RECONSTRUCTION AND DECONSTRUCTION OF A TWELFTH-CENTURY CISTERCIAN CHAPTER HOUSE IN TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY CALIFORNIA

A Thesis
Presented
To the Faculty of
California State University, Chico

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts in Art

by
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J. Craig Brown

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

During the winter of 2007, many decades after earning my bachelor’s degree in architecture from the University of California, Berkeley, I suddenly realized that the study of art history had become my lifelong passion. During those years, art had continued to subtly invade all aspects of my life, from my businesses of building design and world travel to later administration of a small Native American museum in Novato, California. Art in all of its forms always fascinated me and time had come to inquire if I could earn a higher degree, one specializing in the history of art. Thanks to the work of Dr. Matt Looper, at California State University at Chico, I was accepted into the master’s degree program in the Art History Department there, and I began attending graduate level classes that fall semester. I sincerely wish to thank the Art History staff, and especially Professors Dr. Looper and Dr. Asa Mittman and Professor Emeritus Dr. James McManus of that department, for their belief in my abilities to succeed in this endeavor. Through their classes I found that the subject of art history was far more complicated than I had ever imagined. I am grateful for all of their varied insights, lectures and readings during these past several years. And I am proud that both Dr. Looper and Dr. Mittman agreed to be included as thesis committee members for this paper. My deepest thanks to all for guiding me through to the completion of this task.

I would also like to thank several individuals involved with the Sacred Stones project at the monastery of New Clairvaux, Vina, California. As the result of many visits
to the monastery and personal meetings between 2007 and 2010, I gained much of my knowledge of the restoration of the Santa Maria de Ovila chapter house. I specifically would like to thank Robert McMullin, currently development director of the project, and Frank Hemholt, Master Stone Mason, and his apprentices, who have been involved with the actual construction of the project since the first stones were refinished and put into place on-site in 2002. And, through their published comments, I also appreciate the insights into the restoration by the project architect, Mr. Patrick Cole of Chico, California, and the project originator, Abbot Thomas X. Davis (now retired), whose inspiration took the stones from the piles he saw in 1955, at the inception of the dream to restore the chapter house, to their eventual reuse at Vina “where they would be loved and cared for on Cistercian soil.” I appreciate all of their assistance which helped me to analyze and understand the significance of their remarkable achievement.
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ABSTRACT

RECONSTRUCTION AND DECONSTRUCTION OF A TWELFTH-CENTURY CISTERCIAN CHAPTER HOUSE IN TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY CALIFORNIA

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This thesis compares and contrasts use and value in the New Clairvaux Monastery chapter house reconstruction at Vina, California. Use augments the value, as perceived by those directly involved in the project. However, there is inherent deconstruction of Cistercian principles, or value when the project is seen from differing twenty-first century viewpoints. A unique view of “romantic medievalism” in contemporary California has been partly responsible for these contradictions.

My rationale for this study is as follows. The reconstruction of the Santa Maria de Ovila chapter house had two original goals. First, to gather the broken stones and restore them in order to reconstruct the original monastery chapter house, the central assembly hall for any medieval monastery. This building was to become the spiritual center for the New Clairvaux Cistercian complex at Vina. Second, the reconstruction was
to establish a physical link for the monks with their Cistercian past glory, when their monasteries covered Europe and competed for intellectual supremacy of the Church against the Dominican Order of monks at Cluny. Yet, after the passage of nearly eight hundred years, can the use of the reconstructed building, upon completion, repeat the original one intended in twelfth-century Spain? Was the project, upon completion, to be considered an “authentic replica,” a copy, or solely a “symbolic” suggestion of the original chapter house before its demolition in Spain? Were these terms and concepts significant to the reproduction and restoration of ancient structures? Or, even applicable to this specific project? Even more to the point, has the changing role of a Cistercian monastery in the twenty-first century changed the use of its reconstructed “heart” significantly from the original intent? In just the last fifty years, since Abbot Thomas was sent to found a new Cistercian presence in California, that dream has changed considerably.

All these questions eventually concern the value of the completed chapter house reconstruction in the context of a modern monastery. The focus of the monastery is now the commercial production of wine by the previously cloistered order of monks who work in that environment, facilitated by public access to the property as a pilgrimage or tourist site.
CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Introduction to the Subject
and the Literature Used

I, too, saw them lying at the base of an aged eucalyptus tree in the foggy summer’s sunlight. They were simply heaps of carved stones and charred wood fragments, nearly black from the effects of age, moss, and mud. Their carved designs evoked images of structures long past. I wondered: “How long have they been there? And, what had they been used for; where were they from?” My chance discovery in Golden Gate Park happened at a time when tattered, man-made “ruins” from San Francisco’s past were very often found discarded and unused throughout the city. But these stones seemed different. Someone in another time and place had prized these stones for they had been carefully worked. Some were massive and sculptural, others petite and plain. There must have been a great story involved, I surmised, for them to have ended their journey discarded as trash in a hidden corner of that beautiful park. That was the last time I visited them until nearly four decades later. While my own path took many twists and turns, the “Sacred Stones” continued their journey also, and we met again in 2007 in a tiny farming village named Vina. The modern history of these stones begins with wealth, demolition, and good intentions. During the 1920s and 1930s, the wealthy American newspaper magnate William Randolph Hearst intended that several medieval monastery buildings he
purchased from the Spanish government would become part of his private estates in remote northern California. Even though his idea was to disassemble, transport, and reconstruct the structures wholly, none reached its planned destination. Like his fanciful Spanish “castle” on the Central California coast at San Simeon, European artworks and architecture were woven together without much consideration for their original context. To Hearst, the value in art was as a symbol of civility and culture, no matter its original intended use. His personal architect, Julia Morgan, was kept constantly at work trying to incorporate additional art acquisitions into the plans for Mr. Hearst’s various eclectic, palatial homes.¹

In 1931, Mr. Hearst purchased most of a vacant Cistercian monastery in Guadalajara province, Spain: the twelfth-century church, cloisters, refectory, and chapter house at Santa Maria de Ovila.² The intended use was similar to that of the previously mentioned structures; they were used as a museum to house Hearst’s collection of medieval armor at his remote Wyntoon estate on the McCloud River, near Mt. Shasta, California. Again, the structures were taken apart, numbered, and shipped to the U.S., but this time to San Francisco. The stones arrived there in 1941. Due to financial setbacks, Hearst offered the entire shipment of stones to the City of San Francisco, with the stipulation that the city reconstruct the entire monastery as a medieval museum, similar to the Cloisters Museum in New York City. Once more the plan was ended when the wooden crates, stored for years in Golden Gate Park, caught fire several times and the dye-based numbering system printed on each stone for reconstruction was lost. A portion of the

². Ibid.
portal of the church was salvaged and reconstructed in the “Garden Court” of the De Young Museum in 1964-1965, while the remainder of the stones from the most important building erected at the monastery, the chapter house originally constructed between 1190 and 1220, were separated and stored.³

In 1955, Abbot Thomas X. Davis traveled from Kentucky to northern California to found a new monastery. A fellow Cistercian monk in San Francisco showed the abbot the piles of “Sacred Stones,” told him of their history, and the Abbot decided it was time for him to “gather stones together,” as was written in Holy Scripture.⁴ But, technology at the time could not reassemble this puzzle without the missing codes. Abbot Thomas gently, yet persistently, continued to petition the San Francisco city government and the Board of Directors of the DeYoung Museum for a transfer of the stones to his new monastery in the Sacramento Valley.

Considered debris within Golden Gate Park, subsequent plans were made by San Francisco city planners to use the stones in transit stations or seismic retro-fittings under the Legion of Honor Art Museum. Years later, Golden Gate Park gardeners decided to use the more decorative stones, especially those with intricate carving still evident, as borders in a “garden for the blind” project and an “AIDS Memorial,” both located within the huge park. At about the same time, the lesser, plain stones were placed alongside the park’s roadways as curbstones. Many remain scattered and forgotten to this day.

Finally, in 1994, after 75 years of inability to complete Hearst’s plans, San Francisco and the Museum Board finally agreed to grant the Abbot Thomas’ request. Approximately 60% of those stones were recovered from the debris. The monastery of New Clairvaux purchased them and began reconstructing the chapter house in 2002.\(^5\) Funding for the project was primarily by private donations, with supplementary support from the William Randolph Hearst Foundation. In 2010, the project is nearing completion with the gothic front portal completed and the installation of the interior groin vaults under construction. Due to modern building and safety code restrictions, the exterior walls of the structure have been reinforced and are no longer constructed solely of stone: there is a thin stone facing laid over reinforced concrete-block walls to mimic the appearance of the building’s original stone surface. The master stonemasons involved on the project have reproduced the simple Cistercian architectural-style in limestone from Texas, similar to the type of stone originally used in Spain eight hundred years ago. All architectural elements used in the gothic portal screens have been meticulously hand-carved with a mallet and iron chisel. Many of the original stones have been used in the reconstruction, giving a patterned effect from their worn condition when contrasted with the new stones. Unfortunately, a massive, modern arched facade masks the elegant gothic portals from view until one enters the building. The short, squat columns and diminutive oval clerestory windows encasing the original portals seem out of character when seen against a background of tall, pointed groin arches and a single two-story gothic tracery window that floods the space with sunlight.

\(^5\) Abbey of New Clairveaux, “News from the Abbey.”
Organization of the Thesis

This thesis is arranged by subject and chapter. Chapter 2 presents an overall review of literature relevant to this thesis. In general, my selection of relevant literature will provide an analysis of the copy in western art and architecture with an emphasis on the symbolic shapes and Church iconography prevalent in the Middle Ages. Martin Biddle, author of *The Tomb of Christ*, and Colin Morris, in his book *The Sepulchre of Christ and the Medieval West*, both document Medieval church plans based on the circular altar and ambulatory design prevalent in copies of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, which served the same purpose as the original structure that was inaccessible at the time in Palestine. The history of Bernard of Clairvaux and his ecclesiastical movement against the excesses of the Benedictine Order of monks based in France during that time is detailed afterward. This conflict included the achievements of the reform movement of Cistercian monks in architecture and the spread of their new building “formula” throughout Europe in the twelfth century. The melding of their religious beliefs with those of the Christian Visigoths, along with that of the educated Arabian Caliphs, was essential to the growth of the Cistercian Order in medieval Spain. *The Medieval Spains*, by Bernard Reilly, and *Early Medieval Spain*, by Roger Collins, both trace the Cistercian traditions in Spain to the period of King Alfonso VII of Leon-Castile, the age of “Medieval Inter-

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nationalism.” Jerrilynn Dodds, in her *Architecture and Ideology in Early Medieval Spain*,\textsuperscript{10} concentrates her thoughts on Cistercian works in Spain and their fusion with Visigoth and Mozarab influences from further south on the Iberian Peninsula.

Partly, our modern view of American medievalism through contemporary times is found in several books, such as *Medievalism in American Culture*,\textsuperscript{11} by Bernard Rosenthal and Paul E. Szamarch, or *Simulacra and Simulation*,\textsuperscript{12} by Jean Baudrillard. Walter Benjamin and Baudrillard are the most influential of the authors for development of this thesis, since their work focuses on a post-modernist analytical approach to the creation of copies, replicas, and reproductions of art, and, therefore, by deductive reasoning, architecture as well. The writings of Emmanuel Viollet-Le-Duc in eighteenth-century France, as translated by Kenneth D. Whitehead and published in his book *The Foundations of Architecture: Selections from the Dictionnaire Raisonne*,\textsuperscript{13} document Le Duc’s thoughts on medieval building restoration during the nineteenth century. Additional works containing theories for replication or copies in our modern age include *The Culture*.

