

# Abject pilgrimage and healing in Jaume Roig's *Spill*

JEAN DANGLER (\*)

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## SUMMARY

1.— The contents of Jaume Roig's *Spill o Llibre de les dones*. 2.—The *Spill* in its social context. 3.—*Rameria*, or abject pilgrimage in the *Spill*. 3.1.—Strategies of subversion: The severed link between pilgrimage and healing. 3.2.—The broken parallel between sacred and earthly women healers. 3.3.—The lost integration of pilgrims and saints. 4.—Conclusion.

## ABSTRACT

In the *Spill o Llibre de les dones*, the fifteenth-century writer and physician from Valencia, Jaume Roig, uses the motif of pilgrimage to attack earthly women, particularly women healers. Roig undermines the salutary function of medieval pilgrimage in order to expose mundane women in their effort to harm male pilgrims. Since men cannot rely on earthly women, they must seek a healing encounter with the Virgin, whose salutary ministrations always are constant and efficacious. Roig's assault on women through pilgrimage further relates to larger social attempts to marginalize traditional women healers from legitimate salutary practice, since he aims to dissuade male readers from seeking women's healing services in everyday society.

**Palabras clave:** Peregrinación, curaciones, sanadoras, Virgen, santos.

**Keywords:** Pilgrimage, healing, women healers, Virgin, saints.

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(\*) Assistant Professor of Spanish. Dept. of Spanish and Portuguese. 304 Newcomb Hall. Tulane University. New Orleans, Louisiana 70118-5698, EE.UU. E-mail: jdangler@tulane.edu

## 1. *THE CONTENTS OF JAUME ROIG'S SPILL O LLIBRE DE LES DONES*

Jaume Roig's *Spill o Llibre de les dones* is renowned as one of the most misogynist works of medieval Catalan literature. Roig wrote it in a verse form called *copla nova* in about 1460 when he was approximately sixty years old. The *Spill* was read through the sixteenth century in three Catalan editions (Valencia 1531; Valencia 1561; Barcelona 1561), and is explicitly an advice manual directed to an audience of men who are inexperienced in sexual matters. It seeks to ameliorate readers' well-being by dissuading them from relations with earthly women and by urging them to find love, solace, and good health with the Virgin. Roig was well-informed about salutary issues because like his father he worked as a doctor in Valencia throughout his professional life. He also managed the examination and licensing of physicians in Valencia in his role as medical examiner. His literary production was scarce, since he wrote only the *Spill* and a poem in praise of the Virgin. Yet, as evidenced by the *Spill's* three editions, Roig's works became known locally and in Barcelona (1).

The *Spill* starts with a short prologue called the «Consulta», which is followed by the preface, «Perfaçi», and four main books. Book one, «Juventut», recounts the narrator's exploits in his youth; book two, «De quant fon casat», discusses the narrator's unfortunate three marriages; book three (no title) is recounted by King Solomon and mirrors the previous narrator's sentiment against earthly women with references to biblical stories; book four, «O quarta part principal de enviudat», presumably is told by the *Spill's* first narrator, now a centenarian who devotes himself to a contemplative life. Roig never directly refers to himself by name as the *Spill's* storyteller and protagonist, although the book is in part an embellished account of his life. It is narrated in the first person, and the «Consulta», «Perfaçi», and other parts of the book contain biographical information about him. Agustín Rubio Vela

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(1) Roig's poem to the Virgin is located in *Les trobes en lahors de la Verge Maria*, Valencia, 1474. Biographical information on Roig's life is found in ROIG, Jaume. *Spill*, Josep Almiñana Vallés (ed.), Valencia, Del Cenia al Segura, 1990, vol. 3.

has shown that the confusion between the narrator-protagonist and author contributes to the humor of certain events and relationships in the *Spill* (2). Yet, the connection between them also is more complex, since readers likely would have linked the authority of the writer and physician Jaume Roig to the advice and influence of the *Spill*'s narrator-protagonist (3). Roig's occupations as a prominent physician and medical examiner in Valencia would have infused his counsel against earthly women with prestige and command.

