the central Christian doctrine of transubstantiation is conveyed by the naturalistic depiction of Christ as the Man of Sorrows displaying the five wounds as he rises from the open sepulcher behind the altar where Holy Communion is about to be performed. The depiction of Christ would have been considered universally accessible by the Church because of its naturalistic style of representation. Grouped around this Eucharistic image, prominently displayed against a bright blue ground composed of feathers, are the rebus-like signs known as the arms of Christ. These signs are actually mnemonic devices intended to initiate a series of associations in the mind of the beholder. Each sign, whether it be the coins of Judas signifying his treason, the crowing cock of Peter signifying his betrayal, or the instruments of the passion alluding to the crucifixion and to major points of Christian doctrine (for example, the three nails remind the beholder of the Trinity), as well as the image as a whole, serves as an object meant for contemplation. Just as a person

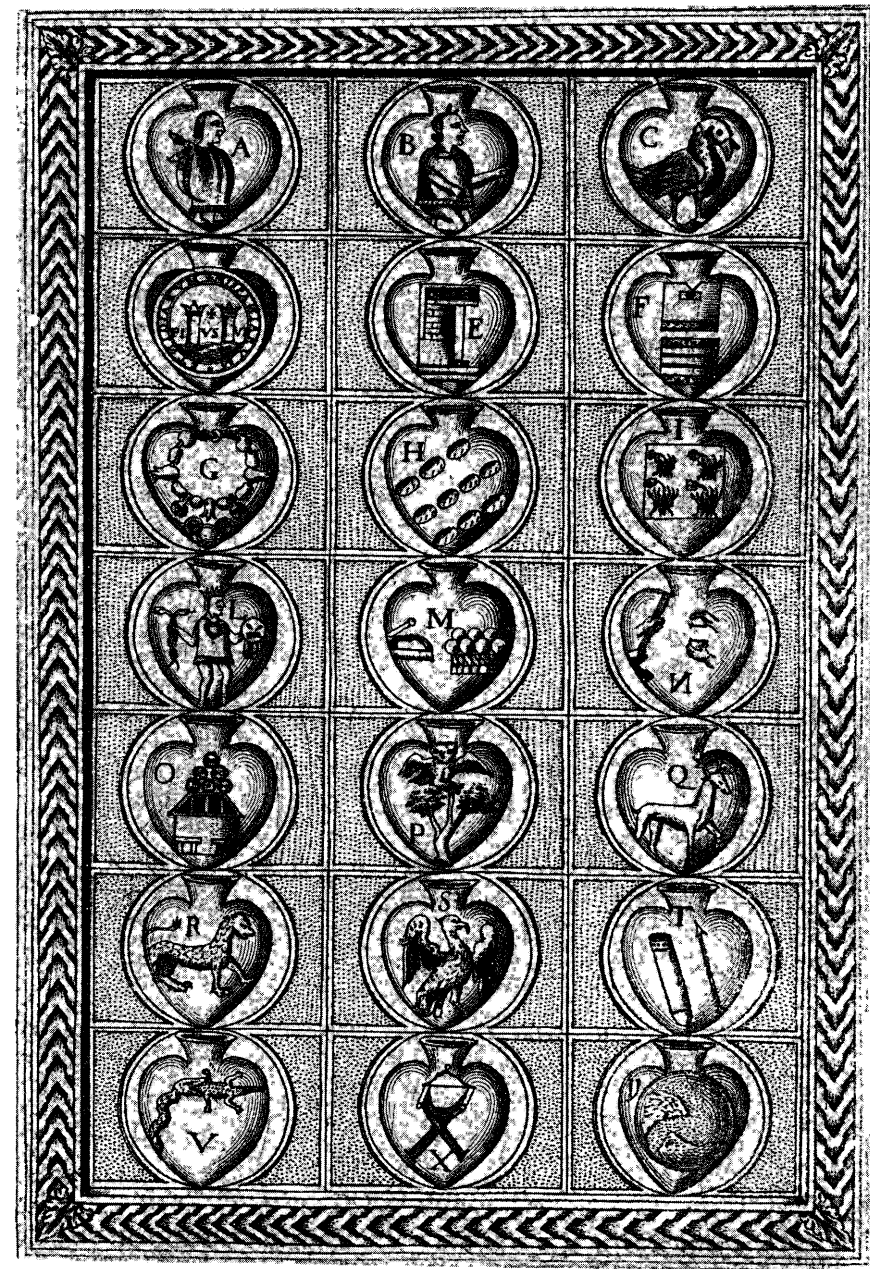


FIGURE 2.3. Diego Valadés, syllabary containing recognizable elements of Nahuatl pictograms combined with European symbols, from Diego Valadés, *De rhetorica christiana* (Perugia, 1579). Engraving. Courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University, Providence, R.I. (Photo courtesy Special Collections, Norlin Library, University of Colorado at Boulder)

learned in Latin might ruminate over the many senses of scripture, attaching in turn literal, tropological, and anagogical significance to the same words, so the visual representation of St. Gregory's Mass was intended to enable an illiterate audience to contemplate the richness of Christian doctrine by visual means.

In the Mexican feather mosaic, alongside conventional signs like the cock, nails, sponge, hammer, column, and flageolet, are some innovations. To Christ's right, behind the open sepulcher, is a delicately shaped tree, or perhaps it is a small plant. On the front ledge of the open sepulcher rest two prominent pink flowers with dark green leaves, apparently an offering, perhaps of the kind formerly associated with sacrifice in pre-Columbian ceremonies. The innovative imagery, while unorthodox by European standards, suggests some kind of an analogy to Aztec ceremonial offerings, but their significance is difficult to assess. In the European prototype imagery, moreover, blood from the wound in Christ's side flows into the chalice on the altar table. This detail illustrating the central Eucharistic doctrine of transubstantiation is missing in the *amantecayotl*.