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of the Copy, by Hillel Schwartz, and an extensive collection of essays edited by Kate Fitz Gibbon et al., Who Owns the Past.

I used three basic tools in my methodological analysis of the Sacred Stones project. First, I used iconological interpretation of the gothic architectural style; since most architecture from the Cistercian Order is devoid of ornament, this lack of elaboration in stone becomes a definitive style element of its own. Second, formalism, as found in Cistercian monastery architecture, is employed. This approach analyzes the structural and decorative qualities of Cistercian architecture that are unique in many ways, as opposed to “Romanesque,” which relies upon its classical basis of order, style, and engineering principles. The third approach used deconstruction, a late twentieth-century “postmodern” process of accepting the inherent dualities and contradictions of art. The Sacred Stones project can be seen from this viewpoint, given the changes in design and program evident since reconstruction of the Santa Maria de Ovila chapter house began in 2002.

Periodical publications and journal articles provide insights into the thoughts of prominent individuals associated with the Sacred Stones project. Foremost among these periodical sources was Gesta Monastica: “News from the Abbey of New Clairvaux.” Several interviews contained in this publication allow the reader to follow changes in the social relevance and design of the reconstruction project since Abbot Thomas began his quest in 1955.

Chapter 3 identifies the role of iconology as used in an analysis of Cistercian gothic architecture from the twelfth century. When combined with the application of formalism and postmodern deconstruction, the Cistercian formula of medieval-modern design theory and construction details becomes easily identifiable. A recent, worldwide resurgence of Cistercian monastic orders has, in turn, resulted in the rebirth of “Saint Bernard’s twelfth century architectural blueprint for the Order, with its emphasis on the quality of light and proportion, on simple, pared down elevations and detailing.”17 Stark minimalism now is the rule as exemplified by architect John Pawson’s Novy Dvur Monastery complex in the Czech Republic. Simplicity and self-denial is the essence of Cistercian life. 18 The plainness of twenty-first century architecture seems to compliment that of the Sacred Stones project even though those building formulas extend back eight hundred years in the past.

Chapter 4 involves a discussion of the research concerning the Sacred Stones project. First, it provides a history of the Cistercian Order and the traditional role of the chapter house in their rituals. Building planning and design details at this time were greatly influenced by the medieval concept of a “copy” replacing the “original” where public use was involved. This section also includes a presentation of the reasons for the spread of the order to the Languedoc and Spain in the twelfth century. Our modern recognition of gothic architecture as “medieval modernism,” with a Cistercian engineering formula of building as its basis, is included. Second, it includes a modern history of the

18. Ibid.
Sacred Stones project and the intentions of the stones’ owners in turn to equate use with “value” across the twentieth century. Third, it considers the influence of “medievalism,” or the romantic viewpoint that the gothic era was an ideal age that the United States ought to mimic. From the fanciful restoration projects of Viollet-Le-Duc throughout France in the mid-nineteenth century to modern “gothic cathedrals” still under construction in the United States today, we still contrast and confuse restoration with replication. Finally, there is a discussion about the needs of a modern winery with public access and use, as seen from various perspectives and viewpoints and their inevitable conflicts in value judgments. The summary and conclusions found in the research are detailed in Chapter 5, which is followed by Chapter 6, a comprehensive bibliography of the research.
CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

The sources selected for inclusion in this paper were chosen for their scholarship relevant to sections of my research, or for their involvement with various aspects of methodology commonly used in the field of art history. Romanesque and gothic church design and the medieval concept of the copy are crucial to understanding the viewpoint of society during the Middle Ages. To the medieval mind, an architectural copy held the same importance as the original for purposes of sacred ritual and sacraments. Two of my sources reflect this theme: The Tomb of Christ and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, by Martin Biddle,\(^\text{19}\) and The Sepulchre of Christ and the Medieval West, by Colin Morris.\(^\text{20}\) Hans Boker continues this topic with his article concerning “The Bishop’s Chapel at Hereford Cathedral and the Question of Architectural Copies in the Middle Ages.”\(^\text{21}\) Two additional articles, “The Idea of the Castle in Medieval England,” by Abigail Wheatley,\(^\text{22}\) and The Medieval Fortress: Castles, Forts and Walled Cities of the Middle Ages, by J.E. Kaufmann and H.W. Kaufmann,\(^\text{23}\) add support for the idea that the medieval monastery was a spiritual “fortress” analogous to the secular feudal castle.

\(^{19}\) Biddle, Tomb of Christ.

\(^{20}\) Morris, Sepulchre of Christ.


Gothic monastic architecture is reviewed in the next section of research. As a prelude to the reforms begun in the twelfth century, it first was necessary to understand the roots of the gothic style in Europe. Articles, including “Gothic Architecture,” by Robert Branner,24 “Gothic Architecture by Remote Control,” by Franklin Toker,25 and “Introduction to an Iconography of Medieval Architecture,” by Richard Krautheimer,26 among others, all helped to define the innovations of early gothic church architecture in France when the Benedictines were leaders of the Church based in Cluny. Deborah Vess discusses “Medieval Monasticism”27 and its traditional methods of planning, details of construction, and use in her book. “Suger’s Miracles, Branner’s Bourges: Reflections on ‘Gothic Architecture’ as Medieval Modernism,” by Marvin Trachtenburg,28 helps the reader understand how the non-classical structural systems that burst upon Europe in the early eleventh century, seemingly out of nowhere, were able to solve many of the problems inherent in Romanesque church planning.

The religious reforms of Saint Bernard and his concepts of art and architecture eventually led to a distinct Cistercian gothic style. In his series of four articles about four Cistercian monasteries located in Italy during the 1890s, A.L. Frothingham, Jr. included

illustrations that detailed these innovations in architecture that were still in existence prior to the First World War.\textsuperscript{29} Their style typifies the Cistercian architectural formula of the Middle Ages. Additional Cistercian historical information, such as “The Birth of the Cistercians,” published by Our Lady of the Holy Spirit Monastery at Conyers, Georgia,\textsuperscript{30} and “Saint Bernard of Clairvaux 1090-1153,” by M. Basil Pennington, OCSO,\textsuperscript{31} give details of the life of the founder of the Cistercian Order and his beliefs that influenced their architectural style. Three additional works emphasize the religious importance of his “Apologia” to Abbot William of Cluny, which led to the mid-twelfth-century controversy about monastic art, which divided the Church in western Europe for decades. The primary source for this topic was \textit{Cistercians and Cluniacs: Saint Bernard’s Apologia to Abbot William}, based on his philosophical ideas about Church reform.\textsuperscript{32}

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{}Bernard of Clairvaux, \textit{Cistercians and Cluniacs: St Bernard’s Apologia to Abbot William} (Collegeville: Cistercian Publications, 1986).
\end{thebibliography}
The next topic for research concerned Cistercian internationalism, and their expansion into the Languedoc and the Spanish Christian kingdoms during the Middle Ages. The history of Visigoth Christians, Muslim rule over their Christian and Jewish subjects, and the “Reconquest” of the Christian kings took place over a period of centuries. Cistercian monastic influence overshadowed that of Cluny and the Benedictine monks from the late twelfth century until the rise of the Black Death in 1348 CE, which decimated monastery populations throughout western Europe. Literature for this period included three important books: *Early Medieval Spain*, by Roger Collins;33 *The Medieval Spains*, written by Bernard F. Reilly;34 Jerrilynn Dodds’ work on *Architecture and Ideology in Early Medieval Spain*.35 In addition, for thoughts concerning the religious influence of France on the region, Vivian Paul’s “The Beginnings of Gothic Architecture in Languedoc”36 became part of the research.

The focus of my research now changed to develop an understanding of American medievalism, by which the Middle Ages was viewed as a romantic age with absolute values of good and evil, an emphasis on collective social behavior (rather than the supremacy of the individual), and the birthplace of modern institutions. *The Culture of the Copy*, by Hillel Schwartz, begins with this era when he “attempts to make sense of the Western fascination with replicas, duplicates and twins . . . the pursuit of copies.”37 That work is supported in its content by another major work recently published in the United

34. Reilly, Medieval Spains.
35. Dodds, Architecture and Ideology in Early Medieval Spain.
States, Simulacra and Simulation, by Jean Baudrillard (as translated from the French by Shelia Faria Glaser). His work incorporates the premise that “simulation threatens the difference between the ‘true’ and the ‘false,’ the ‘real’ and the ‘imaginary’.” Two other important sources dealing other aspects of this topic are noted as well. Who Owns the Past...Cultural Policy, Cultural Property and the Law, by Kate Fitz Gibbon et al., sections of which deal with artistic copies and forgeries in the context of a museum.

Medievalism in American Culture, authored by Bernard Rosenthal and Paul E. Szarmach, concentrates on two themes: first, “to explore the ways in which medieval culture affected the shaping of American society... the other searched for the ways in which American Culture constructed its own ideas of the Middle Ages.”


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38. Baudrillard, Simulacra and Simulation.
39. Ibid., 3.
42. Ibid., 1.
The nineteenth century in Europe and America experienced a time of gothic restoration and revival influenced by primarily one individual, the French visionary architect Eugene Emanuel Viollet-le-Duc. *The Foundations of Architecture: Selections from the Dictionnaire Raisonne*,

46 highlights part of his theories on gothic building restoration then promoted with his supervision. In turn, his influence is found in the work of English and American architects of the latter part of that century, as noted by Elizabeth Cumming and Wendy Kaplan, authors of *The Arts and Crafts Movement: World of Art Series*.47

Modern architectural copies in the United States were constructed as individual wealth increased in America during the Industrial Age. For various reasons, the industrial and spiritual leaders of this maturing nation looked back to Europe for legitimacy. One of the wealthiest of all, William Randolph Hearst, continually wanted to own the past, as well as his own era. *Building for Hearst and Morgan: Voices from the George Loorz Papers*, by Taylor Coffman,48 who edited the papers when they were discovered years later, gives insight into Hearst’s reasoning and the details of several reconstruction/replication projects he envisioned (but never completed). Additional journal articles such as “George Grey Barnard; The Cloisters and the Abbaye,” by J.L. Schraeder,49 concerning the Metropolitan Museum of Art’s home for their medieval art collection, or the

“Mission San Antonio de Padua History,” another restoration project by the Hearst Foundation, were valuable for their insight into the reasoning behind the desire to restore (or replicate) the past.

The Sacred Stones project has been methodically researched. A discussion of pertinent literature concerning this project over many years follows. As far back as 1982, Margaret Burke documented the sad state of the “Stones” in her article, “Santa Maria de Ovila.” Until Gesta Monastica published “News from the Abbey of New Clairvaux,” and unveiled their plans for the chapter house reconstruction, assembling the resources and manpower to complete such a task seemed impossible. “The Monastery Stones - Final Chapter,” by Jack Leiberman, and “12th-Century Portals Reconstructed at Cistercian monastery in Vina,” by Beth Maxey for the Chico Enterprise/Record newspaper, have documented their progress as the project program evolved and changed over time.