In the «Perfaçi», Roig directs his work to his nephew, Baltasar Bou, and urges him to pass on the book's antifeminist information to inexperienced young men, inexperienced older men, and sexually-active religious men and priests (292-322) (4). According to the narrator's message in the «Consulta», he transmits this information from the valley of Callosa, where he has fled the plague in Valencia. He aims to describe to his readers and listeners the innate, maleficent character of abject earthly women in order to reveal their contrast to the *lilium inter spinas*, or the lily among thorns who is the Virgin:

Trobant-me'n aquesta vall  
 Callosa, per les morts fuyt,  
 oçios, trist, sens fer fruyt,  
 empres he, no sens treball,  
 de dones scriure llur tall  
 natural he voluntari,  
 per una, que te'l contrari,  
 descrivir pus façilment

he mostrar, no subtilment,  
 sols rimat portant l'estil,

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- (2) RUBIO VELA, Agustín. Autobiografía i ficció en «L'Espill» de Jaume Roig. A propòsito de l'episodi en l'hospital. *L'Espill*, 1983, 17-18, 127-148.
- (3) See my discussion on this point in DANGLER, Jean. *Mediating fictions: Literature, women healers, and the go-between in Medieval and Early Modern Iberia*, Lewisburg, Bucknell University Press, 2001, pp. 57-58.
- (4) References to the *Spill* are given according to verse numbers from ROIG, note 1, vol. 2.

les dones tenir en vil,  
 comportant-les virilment;  
 sola 'quella gentilment  
 tembre y amar, be schollir  
 entre spines flor de lliur,  
 quial per tot lo mon odora. (9-24)

Thus, Roig frames his advice to men within a contrast of evil ordinary women, and the exemplary Virgin and holy women. His goal is to teach men to resist women in everyday society in order to better their well-being with the Virgin.

Roig embeds his counsel in stories that provide examples about malevolent, ordinary women whose «anti-exemplarity» contrasts sharply with the perfection of the Virgin and saints. For instance, in the first book on his youth, the narrator begins a journey from Valencia to Paris along which he encounters a series of evil women, such as a pastrycook and her two daughters who serve male patrons human meat pies. After finding a fingertip and an earlobe in his food, the narrator warns that these women killed men and used their body parts to prepare their meat pies:

En hun pastís,  
 capolat, trit,  
 d'[h]om cap de dit  
 hi fon trobat  
 .....  
 mes hi havia  
 un cap d'orella  
 .....  
 La pastičera,  
 ab dos aydan[t]s  
 ffilles ja grans,  
 era fornera  
 he tavernera;  
 dels que y [hi] venien,  
 alli bevien,  
 alguns mataven;

carn capolaven,  
ffeyen pastells (1664-1691)

Roig indicates that the interventions of earthly women such as the pastrycook and her daughters harm men's well-being. Not only are men's lives literally at stake, but they are victimized by the ghoulish mediations of everyday women in the most routine circumstances. Men cannot escape these interventions because women actively work in seemingly innocuous areas of daily life, such as food service and preparation, where they cause men to unwittingly ingest human body parts.

The consequences of the *Spill's* diatribe against women extend to one of Roig's actual wives, Isabel Pellicer, who by the narrator's own admission is so virtuous that she resembles men more than women (15974-15976). The misogynist rejection of abject earthly women in the *Spill* leaves Roig with no option but to align exceptional, upright mundane women such as Pellicer with men in a homosocial realm of value that excludes typically evil women. One of the results of the contrast of holy and earthly women is the creation of this homosocial sphere in which earthly women are occasionally esteemed only because of their male qualities and traits (5).