Considered in conjunction, both the suppressions and the unorthodox elaborations of conventional subject matter prompt speculations about the artist's motive. Intentionality eludes modern interpreters, however: these transformations may be meaningful, or they may be no more than "misunderstandings" on the part of indigenous artists. From what is known about the circumstances of the commission, it is likely that de Gante himself approved the innovations. None of the alterations discussed here nor the rendering of the priest's cape with thirteen round medallions (which one contemporary writer suggests is derived from Aztec symbolism) may therefore have been considered to interfere with or subvert the orthodox doctrinal content of the image.³⁴

In the feather mosaic, the conventional setting in a church interior has been eliminated in favor of an undifferentiated blue background. The blue aids the beholder perceptually by isolating each sign against a brilliantly colored ground, making it easier to remember the images, as European treatises devoted to training memory recommend and as other visual examples of the same motifs, such as Fra Angelico's mid-fifteenth-century frescoes in the cells of San Marco monastery in Florence attest.³⁵ Yet the choice of color might also be interpreted as serving a narrative function, indicating an outdoor setting for this particular Gregorian Mass—an

especially inviting hypothesis because the priest and his assistants appear to be humbly kneeling on the bare ground.

Human Memory and the Task of Recollection

The mnemonic devices, moreover, attest to the mental capacity of their users to "recollect," that is, to remember the central mysteries of the Christian faith by contemplating the mnemonic signs that refer to them. Mnemonic signs initiate the inferential process of recollection that is uniquely human, according to Aristotle and elaborated by his commentators from Cicero to St. Augustine to Thomas Aquinas and Albertus Magnus, to name only some of the major contributors to a long historical discussion. The crucial task of recollection is retrieval: a memory image, wrote Aristotle in *De memoria* (450b11–20), is like an imprint or drawing, causing us to remember what is not present: a memory drawing, like a painted panel, is an object of contemplation, a sort of copy and a reminder. Thomas Aquinas described memory as the faculty responsible for the conversion of images into abstractions or universals and reserved the term "recollection" to describe a kind of human reasoning, a "quasi-syllogistic search."³⁶