The initial task of reconstructing a twelfth-century gothic building in the twenty-first century seems to be approaching completion, but compromises were made along the way and the project’s eventual use might be re-evaluated. Use may be defined as “[the act] of employment for some purpose, to put into service, or to apply one’s own

51. Burke, “Santa Maria de Ovila.”
52. Abbey of New Clairvaux, “News from the Abbey.”
purposes [to any object].”\textsuperscript{55} More specifically, for my purposes use will refer to the eventual service of the completed chapter house reconstruction within the context of its contemporary monastery setting. “Value,” on the other hand, is defined as “the relative worth, merit or importance . . . [of its] usefulness.”\textsuperscript{56} Since value is relative, various points of view with respect to the structure’s use will be considered. A discussion concerning the “authenticity” of this reconstruction project with respect to its value and “use,” as seen from differing viewpoints, and the effect of a unique form of California medievalism on those visions, follows next.

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Positivism refers to a systematic approach used to analyze artworks with respect to authorship, style, techniques, and materials. It is supposed that “the facts are the only true source of knowledge.”\textsuperscript{57} This train of thought engages a “highly descriptive account of artworks, including their formal qualities, history of creation, symbols and motifs, the biography of the artist, and so on.”\textsuperscript{58}

Connoisseurship continued as an important part of the empiricalism/positivism method for the study of art throughout the nineteenth century. Subsequently, there was a general decline in this concept of art expertise until approximately 1970, when renewed interest in the systems approach for art analysis allowed for its inclusion again.

One basic tool for analysis of the chapter house reconstruction is “formalism,” with respect to Cistercian monastery architecture past and present. Henri Focillion stated that, in his view, gothic architecture evolved and changed over time due to the nature of building materials and the discovery of the rib-vault style of construction. Michael Baxandall countered this theory with his own contention that gothic architecture is an evolution of artistic forms determined by conservation of building materials and space,

\textsuperscript{57} Anne D’Alleva, \textit{Methods and Theories of Art History} (London: Laurence King, 2005), 10.
\textsuperscript{58} Ibid.
along with the gauging of mathematics which led to a new understanding of structural engineering. The patron of the project thereby achieved the maximizing of his economy-of-scale for the project, and minimized his cost. This view is consistent with that of Michel Foucault, who suggested that history was non-linear, filled with chance occurrences, leaps, gaps, and accidents. He also believed that our ideas, beliefs, and institutions were the means through which power is gained and held in any society.\textsuperscript{59} Therefore, patronage and social context are an important part of the art of the Middle Ages, especially that of the Cistercian monastic order as they strived for supremacy within the Church.

Iconology also becomes a tool for analysis of the duality of ornamental style found in the gothic architectural style. This methodology involves the meaning inherent in the overall character of such works. The conflict over theological beliefs between the Benedictine and Cistercian monastic orders reached even to the stonework and simplicity of design advocated by Saint Bernard himself. The Cistercian monastery plan became a textual source itself, which relied on repetition of a strict engineering formula for rapid international expansion of the order, another use for iconological analytical tools.

Post-structuralism has indicated that there is no single, correct way of seeing the past, especially in art history. Hans Belting emphasized that contemporary art must be seen as “grounded in intense historical and cultural awareness.”\textsuperscript{60} In his writing “The End of the History of Art,” he makes the point that art shapes, and is shaped by, cultural practices and that the role of the individual artist is entirely secondary, even sometimes

\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., 139-140.
\textsuperscript{60} Ibid., 155.
unrecognized. This is one of the basic precepts of the deconstruction theory. A pluralistic view of modern monastery life would change the traditional dualities of art and life, image and reality, priest and laity. Deconstruction changes the rules of how we see art and challenges traditional order and viewpoint. By using poststructuralist approach, the importance of the Sacred Stones is viewed not as recreating an authentic twelfth-century structure and moving it physically eight hundred years into the future, but as completing it.

These all became methods used to understand whether a twelfth-century Cistercian chapter house continues to maintain its original value and use within the context of a twenty-first century monastic environment. The study of the Sacred Stones chapter house reconstruction project began with regular bi-monthly site visits to the New Clairvaux monastery commencing in late August 2007. The project was under construction during the summer and fall seasons of each year, so measured progress could be observed. Interviews were periodically conducted with the principals on-site where they were readily available. The stonemasons worked elsewhere during the mid-October to mid-May hiatus and construction on the chapter house was halted. Photographs documented the construction progress during the subsequent years and the details of the structure’s architecture as newly completed.
CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION OF THE RESEARCH

Cistercian Philosophy

Life in the medieval era was structured in relation to three primary social spaces: a fortress stronghold to protect and support the nobility, monasteries to enclose and protect the clergy, and gathering places, such as markets and inns, for the farmers, craftsmen and travelers. Monasteries were large religious communities, founded and run by members of a specific church order, which included all the necessary daily functions to be self-sustaining.

[The Cistercian order of monks] were a reform order of cloistered Benedictines who had a profound effect on the thought and politics of the twelfth century. . . . The friars were in many ways opposed to the “Establishment”—regular monasticism—and as [such, their] buildings were without frills and basic in design.61

The monastic orders, especially the Cistercians, generally built in a fairly uniform manner wherever they established themselves, thereby playing a vital role in the dissemination of vaulted construction.62

In 1098, the Cistercian order spread rapidly from its beginnings with a desire for a more literal obedience to the spirit and letter of the Rule of Saint Benedict. Chanted at daily prayers, this series of religious rules was intended to focus the followers on the

route to a more spiritually-oriented life.\textsuperscript{63} The monks of the monastery at Cluny, the most powerful and splendid in the region, spent much of each day reciting the “Divine Office” instead of physical labor. In contrast, the reform-minded Cistercians believed that, as stated by Benedict, work was as important as prayer in God’s eyes.\textsuperscript{64} They argued that the “Cluniacs” had forgotten Benedict’s direction on manual labor, so they focused a large portion of their day on reciting church liturgy. To insure that these rules were kept, each Cistercian “daughter house,” of which there were over three hundred across Europe by the end of the twelfth century, was to be visited by their abbot from their senior house at least once a year.\textsuperscript{65} When the abbot was not residence, the \textit{claustral prior}, the abbot’s second-in-command, was assigned responsibility for the internal life of each monastery.\textsuperscript{66}

Brother Bernard, the founding abbot of Clairvaux Abbey, was born in 1090 in the region of Burgundy and entered the Abbey of Citeaux in 1112, bringing thirty of his relatives with him, including five of his brothers.\textsuperscript{67} In 1115, he was sent to establish a new abbey at Clairvaux, “The Valley of Light,” where, as the young abbot, he published a series of sermons on the Annunciation that resulted in his recognition as a masterful spiritual writer.\textsuperscript{68} At age thirty-five, he had been a monk for twelve years and abbot of the monastery of Clairvaux for a decade. Subsequently he became the most influential leader of a movement to reform the Church. In 1125, Bernard wrote his \textit{Apoloagia} dealing with

\begin{itemize}
\item[63.] Vess, “Medieval Monasticism.”
\item[64.] Ibid.
\item[65.] Ibid.
\item[67.] Pennington, “Saint Bernard of Clairvaux.”
\item[68.] Ibid.
\end{itemize}
the excesses of contemporary monastic life at the request of his friend, William of Saint Thierry. While he addressed his letter to Brother William, Benedictine abbot of the monastery at Cluny, he sent the text to another friend, Brother Oger, abbot of Saint Méard at Tournai with the request that it not be copied. In turn, Brother Oger forwarded the carefully crafted letter to Brother William and initiated the Cistercian-Cluniac conflict over monastic reform. “After the rise of the Cistercians the word ‘Cluniac’ was applied to all traditional Benedictines, whatever their actual affiliation.”

In his text, Bernard singled out specific aspects of monastic customs that he considered to be contrary to the original teachings of the Church. Among those items he objected to were the use of gold and silver paraphernalia in the rituals, the rich food served at mealtime, the number of servants assigned as personal staff to Church officials, and the visual art which adorned the buildings, especially the cloisters, which distracted the monks during their periods of contemplation of the scriptures. Bernard’s conclusion to all this ostentatious show of wealth was that it increased the giving of more wealth to a church: “The very sight of such exquisite baubles is sufficient to inspire men to make offerings, though not to say their prayers. In this way riches attract riches. . .” To Brother Bernard, this show of wealth promoted the sins of gluttony, pride, envy, and avarice for the monks when a duty to help the poor should have been the actual goals of the Church. With respect to monastic art, in terms of both sculpture and painting:

Bernard’s insistence that monks express the poverty and spirituality of their lives by the austerity of their buildings, is sometimes understood as a blanket

71. Ibid., 65.
condemnation of art . . . [however], he approves of whatever serves a devotional or instructional purpose.\textsuperscript{72}

He was particularly incensed by the “grotesques,” wild beasts, half-human forms, and violent scenes of pagan warfare and hunting depicted on the column capitals found in monastery cloisters. Not only is their depiction considered to be an “affront to the poor,” but they would act as a distraction for the monks.\textsuperscript{73}

All around there is such an amazing variety of shapes that one could easily prefer to take one’s reading from the walls instead of from a book. One could spend the whole day gazing fascinated at these things, one by one, instead of meditating on the law of God.\textsuperscript{74}

It is the rational mind that Bernard saw as the difference between men and beasts, with violence the result of irrational behavior.\textsuperscript{75} Since many of the monks came from aristocratic backgrounds, where fighting and hunting were considered a sport for recreation, these learned irrational traits needed to be changed in order to worship their creator, as only rational men can do.\textsuperscript{76}

The basis then of Bernard’s criticism of capital sculpture is not rooted in any personal idiosyncrasy, but is a reasoned critique of art as a distraction to the monk, and ultimately the vigorous projection of traditional monastic values.\textsuperscript{77}

Abbot Bernard also comments on the scale of his opponent’s churches, which he considers excessively large in area, too tall and imposing, and extravagant in opulent ornamentation. He states in his text that his preference would be to house the poor with

\textsuperscript{73} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{74} Bernard of Clairvaux, \textit{Cistercians and Cluniacs}, 66.
\textsuperscript{75} Rudolph, “Bernard of Clairvaux’s Apologia,” 128.
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{77} Ibid., 129.
plain building materials, rather than cover the church floors in marble or decorate the holy space with precious metals and gems. “The stones of the church are covered in gold, while its children are left naked!”78 From this point on, “the rugged and stern simplicity, the opposition to the superfluous and the showy, exemplified in the life and works of the Cistercians . . . is the ideal carried out in stone.”79 In actuality,

Bernard’s criticisms of art in the monastery were much broader than the limits of Cluny. They were no less than an integral part of the greatest artistic issue in the West since Roman recognition of the Church: the early twelfth century controversy over monastic art.80

The most common style for Church architecture between the time of Roman recognition of Christianity and the twelfth century is known to us as Romanesque. Common throughout Europe, there were significant regional variations in its standard elements. In simple terms, this architectural style is distinguished by the use of semi-circular arches, thick walls with only a few small windows or door openings for access, ventilation, and light penetration, and elaborately carved capitals on short, stocky columns. Roofs were built of heavy timber construction, and central piers were thick in mass. Barrel vaulting was used in arcades where buttressing from adjacent walls was practical. Seldom were these structures built higher than two stories in the Languedoc region due to limitations of the stone or brick structural building techniques used at that time.81 Northern Spain based their Romanesque monastic church styles, such as the inclusion of wide-span aisleless naves, on examples found at “Toulouse rather than the fully-developed Gothic of the Ile-de-France. . . . The Cathedral of Santiago de Compostella (built around

1100) is almost a replica of Saint Sernin, Toulouse.”\textsuperscript{82} Although the Islamic Caliphs ruled most of the Iberian Peninsula between the eighth and fourteenth centuries, Christian churches near the Pyrenees remained mostly free of their influences until the reconquest of Cordoba in 1235.