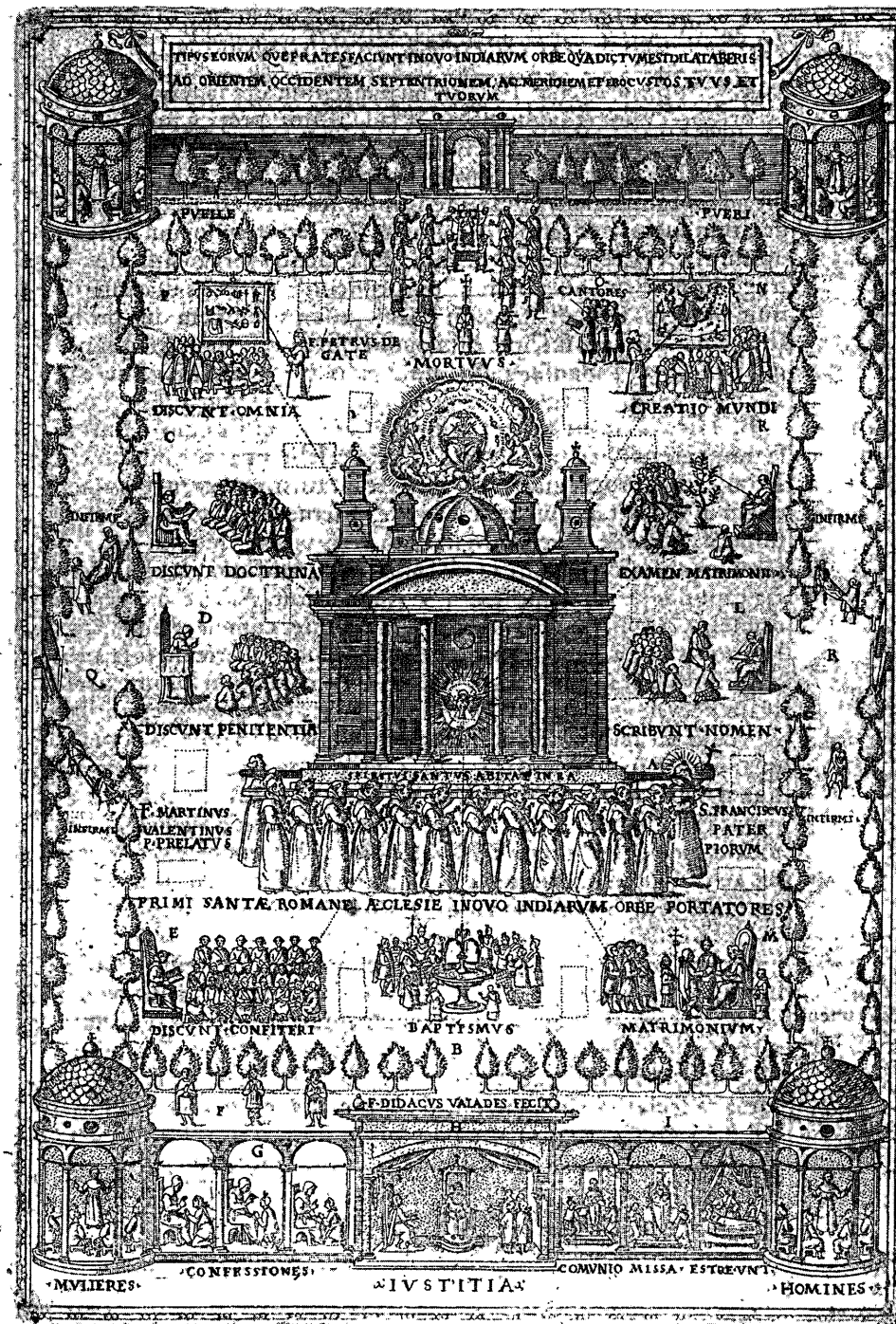
In the fifteenth century, the archbishop of Florence Dominican St. Antonine, whose *Summa theologica* was among the earliest books recorded in New Spain, urged his readers to learn the art of projecting sacred concepts into memory figures. Valadés described and illustrated the basic tenets of medieval faculty psychology that Saint Antonine of Florence promoted, focusing on the role played by the art of memory in teaching sacred doctrine to neophytes at San José de los Naturales (fig. 2.4). The engraving of the idealized courtyard of the church shows where images were placed in strategic locations along liturgical procession routes (fig. 2.5).

The mental capacity to recollect, that is, to draw a series of inferences, as Aristotle and his commentators defined the human faculty of memory as distinct from the retentive memory of animals, was both directly cited and indirectly implied throughout sixteenth-century discussions of the Amerindians' mental capacities.³⁷ The significance of this language of signs in a gift destined for Pope Paul III is clarified by the historical context of the pontificate's *Sublimis Deus* issued thirteen years after the opening of San José de los Naturales. In 1539, Paul III would have been ideally well disposed to understand what was implied by the choice of both the



FIGURE 2.4. (Above) Diego Valadés, diagram of the inner senses, from Diego Valadés, *De rhetorica christiana* (Perugia, 1579). Engraving. Courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University, Providence, R.I.

FIGURE 2.5. (Opposite) Diego Valadés, idealized scene of neophytes receiving the catechism in the courtyard of San José de los Naturales, Mexico, from Diego Valadés, *De rhetorica christiana* (Perugia, 1579). Engraving. Courtesy of the John Carter Brown Library at Brown University, Providence, R.I. (Photo by Ken Iwamasa)



subject and the artistic medium. Indeed, for any beholder attuned to the debate about the rationality of Amerindians, the *Mass of St. Gregory* testifies to their truly human nature in terms that predate Valladolid by at least a decade.

It is perhaps not overstated to claim that, by 1539, the terms on which the Indians' mental capacities were judged were part of an international, transcultural discourse in which the culturally dispossessed also participated—at least to the limited extent of a few assimilated members of the Amerindian elite. Ironically, this erudite gift offered by a bicultural colonial subject in the language of the conqueror, in a medium prized by the colonizer, as evidence of the subject's own humanness never reached its intended destination in the sixteenth century. The whereabouts of this featherwork before it appeared on the art market in 1987 are unknown, leading to speculation that it was captured by pirates on its way to Europe.³⁸

Toward a Theory of Cultural Hybridity

The discussion so far has suggested that culturally hybrid, colonial works of art played a strategic, multilateral role in the history of European ideas of artistic creativity. My hypothetical reconstructions also raise the more difficult interpretative question of what the criteria for dealing with objects should be if cultural interaction is the subject. While these two objects look very different in terms of style, imagery, function, materials, and so on, they elicit similar, culturally specific ideas regarding the significance of artifice. We could never come to this understanding of cultural interaction if we simply followed art history's established procedures. Yet I hope I have been able to suggest how a deeper philosophical grounding is needed to understand how the object operated in its social milieu. Art history would benefit from paying greater attention than it currently does to the historical construction of ideas. We focus too much on objects without examining the conceptual nature of their social existence.³⁹

The imagery of Sapi-Portuguese ivories and Mexican featherworks derives from European models but assumes indigenous knowledge as well. The phenomena of hybridization apparent in the two case studies point to large issues regarding our research agendas and our responsibility to society as intellectuals. The kind of art historical practice I would like to

see goes all over the world and deals with all kinds of practices, representational systems, and cultural conditions—not only at the level of social history, but at deeper epistemological levels. It should study what happens when new identities are formed, when new communication occurs, when representational practices that have never been in contact before are suddenly in collision and contention, when the readability of the art changes because of contact, and when people's lives are changed because of their altered material culture. Neither of the objects discussed in this chapter was of any scholarly interest until quite recently, in the wake of multiculturalism. I am concerned with what we pass on to future generations. What kinds of political implications are there to the knowledge we produce? Our work can seem apolitical when we produce it, but at the same time it excludes other work from taking place or relegates that work to the margins. Once we start thinking about objects from a broader perspective, we begin to recognize how inherited values structure our contemporary practices. Which values do you wish to keep?