The gothic style originated in Northern France and nearby Germany with the expansion of Norman and Lombard influence, probably in the late-eleventh century, and spread swiftly to the adjoining regions to the south and west.\textsuperscript{83} Local building traditions changed the style and details slightly in each location.

In addition to meeting the need for enclosing large interior space for public gatherings and worship, the Gothic style lent itself to the intricate theological programs for sculpture and stained glass devised by scholarly clerics of the time. . . . Space, light, and sculptural effects of the masonry were so organized as to produce a transcendental and awesome character, visionary in scale.\textsuperscript{84}

By the mid-twelfth century, the spread of new, successful Cistercian engineering achievements lead to the further standardization in their monastery plan and construction methods. Cistercian building innovations included (1) structural rib vaulting consisting of a keystone, moulded bricks or intricately carved stones and rib springers, and (2) rectangular exterior buttresses and thin walls supporting diaphragm arches. These stone arches could either carry a stone wall atop and be constructed with either a gabled-roof or support for a timber roof. As Vivian Paul writes,

\textsuperscript{82} Ernest H. Short, German and Spanish Architecture: Reprinted from the History of Religious Architecture (Whitefish: Kessinger, 2006), 232.
\textsuperscript{84} Perrin, “Pointed Arches and Buttressed Walls,” 238.
Among the most important early examples of wide-span diaphragm arches were those built by the Cistercians at the end of the twelfth century for dormitories and refectories in Languedoc and Catalonia.\textsuperscript{85}

Thin, vertical window slits in the first story building exterior walls and lack of ornament on all vertical wall or column surfaces were also common in the Cistercian building “formula,” replicated throughout their domain.

A typical medieval monastery complex was comprised of all the structures required to sustain a large, self-sufficient population of monks. By the time of Abbot Bernard of Clairvaux’s death in 1154, his monastery alone fed and housed nearly seven hundred brothers of his order.\textsuperscript{86} The site of the community contained not only a large church and cloisters for contemplation, but a chapter house, a refectory, hospital, guest-houses, store houses, and barns. Nearly all of these Cistercian monasteries were constructed during the half-century that witnessed the transition from Romanesque to gothic architectural style.\textsuperscript{87} Standard Cistercian layout placed the church to the north of the chapter house and both were adjacent to the cloisters, although variants did occasionally occur due to unusual circumstances. In his studies of four Cistercian monasteries in Italy, built within the mid- to late-twelfth century, A.J. Frothingham, Jr. found great similarity in engineering no matter the location of each site. The French Cistercians seem to have brought their own style of construction wherever they settled. They became the “principal agents for the propagation of the Gothic style in every other country of Europe.”\textsuperscript{88} The subsequent resurgence of the Dominican order and the birth of the Franciscans in the

\textsuperscript{86} Frothingham, “Introduction of Gothic Architecture into Italy I,” 17.
\textsuperscript{87} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{88} Ibid., 13.
thirteenth-century, combined with local wars and the advent of the Black Death in 1348, ended the Cistercian superiority in Church affairs.\(^89\) The diaphragm vaults found in various Cistercian churches in Italy are based on the same load-bearing engineering principles as those in France. The vaulting of a Cistercian dormitory at Poblet, France, is nearly identical with that found at Fossanova, Italy. Unadorned cross-rib vaulting remained visible in the refectory building at Le Thoromet, France. Two chapter houses that Frothingham studied in Italy, at Fossanova and Cimino, bear a striking resemblance to the one from Santa Maria de Ovila, Spain, currently under reconstruction in California.

There is a marked simplicity in the main arches of the nave. They are totally devoid of external mouldings, and this point of difference between Fossanova and the traditional churches of the Ile-de-France is in harmony with the Cistercian dislike of the unreal and the artificial, and their love of constructional beauty.\(^90\)

For a period of more than 700 years, the Cistercian monks of Santa Maria de Ovila in Spain daily chanted a chapter of the *Rule of Saint Benedict* for the community before they began their work. The “rules” translated the Gospels into a way of life and thus the chapter house was the most important building at the monastery.\(^91\) Great care was taken in the simple details carved by the master stonemasons in its groin vaulting, arched portals, and slender columns.

Even taking precedence over the church. In the twelfth century the best materials were used in its construction. For example, the Chapter House alone had solid blocks for the walls. All other buildings, including the church, had walls that were filled with ‘rubble,’ that were built with smaller stones.\(^92\)

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89. Ibid., 18.
90. Ibid., 34.
91. Abbey of New Clairveaux, “News from the Abbey.”
92. Ibid.
This small building was a monastery’s heart. While a great mass of stones from Santa Maria de Oliva in Spain was shipped to California by William Randolph Hearst, those of the chapter house were separated from the rest and kept together over time. A new Cistercian brotherhood eventually accepted the challenge to add that “heart” to their new monastery at Vina California.

The Recent History of the Sacred Stones Project

In 1994, after nearly thirty years of discussion, the Sacred Stones were granted to the Monastery of New Clairvaux and the services of an architect, Patrick Cole, were accepted for the reconstruction project. In his working drawings, the architect was required to meet the modern basic construction code requirements.

The building needs to be outfitted with modern amenities, such as electricity, in a way that does not compromise the original form of the structure. [Additionally,] the architect . . . developed mechanical and electrical plans, prepared design development drawings and specifications, and assisted with [construction] cost estimates.94

The general contractor for the project is Phillip Sunseri (Sunseri and Associates), and three internationally recognized master stonemasons have been involved with the project: Frank Hemholts, Oskar Kempf, and Ross Leuthard.95

The role of the architect in any modern building project is far different than that of his counterpart during the Early gothic years prior to the thirteenth century.96 Today’s architect has the responsibility for drawing the program given to him by the

93. Ibid.
94. Ibid.
95. Ibid.
client and making certain that all requirements for building materials and specifications have been met. Those written details are passed to a construction specialist who (1) determines the order of necessary tasks to be completed and (2) is responsible for remaining within a specified itemization of costs, both in time and money. The medieval counterpart had responsibility to both design and construct and relied on past experience and the skills of familiar secondary craftsmen in order to form a team with the “master” in charge. It was not unusual for such teams to travel the length of the pilgrimage roads, working on several projects at once in different regions of Europe. Before the year 1220, building design would be drawn directly on the ground, without the use of drawn plans, for none exists from that period. Obviously, a standard “formula” for design, engineering, and construction details repeatedly used for similar structures would have sped up the process and have allowed extra time to be spent on customization of specialized projects, such as a specific church building, to highlight the community’s prestige.

With the chapter house reconstruction at Vina, the project architect seems to have been made aware of the building’s basic structure and carved details in advance, either by advice given by the monks and scholars about Cistercian engineering methods, by viewing the partly assembled stones on the site, or by diligent research into the vast information resources about Cistercian monastery construction available in publications or online. A combination of all three approaches would have been preferred to heighten the “authenticity” of the final structure, and Mr. Cole seems to have understood Cistercian architecture in detail. The graphic images printed in the previously mentioned essays by Mr. Frothingham on the subject of Cistercian monastery buildings in Italy give

97. Ibid.
evidence that the ongoing New Clairvaux chapter house project was obviously Cistercian in its original construction.

There were only sketchy photographs of Santa Maria de Oliva before it was dismantled by Mr. Hearst. But, according to Mr. Cole, it is thought that the chapter house had elements of both the Cistercian style and the more traditional heavy Spanish Romanesque exterior walls, with thick walls and narrow window slits, as seen the illustrations included in Jerrilynn Dodd’s writing. Cistercian building practices were distinct and uniform during the late-twelfth century, whether in the Languedoc, Italy, or Spain. There is interior cross-rib vaulting; thin, vertical window slits on one exterior wall; rectangular exterior buttresses at the thrust points of the vaults; three pointed arch portals with slender clustered columns; plain capitals and two carved stone, circular gothic lunettes; finally there is a large, two-story gothic tracery window in the south wall of the sun porch. The proposed interior vault-supporting piers are also intended to be formed with clustered columns simply capped, launching the vault ribs over to the exterior walls. These, along with the ribbed cross-vaults of the ceiling, remain incomplete as of 2010. There is no way of knowing whether significant changes in chapter house details were made during its eight hundred years of use. But, those early photographs do show it to be true to its Cistercian roots, as noted by Frothingham’s essays, in most respects. A major architectural detail missing from the early photographs was the style of the two central column capitals, which remained missing when the stones were shipped to Vina. The architect and Abbot appealed to the public for information as to their whereabouts with-

98. Dodds, Architecture and Ideology in Early Medieval Spain, 190-205.
It became the job of the stonemasons to create two capitals to complete the design and they chose a simple, pointed acanthus leaf pattern which seems somewhat out of character with those clustered around it. The west-facing courtyard wall obviously conveys a much different style of design, with heavy columns in the Romanesque fashion, wide pointed arches and oval clerestory windows overhead, rather than the more dramatic slender gothic elements seen within. But the rebuilt portion of the project seems faithful to its original medieval design.

Cause and Effect of American Medievalism

In their book *Medievalism in American Culture*, authors Rosenthal and Szarmach define the term *Medievalism* as an “idealized picture of medieval life.”\(^1\) Myth, legend, and tales all have colored our view of that era, and, as a consequence, we have often applied those morals to our own times and problems.\(^2\) The nineteenth-century expansion of American culture into the west was seen by many as evidence of pervasive “American medievalism,” with cowboys and explorers taking the role of “good knights” while the crooks, thieves and drifters assume the “bad knight’s” role.

Additionally, two other romanticized legacies have become part of our view of that era: the reconstruction of the medieval institutions, buildings, and associated decorative motifs as symbolic icons for our use, and the recreation or study of the history, literature, and arts of the Middle Ages. American medievalism retained this idealized

\(^{100}\) Kahn, “Reconstruction, a New Chapter.”
\(^{101}\) Ibid., 15.
perception of European medieval social history, the time between classical polytheism and the Renaissance, as a period when society was unified in seeking common goals for a community. Today, scholars of the Middle Ages mostly disagree with this romantic viewpoint and suggest that society at that time was much more diverse, with ethnic and class divisions evident throughout Europe.

This was especially true in England, where the Middle Ages were critical in forming the belief in their national identity with the development of the “Common Law,” their distrust of the Roman Catholic Church papacy, and freedom to seek their own destiny. Over time, the eventual ruins of cathedrals and castles scattered around the English countryside constantly reinforced this link to the past and became romanticized in art, literature, and traditions. The later Renaissance era became seen by many as a period of rest, or even regression, between the achievements of the Middle Ages and the Age of Reason.\textsuperscript{103} During the time of the English settlement of North America, these concepts were transplanted by the colonists by way of the books they brought with them. Printed materials were the primary source for literacy in the colonies and were the bearers of these thoughts.\textsuperscript{104} Moral lessons were highlighted in many of these works, to teach a literate, if isolated, community of brothers with common ancestry with the English.\textsuperscript{105} The American Revolutionary War disrupted this channel of education for nearly a decade and it was not reopened until the 1790s, when trade was reestablished between England and America.\textsuperscript{106}

\textsuperscript{103} Kenney and Workman, “Ruins, Romance and Reality,” 132.
\textsuperscript{104} Ibid., 131, 145.
\textsuperscript{105} Guggisberg, “Uses of the European Past in American Historiography,” 5.
\textsuperscript{106} Kenney and Workman, “Ruins, Romance and Reality,” 145.
Philadelphia was the intellectual, cultural, and financial center of the new nation, and the Gothic Revival in the arts began there with the construction of the imposing Bank of Philadelphia building in 1805. 107

In Europe, the Medieval Revival was part of a wide ranging romantic reaction against the tyranny imposed by excesses of neo-classical order, benevolent despotism, and revolution in the name of Reason . . . the Middle Ages triggered much deliberate fantasy created as an escape from unbearable everyday realities. 108

Americans, whose lives were different yet often equally unbearable, also wanted to believe in the fantasy of an “enchanted past.” 109 The new nation eagerly accepted the imagery of the Middle Ages in order to create a sense of shared destiny and heritage with their “lost Mother Country” on the path to a better future. 110

American study of the history of the Middle Ages in Europe tended to emphasize an understanding of the resolution of medieval conflicts and how the newly formed institutions put into place by the leaders of the Revolution would achieve this end.

For the romantic historians of America the study of European history had two main functions. Primarily, European history was “pre-natal” American history in the period when the destinies of the two continents were still tied to each other, or in the earlier period when American History in the proper sense had not yet begun. The secondary function was the indication of continuing political and religious conflict in the Old World at a time when these problems came to be solved in the New. 111

107. Ibid.
108. Ibid., 163.
110. Ibid., 3, 12.
111. Ibid., 7.
These themes would later become more obvious as the Industrial Age, and its associated social evils, took root in England and America in the nineteenth century. At that time, many social historians looked more favorably on the German experience during the Middle Ages as the preferred example, with its conflicts between science and religion combined with a gradual acceptance of evolutionary development. Behind this social movement was a basic belief that “the German historical school (‘Franks, Goths, Saxons, Lombards, Normans, Netherlands, and Americans—German’s all’) on one hand and that of Darwinism on the other.”

In literature of the time, emphasis was placed by the authors Goethe, Tennyson, and Scott, and on medieval themes involving chivalry, honor, and selfless purpose. Again, the emphasis was primarily on the common good, not the desires of the individual. Liberty of thought and group freedom were often the object of the lesson, with examples such as the signing of the Magna Carta, the quest of Parsifal for the Holy Grail, or the Arthurian Knights of the Round Table. At the same time, there was “downplaying,” or ignorance, of the despotic character of the feudal system of labor and wealth. “In one form or another all these works dealt with the evolution of political, religious and individual freedom out of political and religious tyranny.”

Architecture in both England and America attempted to convey similar beliefs visually with the use of the gothic style of building design and construction.

Gothic architecture began with the building of large, public meeting halls and church naves in the eleventh century. The use of the pointed arch, ribbed vaults, and buttressed walls, building innovations first used during the expansion of Norman and Lombard influence in western Europe, probably in the late-eleventh century, allowed for less support columns within a space than had the traditional Romanesque style of building.\textsuperscript{117} These larger, unobstructed spaces allowed for natural sunlight to illuminate the space through the use of larger windows and open colonnades for ceremonial use. Gothic style became “the art of romance,”\textsuperscript{118} which brought nature into the space with its lighting and sculptural effects. The vertical nature of the man-made, sculpted stonework contrasted sharply with the verdant, horizontal landscape of Northern Europe. When the Anglican Church of England decided to expand in order to better serve its dispersed congregations in 1818, of the 214 new churches built within the next decade, 174 were designed with gothic architecture.\textsuperscript{119}

This style of architecture was generally based on timber and stone construction with skilled labor carefully fitting together pieces.\textsuperscript{120} Timber construction techniques used in gothic architecture seem to derive from the great monastic barn roofs built during the Middle Ages.\textsuperscript{121} Europe and America both had adequate raw materials and manpower readily available for such work. The oldest group meeting hall built in the colonies was Saint Luke’s Church near Smithfield, Virginia (built in 1632). Timber framing and gothic design details were used in its construction. Even at that early date in the new colonies,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{117} Branner, “Gothic Architecture,” 328.
\item \textsuperscript{118} Perrin, “Pointed Arches and Buttressed Walls,” 238.
\item \textsuperscript{119} Kenney and Workman, “Ruins, Romance and Reality,” 144.
\item \textsuperscript{120} Perrin, “Pointed Arches and Buttressed Walls,” 239.
\item \textsuperscript{121} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
that style was considered to be suitable for protestant religious use, since it was considered to be multi-denominational in character.

American ecclesiologists envisioned Gothic as a symbol of denominational identity rather than as a starting point for the moral regeneration of a rapidly industrializing nation, as did their Anglican counterparts.122

For use in secular institutions, such as governmental or university complexes, gothic style was also desired. In 1842, after an accidental fire partly destroyed the British Parliament building, a collaboration of architects decided to reconstruct their national symbol with elaborate gothic details.123 Since Oxford and Cambridge universities in England had developed over the centuries with a similar style, many new American universities established in the nineteenth century also followed this example. The term, “Collegiate Gothic,” came into common American use during this period.124 Residential architecture for wealthy American businessmen developed its own medieval appearance. In the 1830s, it was often suggested that the lower Hudson River was equal to, and possibly superior to, the Rhine River in Germany, “but needed castles and their historic associations,” and the New York wealthy families were eager to supply them.125 Even furniture design was often based on this preferred design style and was generally referred to as the “Taste of Elegance.”126

As the Industrial Age spread from England to American, so did the social upheaval that it created. Religious reformers perceived the Middle Ages as a time of social uniformity and community welfare in contrast to the blight and despair rampant in

124. Ibid., 247.
126. Ibid., 158.
company towns. The “social critique” referred to the “use of an idealized version of the Middle Ages as an alternative social model against which the defects of the modern world could be compared.” An example is given in the “History of the Protestant Reformation,” by William Cobbett, where he “drew a systematic contrast between the medieval days of roast beef and Catholicism, and the 1820’s when men were reduced to eating seaweed in Ireland and robbing pig-troughs in Yorkshire.”

The monastery of the Middle Ages as the antithesis of the industrial city and its callous masters . . . [and] reinforced a vision of the Middle Ages in which “happy rustics gathered on the village green, . . . a joyous laugh and song went up from a group of dancing maidens, and the sober elders . . . looked on approvingly. . . .”

Class struggle during the Industrial Age, used the romanticized beliefs of the Middle Ages as a precursor to a supposedly Utopian future. Similarly, a Confederate soldier who died in battle during the American Civil War was eulogized with these traits: “True knight . . . doughty leader . . . high hearted gentleman . . . chivalric, lion-hearted, strong-armed.”

After World War I, America looked back once more to Europe during the Middle Ages after many years of isolation. The romance of the “Wild West” had been its most recent chapter in morality with bold, tough cowboys replacing white knights, righting the crook’s (black knights) wrongs, and a return to chivalry. The 1920s brought

128. Ibid., 265.
129. Ibid., 266.
131. Ibid., 19.
renewed interest in *Medievalism* at a time when Europe lay in ruins. But, Anglo-America was then ignoring its own cultural diversity and continued to emphasize  

the cultural unity of the Middle Ages . . . in contrast to [that] of the modern world . . . American Medievalists of the 1920’s and the early 1930’s were proudly conscious of the fact that the intellectual heritage of the Middle Ages belonged to them just as much as it belonged to the Europeans.

Again, America looked back to a fictional time when “men built white walls around the cities, new white gothic churches in the towns, new castles on the hills.”

America in the early twentieth century was preoccupied with the symbolic duality between “white” and “black,” especially when the subject was racial. Thus, descendants of the original Anglo settlers longed for a different world, as romanticized in the words of Lord Tennyson: “A land of settled government, a land of just and old renown, where freedom slowly broadens down, from precedent to precedent.” In reality, especially for the racial minorities in America, “men are no happier now than in the later Middle Ages.”

The romanticized beliefs in individual freedoms and rights that we now hold have replaced the “idealized” communal society welfare previously taught.

Many American architects have chosen the romantic gothic or Romanesque building styles to enhance their public projects, among the best of which was the renowned Louis Sullivan at the turn of the last century. As one of the originators of the vertical “Sky-Scraper,” as well as solid, massive Chicago bank buildings, these medieval

133. Ibid.
design motifs were found to be appropriate. However, there are only three examples of medieval Cistercian architecture now existing in the United States: one as a reconstruction of a medieval cloisters quadrangle and two as rather larger entities. Each is briefly described below.

The Cloisters Museum in New York City was built to house the vast collection of medieval art from the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Its site on the grassy bluffs of upper Manhattan overlooking the Hudson River reminds the viewer of a medieval monastery setting removed from the distractions of city life. The complex began as George Grey Barnard’s collection of medieval art. As a sculptor and art collector in France at the turn of the twentieth-century, Barnard had easy access to various sorts of European antiquities, shipping many to his home in New York.

In 1913 the French government woke up and passed a law restricting the export of “cultural heritage.” Two days before the law took effect, Barnard sent a shipload of Romanesque and Gothic material to New York, where he built his own public museum in Upper Manhattan, calling it the Cloisters. Rockefeller was a visitor and soon became a major client, buying the entire collection for the “Met” [Metropolitan Museum of Art.]


The collection of structures was transported to a new site in New York City and reassembled in 1936 to act as the setting for display of the expanded medieval art collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. While the overall effect of the complex appears to be medieval in character, the assemblage of the parts into a single complex is not an authentic representation of a monastic space. Building elements from different periods within the lengthy timespan of the Middle Ages are juxtaposed and seen together.
The collection of various art objects within can be seen as secondary to the composite effect of the buildings and not necessarily enhanced by them. Fragments from the Cistercian Abbey of Bonnefort-en-Comminges southwest of Toulouse, France, were incorporated into the final museum complex. The four-story stone tower central to the Cloisters complex is a replica based on the design of a similar one at Saint-Michel-de-Cuxa in southern France.

The museum wasn’t so much built as assembled. Certain features, like the tower, were brand new, though vaguely based on European models. The core was four French cloisters reconstructed, with varying degrees of accuracy, from salvaged parts. Much of the rest of the interior is made up of architectural bits and pieces—a door, an arch—from northern Europe and Spain, with dates from the 9th to the 16th centuries.

With its amalgamation of four gothic cloisters and one Romanesque cloister, a gothic chapel and twelfth-century chapter house, both also from France, and a twelfth-century Spanish church apse into a single museum complex, the Cloisters remains the largest of our limited number of medieval structures available for study in North America.