NOTES

Warm thanks to Susan Lowish for her astute reading of an earlier draft of this essay.

1. Serge Gruzinski, *The Mestizo Mind: The Intellectual Dynamics of Colonization and Globalization*, trans. Deke Dusinerre (New York: Routledge, 2002), 4.

2. Joan Kelly [Gadol], "The Doubled Vision of Feminist Theory: A Postscript to the 'Women and Power' Conference," in *Women, History, and Theory: The Essays of Joan Kelly* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 51–64.

3. Clifford Geertz, *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology* (New York: Basic Books, 1983).

4. The first example is drawn from my edited book, *Reframing the Renaissance: Visual Culture in Europe and Latin America, 1450–1650* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995).

5. Suzanne Blier, "Imagining Otherness in Ivory: African Portrayals of the Portuguese c. 1492," *Art Bulletin* 75, no. 3 (September 1993): 375–97.

6. Ezio Bassani and William Fagg, *Africa and the Renaissance: Art in Ivory*, ed. S. Vogel with C. Thompson (New York: Center for African Art, 1988).

7. Blier, "Imagining Otherness," 390–91, citing further evidence that the ornament of these ivories derives from textile patterns that carried cosmic significance, writes that the imagery often concerned the land of the dead. For the object reproduced here, see Bassani and Fagg, *Africa and the Renaissance*, cat. no. 31.

8. Margaret Hodgen, *Early Anthropology in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1964), is an excellent source of information for sixteenth-century geographical geographies. Among more recent studies, see Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992), and Mary Campbell, *The Witness and the Other World: Exotic European Travel Writing, 400–1600* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991).

9. See David Summers, *Michelangelo and the Language of Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), 496–97, for an excellent discussion of *grotteschi*, and more recently, “The Archeology of the Modern Grotesque,” in *Modern Art and the Grotesque*, ed. Frances S. Connelly (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 20–46.

10. On *grotteschi* as emblematic of artistic license to invent, see further, David Summers, “Michelangelo on Architecture,” *Art Bulletin* 54, no. 2 (June 1972): 146–57, and “Archeology of the Modern Grotesque.”

11. Invoking the same contrast between reasoned imagination and the capricious fantasy, Cardinal Gabriele Paleotti, author of an influential treatise on painting (1582; Latin edition of 1594), introduced extensive new qualifications drawn from the standard authorities. He constructed a theory of style that, in effect, favored the scientific embellishments of optical naturalism but retained the artist’s right to depict *grotteschi* as long as these vivid representations were not capricious figments of the imagination. Paleotti developed his position in consultation with his lifelong friend Ulisse Aldrovandi, the renowned naturalist and collector of New World materials, as documented in their correspondence. He seems to have taken to heart Aldrovandi’s advice concerning the proper principles guiding artistic illustration when, for example, he admitted that painters should be allowed to represent novel things that seem to lie outside the order of nature (*se bene fuori dell’ordine suo*), as long as they actually do exist. These include “monsters of the sea and land and other places.” The difference is that embellishments that have counterparts in nature are “proportioned to reason” (*proporzionati alla ragione*), while *grotteschi* refer to fantasms, things “that have never been, that could not exist in the manner in which they are represented.” These condemned forms of artifice are (contra Lomazzo) the *capricci* of painters, products of their irrational imaginations (*irragionevoli imaginationi*). See Gabriele Paleotti, in *Trattati d’arte, del cinquecento*, ed. Paola Barocchi, 3 vols. (Bari: Giuseppe Laterza e Figli, 1961), 2:425 (book 2, chapter 37); see also 382–89. See further, Claire Farago and Carol Parenteau, “The Grotesque Idol: Imaginary, Symbolic, and Real,” in *Idols in the Age of Art: Objects, Devotions, and the Early Modern World*, ed. Michael W. Cole and Rebecca Zorach (Aldershot: Ashgate Press, 2009), 105–32.