Our two final examples represent Spanish medieval architecture, and both are similar in their recent history: the Saint Bernard de Clairvaux Church and Cloisters, now located in North Miami Beach, Florida, and the chapter house of Santa Maria de Ovila Monastery, now under reconstruction at New Clairvaux Monastery, Vina, California. The wealthy American newspaper magnate, William Randolph Hearst, intended both of these

141. Cotter, “Epiphanies in a Medieval Courtyard.”
monastery buildings to become a part of his private estate in remote northern California. Even though his idea was to purchase, transport, and reconstruct the structures wholly, neither reached its planned destination. Like his fanciful Spanish “Castle” on the Central California Coast at San Simeon, European artworks and architecture were woven together without much consideration for their original context. To Hearst, the value in art was as a symbol of civility and culture, no matter its intended use. His personal architect, Julia Morgan, was kept constantly at work trying to incorporate additional art acquisitions into the plans for Mr. Hearst’s various eclectic palatial estates.  

In 1925, he purchased the cloisters and many of the outbuildings of a vacant Cistercian monastery located in Sacramenia, Segovia, Spain, which had been built between 1133-1141 at the request of King Alfonso VIII of Castile. The buildings were dismantled, the stones numbered and itemized, then packed in straw for shipment to New York City. Overall, there were nearly 11,000 crates of stones shipped. Upon arrival in New York, the shipment was quarantined and the straw removed to prevent spread of hoof and mouth disease which had been found in Spain. The repacked crates were mis-numbered and plans for reconstruction were abandoned. In 1952, a year after Hearst’s death, the stones were purchased by Raymond Moss of Florida and taken to North Miami Beach to be reassembled, a task which took the new owner 19 months and 1.5 million dollars to accomplish. Some of the stones remained unused in the process. The cloister colonnades have simple Romanesque capitals on short, stout columns, crossed by ribbed

142. Burke, “Santa Maria de Ovila.”
interior vaults above. The single story church has little ornamental stonework except surrounding the main doorway, with simple pointed arches crossing the interior. The stonework is roughhewn, both from weathering over time and the inexactness necessary in fitting the decorative stonework back into place, leaving some obvious cracks and joints evident. The legacy of medievalism in American culture remains:

The medieval contribution . . . was positive in its own right. American clients commissioned Gothic buildings because they were fashionable abroad, but partly also because they considered it appropriate to adapt the styles found most effective in the past, under whatever system of government, to the most advanced and enlightened purposes of a society that accepted its heritage from European culture as the basis of a unique responsibility to set an example for future generations.144

Two American architects of the late nineteenth century, Ralph Adams Cram and Louis Sullivan, were instrumental in cementing the Gothic Revival in place in this country. Their combination of the use of modern materials such as concrete and the steel frame, when combined with the imagined romantic images of gothic verticality, space, geometry, and communal use, greatly reduced the “cost” of a structure with respect to manpower, materials, and scale. These factors equate to an increase in “worth,” or value. As a student at the École de Beaux-Arts in Paris as late as 1864, when Viollet-le-Duc was “restoring” Notre Dame Cathedral, he must have been somewhat influenced by the restoration work in progress. Sullivan was the creator of the vertical “skyscraper,” taking the medieval concept of height to new extremes. His massive, solid bank buildings used these lighter structural elements to give the same effect that cross-vaults had done in that previous age. It was Sullivan’s idea that composition, combined with elaborate

ornamentation and details, gave the building its appropriate character and reason to exist, “more than the planning, construction and structure, as it was for Viollet-le-Duc.”

The Arts and Crafts movement began in England during the late-nineteenth century in opposition to mass industrial production of low quality utilitarian goods for daily life. Founded by John Ruskin and William Morris of Great Britain, there were several stated goals of the movement. First, to give quality back to the process of craftsmanship itself, which the industrial revolution had devalued. Second, to work with local materials and regional crafts traditions to restore a sense of continuity with the past. And last, to bring harmony into the work of the architect, the designer, and the craftsman to bring well-designed, affordable, utilitarian objects to the middle classes of the industrialized world. In fact, the reverse occurred when it was found that the return to handicraftsmanship was affordable only to the wealthy, “restricted elite” and a higher worth, or price in common terms, was assigned to such work. In England, the leaders of the movement returned to their gothic foundations, which were highly romanticized. “Ruskin . . . emphasized the natural qualities of medieval building produced by guilds of builders and craftsmen who he insisted had worked together in perfect harmony.” In America, regionalism in the movement was evident since the east coast and the mid-west identified more closely with romanticized English history and their gothic architectural tradition, while in the far west, especially California, the Spanish colonial past was idealized.

Numerous literary articles concerning the American Indian and Spanish mission cultures

146. Cumming and Kaplan, Arts and Crafts Movement, 6.
147. Ibid., 32.
“depicted and idealized past that ignored the harsh reality of the Indian’s exploitation by white settlers.”148

California Dreamin’: A Distinct Medievalism

California has always been eager to celebrate and monumentalize its mythic, fanciful past. Beginning with the Spaniards in 1769, many diverse groups of people have resettled here, and often they created tales of a non-existent, heroic past. Much of their art and literature continues to tenaciously blend fact with fantasy, resulting in California’s distinct vision of itself. The myth centered around a notion of a land filled with opportunity, wealth, and competitive men who challenged the odds to succeed. Courage, luck, and persistence were virtues that usually led to a permanent place in the sun (and the historical spotlight)!

Restoration, and replication, of California historic sites for educational purposes began as early as 1903 with the founding of the California Historic Landmarks League. That year, they began to restore San Antonio de Padua Mission, located in the isolated coastal mountains near Jolon, California, seen as one of the largest and most picturesque of all the missions remaining in northern California. The restoration had to be repeated in 1906 due to the San Francisco earthquake when most of the structure’s walls collapsed. Many historians consider the renovated mission an accurate replica of the original mission as it stood in 1813, before its secularization. It remains one of only two mission complexes in California undisturbed by subsequent urban growth nearby:

Located in the Santa Lucia Mountains in an oak studded valley southeast of Monterey . . . the setting of this mission is much as a traveler would have seen

148. Ibid., 124.
two centuries ago. The walls of this charming church boast painted decorations painted by the mission Indians. Behind the altar is a large [figure] of the Arcángel San Miguel, with extended wings and just below, the [figure] of the church patron, San Antonio. Two figure heads from colonial frigates were brought by sailors. They stand in a display outside the arcade of the mission. San Antonio de Padua was the first Alta California mission with a fired-tile or “teja” roof, and the very first with over 1,000 neophytes. The extensive restoration and unspoiled setting of San Antonio de Padua makes this one of the most picturesque missions in California. It has an extensive museum with a number of exhibits displaying various aspects of daily life at the mission.149

For many decades Hollywood studios found it convenient to recreate the past in forms of gothic churches or Spanish missions as stage sets. These “sets” were crafted to heighten the sense of reality for a very specific use: to entertain the viewer. Examples of this technique were seen in Alfred Hitchcock’s “Vertigo,” during the filming of which two California missions acted as stage props for the action and suspense. On three occasions, Hollywood created set replicas of the Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris to film “The Hunchback of Notre Dame.” The vast gothic interior space built for the Universal Studios’ 1923 spectacle was so large and imposing that it stood on their stage set lot, used for background photographs of Paris for other films, until a back-lot fire in 1967 destroyed it completely. The 1939 film version of the same story made by RKO Studios used full-scale sets of street-level scenes combined with model replicas of the cathedral, to enthrall their audience. In the 1996 Disney Studios animated version, the artists in charge of film graphics spent several weeks sketching the cathedral on site to replicate all of its architectural details precisely. Replication of the gothic elements was an essential element to convey the perceived “reality” of the setting.

Theme parks were the next logical advance so that the viewer became a participant in the realistic, but false, fantasy. “Disneyland exists in order to hide . . . the ‘real’ country, . . . that the adults are elsewhere in the ‘real’ world, [and it was built] to conceal the fact that true childishness is everywhere.” \textsuperscript{150} In Mel Brooks’ film \textit{Blazing Saddles}, the town of Rockridge is reconstructed as a “false-front” facsimile to fool the invading villains. Even the inhabitants of the town are life-size copies made of paper—images rather than flesh. The thin limestone veneer covering the concrete block and steel structure of the New Clairvaux chapter house serves this same purpose. The veneer does not support the building any more than the paper or cardboard images can do anything except distract the viewer: they are only “false fronts,” creating a false sense of “reality.”

As noted earlier, we have an obsession with the ideas, icons, and objects from our past. The myths, lessons, and ruins provided by our forefathers have become essential building blocks for construction of our modern society. Our contemporary institutions continue to emphasize past achievements and it is necessarily precious to touch a fragment from the past, to hold it and caress any marks made on it by human hands. To see a few weathered, broken bits of masonry brings to our minds a gothic portal. With those shards comes a subtle image of castles, cathedrals and challenges. That thought, in turn, brings to mind the lives of devoted monks in an age of faith, very unlike our own. The copy carries on this unspoken message to another generation, as does a replicated California mission, or the Virginia colonial capital. The function of the copy is not exact duplication in all its dimensions, which a copy can never replicate. Its importance is that it serves the function of a “memes,” a subtle sensory communication to the mind. The

copy, in fact, adds to and amplifies the value of the original work, a gift handed to us over time.

The Medieval and Modern Concepts of a Copy

Copies of works of art have been created for a variety of reasons and uses. To our age, a forgery is a [deliberate] “fabrication, passed off in the name or style of another person or era.” Yet, for centuries past, questions of authorship and originality have plagued the subject of art “authenticity.”

Connoisseurs have debated the moral and ethical problems of [copies] . . . [whether] created be a school of painters following a master’s style; executed by apprentices learning their craft under a master; [or] copies executed by apprentices under supervision of a master, who signs them and sells them as originals.

During the Middle Ages, important pilgrimage churches such as the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem were often copied by monasteries throughout Europe to imitate their importance as a holy place of worship. The builders “never completely replicated the original, but rather only the most symbolic figures applied to the measure of different parts of a building, and some copied parts sufficed to ensure identity of a building,” The circular ambulatory of many large churches was originally meant as a ceremonial processional route around a tomb modeled after the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, and subsequently came to later signify a circular passage around revered relics

151. Schwartz, Culture of the Copy, 218.
152. Ibid., 247.
of a sacred person, holy artifacts, or a series of chapels rather than a burial place. As such, the image of a circular building in artistic representations of the Heavenly City and the plan of most circular or octagonal churches of that time were meant to signify Jerusalem’s most important site of worship. “Copying in the middle ages was not something to be taken literally.” An example given in the scholarly sources used here is the circular plan for the Holy Roman Emperor Charlemagne’s Chapel at Aachen, Germany, which seems to be based on the earlier Byzantine church of San Vitale in Ravenna, Italy, rather than its predecessor in Jerusalem. While many later pilgrimage churches were similar in basic form and function, these features are attributed to the influence of the great medieval monastic center of Cluny, France, which may not have been the case. Art historians now differ on this idea with many looking to other precedents for the basic pilgrimage church plans.