12. On this, see Robert Farris Thompson, *Flash of the Spirit: African and Afro-American Art and Philosophy* (New York: Random House, 1983), and *Face of the Gods: Art and Altars of African and the African Americas* (New York: Museum for African Art and Munich: Prestel, 1993).

13. In fact, slaves themselves became objectified as manifestations of prestige, ornaments to a lady’s or lord’s other magnificent possessions—or to persons making

pretense to be wealthy and noble aristocrats. See Kim F. Hall, “An Object in the Midst of Other Objects: Race, Gender, Material Culture,” in *Things of Darkness: Economies of Race and Gender in Early Modern England* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 211–53.

14. Nicholas Thomas, *Entangled Objects: Exchange, Material Culture, and Colonialism in the Pacific* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1991).

15. Serge Gruzinski, *El pensiamiento mestizo*, trans. Enrique Folch González (Buenos Aires: Paidós, 2000), 206–8.

16. pavlo iii pontifici maxima/en magna indiary[m] vrbe mexico/co[m]posita d[omi]no didaco gvberna/tore cvra fr[at]ris petri a gante minoritae ad 1539 (Made for his excellency Pope Paul III in the great city of the Indies, Mexico, during the governorship of Don Diego [?], under the supervision of the Minorite Brother Peter of Ghent, a.d. 1539).

17. Gerhard Wolf is currently organizing an exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art on featherwork.

18. See further discussion by Donna Pierce in *Mexico: Splendors of Thirty Centuries*, exhibition catalog (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1990), 260–63, and Detlef Heikamp and Ferdinand Anders, *Mexico and the Medici* (Florence, 1972), 16–18. The Mass of St. Gregory was depicted on a number of feather mitres and in murals in Franciscan convents at Tepeapulco and Cholula, as noted by De Gerlero and Martínez del Río de Redo, in *Mexico: Splendors of Thirty Centuries*, 259–60. The following discussion is an expansion of my entry, “Mass of Saint Gregory,” in *Painting a New World: Mexican Art and Life, 1521–1821*, ed. Donna Pierce, Rogelio Ruiz Gomar, and Clara Bargellini, exhibition catalog (Denver: Denver Art Museum, 2004), 98–102.

19. De Gerlero and Martínez del Río de Redo, in *Mexico: Splendors of Thirty Centuries*, 260.

20. Lewis Hanke, “Pope Paul III and the American Indians,” *Harvard Theological Review* 30 (1947): 65–102, and the translation by Francis MacNutt, *Bartholomew de Las Casas* (New York, 1909), 427–31.

21. Hanke, “Pope Paul III,” 72–73.

22. *Ibid.*, 74, citing James Brown Scott, *The Spanish Origin of International Law: Francisco de Vitoria and His Law of Nations* (Oxford, 1934), 281.

23. Aristotle, *Politics*, 1254b15–1255b40, is the crucial discussion.

24. On which, see Anthony Pagden, *The Fall of Natural Man: The Amerindian and the Origins of Comparative Ethnology*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), and further, Claire Farago, “The Classification of the Visual Arts during the Renaissance,” in *The Shapes of Knowledge from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment*, ed. D. R. Kelley and R. H. Popkin (The Netherlands: Kluwer, 1991), 25–47.

25. See Hanke, “Pope Paul III,” 68–71; Bishop Garcés wrote a letter to Paul III on the recent missionary activity of Bernardino de Minaya that paved the way for the pope’s momentous bull *Sublimis Deus*.