The widespread use of ambulatories with radiating chapels across France is well known before and after 1087, although they are infrequently found on pilgrimage roads in Spain and Italy. The Peace of God accord, granted between Catalonia and the Languedoc in 1027, gave unimpeded access to the traveling monks to spread their works into those regions. To what extent such a phenomenon can be ascribed to the example of Cluny... is still far from being statistically measurable, given present uncertainty about the extent of Cluniac political influence over monastic churches.

According to Jean Baudrillard in his comments concerning Walter Benjamin’s

“The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction (1935),”

156. Morris, Sepulchre of Christ, 60.
158. Ibid., 52.
159. Lyman, “Politics of Selective Eclecticism,” 86.
160. Ibid., 87-88.
there is a fine distinction between simulation and reconstruction in our post-modern age, when replicas can be so finely crafted. While these authors wrote their essays earlier in the twentieth-century, their conclusions are as equally meaningful for contemporary American society as they were a half-century ago. . . . What [this culture] want[s] to find: Authenticity . . . [culture] in which nothing is spiritually meaningless.\textsuperscript{161}

The number of physical dimensions copied, enhances the authenticity of the reproduction.

What is lost in the work that is serially reproduced, is its ‘aura’, its singular quality of the here and now, its aesthetic form [it] has already lost its ritual form . . . it takes on a ‘political’ form . . . Why would the simulacrum with three dimensions be closer to the real than the one with two dimensions? It renders us sensitive to the fourth dimension [time and space], which takes on the force of evidence.\textsuperscript{162}

As Walter Benjamin writes, even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be.\textsuperscript{163} Replicas or copies of artworks were made, as Benjamin argues, by pupils in the practice of their craft, by masters for diffusing their works, and, finally, by third parties in the pursuit of gain . . . The reproduction is perceived without its original context; it is usually branded a forgery, [while] the original preserved all its authority.\textsuperscript{164}

Kate Fitz Gibbon builds upon these ideas and asserts that fakes distort our understanding of a specific artist’s work, as well as our understanding of an era or culture and thus the historical record itself. One important distortion is that fakes (as well as malicious, fraudulent, negligent, or simply mistaken attributions) very often contain current, era-specific characteristics.\textsuperscript{165}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{161} Ibid., 373.
\item \textsuperscript{162} Baudrillard, Simulacra and Simulation, 99.
\item \textsuperscript{164} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{165} Spencer, “Expert and the Object,” 160.
\end{itemize}
All of mankind’s artistic endeavors must change over time: it is my belief that the “copy” is never a perfect replication, or reconstruction, of the original. As much as we think we can understand the works of any distant era, contemporary society will always intrude with our own perceptions. We are captives of our times and events, and we will create “copies” with all those influences in mind. While it is true that gothic cathedrals were built with centuries of effort, and their ultimate design evolved over time, those crafted with the Cistercian building formula were constructed during a shorter timespan, since the order survived as a force in architecture only from the mid-twelfth century to the time of the Black Death in 1348. Those Cistercian originals lacked later architectural influences; they simply became stone monuments of the depleted Cistercian monastery order. Our reconstruction is simply the best we can accomplish when we attempt to re-create a duplicate of their originals.

The visionary French architect Eugene Viollet-le-Duc promoted a controversial method of replication. Restoration was not preservation as we now understand it, but rather the act of completion of a building to a condition that could never have existed at any specific previous time. His was an idealized vision of a medieval structure, given his knowledge of that era, using materials and construction methods available to him in the mid-nineteenth century.  

Restored structures typically commemorate past individual or shared cultural experiences, while their builders strive to demonstrate their individual superiority, authority, and generosity by replicating symbolic monuments. Depending on the use and value demanded of a copy, and the skill used in its construction, the levels of achievement vary.

Western cultural institutions persist in promoting the concept that “old is real!” As stated before, one of the basic ideas behind American medievalism was “the re-creation or study of the history, literature and arts of the Middle Ages.” I propose that there are five generalized reasons why architectural replicas exist in the United States, be they singularly classified as “reconstructions” or “copies.” How each of these motivations applies to our subject project will be discussed as well.

Five Motivations for Reconstruction

Dependence on the Past

Our entire linear culture and accumulative culture collapses if we cannot stockpile the past in plain view... We require a visible past, a visible continuum, a visible myth of origin, which reassures us about our end.

This is especially the case for major religions, which retain sacred religious rituals, dogma, and traditions across time. The Sacred Stones project at Vina has used the reconstruction of the ritual-based chapter house, formally the primary gathering place within any monastery complex during medieval times, as the symbolic focus for future monastery expansion and as a magnet for attracting the public to its remote rural setting. Economically, this monastery is based on wine production and is located on the site of what once was the world's largest commercial winery. This tradition continues with the modern-day Cistercian monks. The medieval monastery community also functioned as the “Spiritual Castle,” of which the chapter house was the “treasury,” its spiritual heart.

167. Ibid., 374.
169. Baudrillard, Simulacra and Simulation, 10.
The superiors of the New Clairvaux monastery have stated their desire to “return their stones” to their proper Cistercian use. In turn, the order will attempt to regain a part of their lost legacy as leaders of the Church. Reconstructing an “authentic” eight-hundred-year-old Cistercian chapter house focuses public attention on their monastery as a destination open to public pilgrimage and tourism to the site.

Philanthropy with Benevolent Intention

Beginning in 1929, John D. Rockefeller, Jr., had become convinced that the nation required a rebirth of patriotism during the Great Depression. He decided to rebuild the original colonial Virginia capital of Williamsburg (1699-1780), where so many of the political foundations of the Nation had been formed. As stated in a letter by Mr. Rockefeller’s associate on the project, Reverend William R. A. Goodwin, dated July 29, 1930,

Williamsburg will bring to mind and perpetuate the simple architectural designs of that period in Virginia and American history before wealth had become obvious . . . A shrine will be created that will serve to stimulate patriotism, that will develop in American citizens a deeper love for their native land as they come to understand the things that happened here, without which the foundations of the federal republic could not have been securely laid . . . Mr. Rockefeller was extremely anxious that the work should be done in accordance with historic verity . . . Research workers were sent to England and to France to study the records in the British foreign record office, in the libraries in the universities of England, and in the military offices and historic libraries of France. As a result of this work, information indispensable to the restoration was secured. The work . . . proceeded with care and with great caution.

Again, the monastery as the “Spiritual Castle” becomes obvious as an objective of the Sacred Stones project at Vina. To enhance the spiritual heart of a modern

171. Schwartz, Culture of the Copy, 276.
monastery complex by the association with its medieval predecessor would be considered as a gift of community service overall, and to the monks within specifically. During the Middle Ages, the neighboring monks’ prayers benefited the community welfare, not solely as a result of their presence and proximity.

Advertising: Sale of a Product

Product advertising needs powerful and understandable messages to succeed in our modern media-oriented society.

Today what we are experiencing is the absorption of all virtual models of expression into that of advertising. All original cultural forms, all determined languages are absorbed in advertising because it has no depth, it is instantaneous and instantaneously forgotten.¹⁷³

From the point of view of a Christian religious community, the resurrection of an eight-hundred-year-old sacred building is not only a reconfirmation of faith but might even be considered by some as a marketing tool. As Schwartz writes, “given an industrial capitalism that prided itself in its capacity to reproduce anything material, antiquarianism was inadequately persuasive.”¹⁷⁴ Our culture, based on disposability of goods, needs to be assured that acts of preservation are crucial for the extended life of a community: “Once destroyed [objects] can never be replaced.”¹⁷⁵ To construct a full-scale medieval chapter house in all its mass, solidity, and detail is no less of an achievement with the element of public fascination. The pilgrimage of the public to tour the properties, and to admire first-hand the achievements of its builders, becomes an obvious wine advertising and sales device.

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¹⁷³. Baudrillard, Simulacra and Simulation, 87.
¹⁷⁴. Schwartz, Culture of the Copy, 275.
¹⁷⁵. Ibid.
Imagination as Public Entertainment

Prior to World War II, American art and literature were highly romanticized to create a fictional, simplistic picture of American Indians and other minority groups. *The Song of Hiawatha*, by Longfellow, the annual Ramona Pageant staged in southern California, and *The Mask of Zorro*, based on Mexican California, give evidence to this social trend. All of these involve fantasies based on idealized racial notions and cultural morality held at the time. In our modern setting, the institution of living history museums has taken this fiction to a much more complete level of illusion. The contemporary addition of sensory “memes,” or subtle sensory suggestions placed deliberately within the space, will heighten the visitor’s sense of reality. No longer are walls of buildings devoid of stains, or the smell of decaying hay or animal droppings swept away. In the case of twenty-first century Williamsburg, the slave quarters have the presence of living slaves [actors].

The structures are pristine without a trace of the patina of decades of use associated with age. With the eventual addition of public tours to our subject site, this subliminal message may change with the public’s inevitable desire to perceive “authenticity,” combined with the slow degradation that inevitably accompanies use. The authenticity is enhanced by the accompanying text given in tours and literature, is inscribed within the structures, based in the stones themselves.

Fallacy of a Cultural Context

Praise of the “new” is more often a misunderstanding of the unique. An excellent example of this current social trend involves the proposed symbolic return of a portion of the cloister of Saint-Michel de Cuxa, a long-standing feature of the New York

176. Ibid.
Metropolitan Museum of Art’s medieval collection, to its original location in southern France. Repatriation of such sacred objects attempts to rectify their absence but does not take into account the resulting cultural change caused by their original removal.

Baudrillard discusses this distinction:

The cloister should have stayed in New York in its simulated environment, which at least fooled no one. Repatriating it is nothing but a subtle subterfuge, acting as if nothing had happened and indulging in retrospective hallucination.  

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In fact, the proposed repatriation has not happened as of 2010. The Cloisters has not discussed any desire to repatriate the carved capitals to France during the past fifteen years. When I contacted the Cloisters Museum in New York City in mid-October, 2010, I received a response from the museum’s curator, Dr. Barbara Drake Boehm, stating that Most of The Cloisters’ sculpture from Saint-Michel-de-Cuxa is on exhibition. However, some elements that are not installed are on loan from us to the abbey of Saint-Michel-de-Cuxa, which, as you know, still has some material from the cloister in situ. None of the Cuxa sculpture will be “repatriated,” as it was all acquired by George Grey Barnard through legal purchase at the beginning of the 20th century.  

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In other instances, many large museums have returned cultural relics to their original setting as a matter of ethics. There still exists a need, and desire, to hold onto objects from past eras and to protect them for future generations to study.  

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Thus, many museums display copies of precious objects while their original artworks remain hidden from the public in vaults. This need also encompasses (1) the “desire of contemporary masses to bring things ‘closer’ spatially and humanly . . . to get hold of an object at very

177. Baudrillard, Simulacra and Simulation, 11.
close range, by way of its likeness, its reproduction,”\textsuperscript{180} and, (2) “overcoming the uniqueness of every reality by accepting its reproduction.”\textsuperscript{181}

The monastery of New Clairvaux promotes its new chapter house on the basis of its antiquity, with an offer to visit the site even during the reconstruction process. The resulting patina of age on the original Sacred Stones is emphasized as a badge of honor, even though the resulting gothic form is heavily augmented with modern structural technology. The new cloisters plan even acts as a shroud, obscuring sunlight and enclosing parts of the original facade, in spite of the fact that the climate and natural light of central California and Spain are quite similar.

**Resulting Chapter House “Use” and Conflicts**

Works of art throughout history involve worth, or value, as a component of the process; there was a deliberate need to justify the time, materials, and techniques to complete the chosen task, without which the undertaking would be considered “worth” less. But there are many different types of value as perceived by the individuals directly involved. Value in exchange, market value, insurance value, and value in use are all terms commonly used to quantify the time, labor, creativity and material costs involved in completion of a specific task. In this essay, the focus is centered on a project’s “use-value,” and the differing perceptions of the terms “use” and “value” in the Vina project. As previously stated, the chapter house reconstruction project involves a winery as the principle business on the property. At first glance, the example of medieval architecture may be considered either as a period reconstruction worthy of study, or as well-crafted

\textsuperscript{180} Benjamin, “Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction.”
\textsuperscript{181} Ibid.
romanticized replica, to be used for commercial marketing purposes. More importantly, this project seems to be a mixture of the two. “Value-in-use . . . reflects a value to a particular user, recognizing the extent to which the property contributes to the enterprise.”\(^{182}\)

The term involves only specific value to one particular user, and is usually below the market value of a property. Remove the original “use” from a structure, and it becomes subject to another value-in-use determination for a different user. In his mid-twentieth century essay on mechanical reproduction of artwork and text, Walter Benjamin states,

> With the emancipation of the various art practices from ritual [use,] go increasing opportunities for the exhibition of the products [of the artist] . . . Buildings are appropriated [by the public] in a two-fold manner: by use and by perception . . . or rather by touch and sight.\(^{183}\)

Two major questions arise from the study: (1) Since the monastery is a functional winery for the production and sale of table wines, why construct a symbolic monument on the premises, with the extreme logistical and financial costs associated with such an endeavor? and (2) Can the replicated structure have a resulting “value” contribution sufficient to justify this expense to the donors upon completion, especially since the “use” of the chapter house has been changed from that originally intended during the medieval era?

The Sacred Stones reconstruction of the Spanish monastery chapter house is intended for use, both in terms of central monastery location and importance, as well as being a communal center for the monks at times of special religious observances. However, its proposed use as a public pilgrimage/tourism site is contrary to the original func-

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tion of a chapter house within a cloistered monastery of monks during the Middle Ages. While their monasteries were large, consisting of many structures, they were self-contained communities that welcomed travelers for a short stay but segregated them in peripheral guest houses. They were often equated to “a fortress,” with entry to the interior limited to members of the specific religious order only.  

184 Medieval monks were often recruited from the nobles and aristocracy, trained in warfare and weaponry to become a “White Martyr for Christ” (milites Christi). For the Christian warriors of the Middle Ages, white martyrdom denoted the sacrifice of all that they loved in exchange for Holy service, with the knowledge that they consequently would suffer fasting and hard labor. In her article “Red, White and Blue Martyrdom: In Ireland in Early Medieval Europe,” Clare Stancliffe discusses the differences between the aspects of suffering during the service of Christ in medieval monastic societies: “Red martyrdom denotes death for Christ’s sake; white, the daily martyrdom of ascetic life; and blue the tears, hardships and fasting of the penitent.”  

185 As such, these fearless warrior monks dwelled in the fortress of the monastery compound.

Repatriation of the ancient Spanish Cistercian chapter house by use by the monks of New Clairvaux was originally a goal of their abbot when he first saw them in 1955.  

186 Yet, when interviewed, development director McMullin stated that the current abbot of New Clairvaux had indicated to him that the order will use the reconstructed

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186. Abbey of New Clairveaux, “News from the Abbey.”
chapter house only for sacred rituals, thus it will not serve its original daily use.\textsuperscript{187} In effect, it will simply borrow the “aura” of its previous status, as Benjamin hypothesized in his essay.\textsuperscript{188}

**Perspectives and Viewpoints on the Sacred Stones Project**

The building and planning departments in Tehama County, which oversee compliance with the Sacred Stones project, were primarily concerned with public safety issues and community impact. Value judgments and appropriateness within the context of public use were not offered by these officials. Professor Asa Mittman, scholar of medieval art history at California State University, Chico, offered his comments from the viewpoint of an educator in art history. A spokesperson for the Chico Chamber of Commerce, Jolene Francis, was contacted since that city would be most directly affected by a growth in tourism due to its proximity to the project.\textsuperscript{189} These conversations resulted in several observations. The project architect views the chapter house as a central building within a newly planned community center for the monastery, connected by cloisters and gardens, to be developed over time. Nearly ten years have already been devoted to the reconstruction project alone, with an estimated cost of more than $7 million, according to the project manager, mostly achieved with private (not institutional) donations. The overall site development will take considerably more in time, labor, and money.

The Vina reconstruction is the latest of only three such attempts at reconstruction of medieval Cistercian architecture in the United States, following the cloisters in

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{187} Robert McMullin, interview with author, April 13, 2010.
\item \textsuperscript{188} Benjamin, “Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction.”
\item \textsuperscript{189} Jolene Francis, interview with author, April 14, 2010.
\end{itemize}
New York City and Saint Bernard’s church and cloisters in North Miami, which were inspired by nostalgia and a desire to collect the relics of the past. A point made by the workmen on the project: their stonemason skills are “marketable,” not merely “learned fabrications.” They have found that they are able to use their learned skills elsewhere in the world, wherever replication or restoration is needed. The master stonemasons have used their skills admirably and the result is a rare architectural achievement brought to the modern world from a time unknown by most Americans: a medieval Cistercian gothic building reconstructed to serve a small monastic community in modern-day California.
CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

According to Patrick Cole, architect for the Sacred Stones reconstruction, “Everyone who stops by to see it is awed . . . It’s been a spiritual joy working on such a meaningful project, as a gesture toward honoring the divine.” Yet, Robert McMullin, development director of the project, has said that the restoration is considered by the monks of New Clairvaux as separate from the primary purpose of the monastery, and will become a place for public pilgrimage and tourist interest rather than a shelter for daily devotion, recitation of the Rule of Saint Benedict, and contemplation. In the year 2000, the originator of the project, Abbot Thomas X. Davis, told the San Francisco Chronicle that he dreamed “to someday bring the stones home, where they would be loved and cared for on Cistercian soil.” However, the project has, in turn, changed the monastery’s use. Originally built to house a religious order of cloistered monks, “it’s now open for tours, tasting [and sales] of acclaimed wines from the abbey’s own grapes and overnight retreats for followers of any faith.”

Former California State University, Chico librarian and historian Kevin Starr states, “Americans recreated California . . . [by changing it] into a Mediterranean-Levantine lushness . . . metaphors for what [they] wanted out of California: a new Italy, a

190. Kahn, “Reconstruction, a New Chapter.”
191. Ibid.
192. Ibid.
The Sacred Stones project is an outgrowth of this idea. The indicated value judgment for the project is for increased public use of the facility, to the betterment of the monastery winery. It exists as evidence for its former religious authority and prestige. The romance of American medievalism is evident at New Clairvaux in its simplicity of the restored chapter house’s gothic details, its prospective use for ceremonial religious ritual, and as a focus for public pilgrimage.

This restoration project follows an eclectic California pattern—a combination of opportunity, good luck, and perseverance that, in turn, leads to success. The long-lived American myths that the people of the Middle Ages were more devout and sincere in their beliefs, and that good and evil were absolute in that era, without any qualifiers, contrasts greatly with our perceptions of the modern era.

Only where the dream lingers could such a project be completed and not ridiculed as an exotic fantasy. In California, tradition allows eccentric groups space for such dreams to grow and be shared, as long as one has the wealth to realize it. Medievalism, combined with individual (or community) wealth and support, have promoted a gothic-style resurgence in California history. Once built, to paraphrase a popular movie script, “They will come!” Examples include San Francisco’s high-gothic Grace Cathedral, sited atop Nob Hill, and the neo-gothic Crystal Cathedral mega-church built in Garden

At the turn of the last century, Californians commonly used Gothic Revival designs for their homes, churches and institutions of higher learning. Located in Oakland, California, the Cathedral Building, originally named the Federal Realty Building, was built by architect Benjamin Geer McDougall, who designed it as the first Gothic Revival style skyscraper west of the Mississippi River. A prime example of ‘Collegiate Gothic’ in California is Bowles Residence Hall at the University of California at Berkeley, designed by George W. Kelham and built in 1928.

More than half a century lies between the reconstruction of Saint Bernard’s Cistercian church and cloisters in North Miami Beach, Florida, and the project currently under way in Vina, California. The viewpoint of art historians has changed considerably during that time. In the mid-twentieth century, replication of such ancient structures was limited by whatever materials were available locally, the skills of the workers to refit the pieces correctly, and a general knowledge (or lack thereof) concerning the original context, or use, of the structure. Romantic medievalism was obvious, while authenticity was a secondary concern. The growth of imaginary settings for entertainment, such as the theme parks produced by Walt Disney, gave rise to the term “imagineering,” defined as “blending creativity and innovative technological advancements.”

There appears to be sufficient “Value” contributed by the project to justify completion by the monks of New Clairvaux, but the standard of value has completely changed during these past eight hundred years. The value upon completion will be


primarily educational for the general public, allowing them to glimpse (albeit in artificial form) a past era often viewed solely in romantic art and literature. That era becomes tangible, in four dimensions, and hopefully will be allowed to gather a patina of age as its new use continues to evolve. For the builders, though, this reconstruction will be seen as an “authentic” replica of its medieval predecessors, possessing a newly defined use associated with contemporary twenty-first century value judgments.

One final observation: Medievalism is still present in our era and this project is a fine example of romanticism. The “use” of the structure has been changed to function in the context of a twenty-first century religious institution now open to the public. This project is not chiefly concerned with medieval theology or monastery ritual, but rather the stone-masons’ twenty-first century skills in reconstructing a Cistercian gothic building. Those stones have now been endowed with considerable “value” from the masons’ viewpoint. For Professor Asa Mittman, a spokesman for the art history faculty at California State University, Chico, the Sacred Stones project provides a “tool” to bring medieval history into better focus. Many students now have the opportunity to closely study a well-crafted reconstruction of a Cistercian-styled religious edifice in northern California. Previously, a trip to Europe or Britain was required to view similar structures in detail. But, to the question of whether it is an “authentic” gothic architectural reconstruction, or simply a modern copy of a Cistercian chapter house using mostly new materials with a patina of age applied by reworking a few older stones, is a more difficult question. Romanticism will overlook the steel reinforcing and concrete block shell encasing the building. The cloister entrance does not echo the elegance of Cistercian gothic, and future

197. Dr. Asa Mittman, interviewed by author, April 14, 2010.
expansion, when it occurs, will hide this traditional monastery “heart” completely. Of course, that is how the era of the copy began in the Middle Ages, when Jerusalem was too distant for pilgrim’s access. The Middle Ages are now unreachable as well.

The Stones are always peaceful, stark bones like those of most other fossils on public display in museums. Their cultural muscles withered and vanished long ago. My thesis is not concerned with theological or ritual use of the reconstructed Spanish chapter house, but rather its value as a tool to be used to better understand architecture from the Middle Ages. You will also find a draft of romantic American medievalism in the New Clairvaux monastery atmosphere, mixed with the smell of aging wine. Most Californians will easily recognize both scents, since romanticism has long been prevalent here.
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