26. See Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art, *Fifteenth-Century Engravings of*

Northern Europe, exhibition catalog by Alan Shestack (1968), cat. no. 214 (similar engravings by the same artist are cataloged as nos. 214 and 215).

27. On the history of the iconography in Europe, see J. A. Andres, "Die Darstellung des Gregoriusmesse im Mittelalter," *Zeitschrift für Christliche Kunst* 30 (1917): 145–56, cited in Shestack, *Fifteenth-Century Engravings*, cat. no. 214, and Alexander Nagel, *Michelangelo and the Reform of Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), esp. 51. On the iconography in New Spain, see Sonia Pérez Carrillo, "Aproximación a la iconografía de la misa de San Gregorio en América," *Cuadernos de arte colonial* 4 (1988): 95–106, with further references, 104 n. 1.

28. In his famous letter to Sernus, ca. a.d. 600, Gregory the Great wrote in defense of images that "it is one thing to adore a painting, but quite another to learn, through the story the painting recounts, what ought to be adored," for painting is made for "idiots and illiterates, for ignorant who must be content to find in images what they cannot read in texts." See Gregory the Great, *Epistolae* 11.4.13, in G.-P. Migne, *Patrologia Latinae*, vol. 78, col. 1128; translation cited from Georges Didi-Huberman, *Fra Angelico: Dissemblance and Figuration* (1990), trans. Jane Marie Todd (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 25.

29. Fray Bernardino de Sahagun described and illustrated featherwork techniques in his *Historia general de las cosas de Nueva España*, book 10, compiled in the second half of the sixteenth century (see the modern edition, *The Florentine Codex: A General History of the Things of New Spain*, books 1–12, trans. Arthur J. O. Anderson and Charles E. Dibble [Santa Fe: University of New Mexico Press; Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1950–81]).

30. As attested, among other things, by a letter written in 1537 to Charles V at a meeting of the provincial bishops (who were appointed from the regular clergy at this time) to review the problems of evangelization. See Robert Ricard, *The Spiritual Conquest of Mexico: An Essay on the Apostolate and the Evangelizing Methods of the Mendicant Orders in New Spain, 1523–1572* (1933), trans. Lesley Byrd Simpson (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), 7.

31. The Franciscan trade school adjacent to the monastery of San Francisco in Mexico City was functioning as early as 1526; on its organization, curriculum, and relationship to other mission schools, see Jeanette A. Peterson, *The Paradise Garden Murals of Malinalco: Utopia and Empire in Sixteenth-Century Mexico* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993), 50–65.

32. De Gerlero, in *Mexico: Splendors of Thirty Centuries*, 250–52.

33. Samuel E. Edgerton, *Theaters of Conversion: Religious Architecture and Indian Artisans in Colonial Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2001), 27–28, with further references to testarian manuscript studies.

34. De Gerlero and Martínez del Río de Redo, in *Mexico: Splendors of Thirty Centuries*, 259, identify these disks with *chalchihuiite*, a precious stone associated with water in the pre-Hispanic world.

35. On the memory arts, see Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Mem-*

ory in Medieval Culture (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), esp. 19–23, 62–72; on Fra Angelico's use of color in San Marco in the context of the memory arts, see Didi-Huberman, *Fra Angelico*, 60–75.

36. Thomas Aquinas, St. 1a, Q. 78, a.4, response. Aristotle also described a mnemonic technique done through some kind of system of images (see *De anima* 427v; *Topics* II–VII). See Carruthers, *Book of Memory*, 62–63.

37. Roughly two centuries later, the same texts and arguments played a key, and more pernicious, role in racial theory. Nancy Stepan, *The Idea of Race in Science: Great Britain, 1800–1960* (London: Macmillan; Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1982), is an excellent introduction to the texts and issues well beyond Britain.

38. De Gerlero and Martínez del Río de Redo, in *Mexico: Splendors of Thirty Centuries*, 259.

39. I owe this insight to my student Cassiope Sydoriak.