Roig generally associates all males with the Virgin, and all earthly females with Mary's opposite, sinful Eve. He links women's sordid character to Eve by calling them her daughters («filles d'Eva», 355-371, 6474-6477), and thus creates a lineage that has biblical and biological connections. The filial reference demonstrates that all women contract Eve's sin through childbirth, an inheritance that Roig makes pathological. Earthly women are sick by definition because of their connection to sin, and the *Spill* leaves them with no possibility of vindication. They spread their disease to men through sexual relations and friendly, domestic contact, which is evidenced by an anecdote about the narrator's first wife, a young woman who is like a grunting pig when she sleeps, and who urinates in bed on other occasions: «Porçell

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(5) DANGLER, note 3, p. 56.

grunyent / tota la nit / era'n lo llit / . . . Sovint al llit / se orinava / he freçjava» (2352-2354, 2376-2378). When the narrator decides to leave her, he says that it is due to her disease, an ephemeral ill that is never directly identified in the book, but that surely refers to the sin-disease that women inherit from Eve (3036-3037). Roig uses the *Spill's* separation of earthly women and the Virgin to create an implicit comparison between Mary as the source of all that is male and good and Eve as the fount of all that is female and detrimental. This biological and ideological division is crucial to Roig's advice to readers about avoiding ordinary women, since their inheritance of Eve's sin-disease links them to Eve's sexual transgression with Adam, and aligns them pejoratively with sexuality, childbirth, and human reproduction. Roig links women to the profane and abject by deliberately contrasting them to the Virgin and holy women.

## 2. *THE SPILL IN ITS SOCIAL CONTEXT*

Throughout its critical history, the *Spill* largely has been considered a work of misogynist, entertaining literature that grew out of a creative flourishing in late fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Valencia. Jaume Roig was known within a community of writers that included the abbess Isabel de Villena, and although his literary output comprised only two works, the *Spill* and a poem to the Virgin, his writing was prominent in Valencia (6). Roig's notoriety within Valencia's literary circle is evidenced by the *Spill's* probable connection to Villena's *Vita Christi*, which Joan Fuster averred was not merely a book of Christ's life, but also was a dignifying of earthly women in response to Roig's misogyny in the *Spill*. More than other lives of Christ, Villena's *Vita Christi* focused on mundane women such as Mary Magdalene to correct their erroneous presentation in the *Spill*. (7).

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(6) Rosanna CANTAVELLA addresses Roig and Villena's connection in *Els cards i el lli: una lectura de l'Espill de Jaume Roig*, Barcelona, Quaderns Crema, 1992, pp. 39-40.

(7) FUSTER, Joan. El món literari de sor Isabel de Villena. In: *Obres completes*, Barcelona, Edicions 62, 1968, vol. 1, pp. 173-174, and FUSTER, Joan. Jaume Roig i sor Isabel de Villena. In: *Obres completes*, Barcelona, Edicions 62, 1968, vol. 1, pp. 107-110.

The relation between the *Spill* and the *Vita Christi* shows that Roig's text was intimately connected to cultural anxiety about women and men in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Iberia. Its cultural importance further exceeded its link to Villena's work and evidenced serious concerns about men's health and the general social order. Michael Solomon recently showed the *Spill*'s connection to cultural apprehension about men's sexual well-being, and demonstrated its transmission of valuable information to male readers about their sexual hygiene and practice (8). It encouraged them to avoid intimate attachments with ordinary women, which it illustrated through women's failings as wives and mothers. The *Spill*'s relation to salutary interests is explicit on the title pages of the three sixteenth-century editions, where devotion to Mary is connected to the book's healthy instruction on how to live a well and ordered life. Men must rely on the Virgin and avoid earthly women in order to maintain well-being (9).

The *Spill* further participates in broader issues related to late medieval health, since it responds to the attempts by the professionalization of medicine to establish medical practice as the most effective method of healing, and to dignify male physicians as the most able healers. To this end, civil and royal authorities marginalized women healers and non-Christian men from traditional medical practice. They employed a variety of techniques to exclude them, including laws against women healers (and against Jewish and Muslim men), compulsory university study in a medical faculty (women were prohibited from official university enrollment), and the establishment of municipal and royal boards responsible for the examination and licensing of physicians. Since licensing required training in a university medical faculty, women were twice excluded from obtaining this certification, once in their inability to enroll in universities, and again in the requirement for study in a medical faculty in order to receive a license (10).

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(8) SOLOMON, Michael. *The literature of misogyny in Medieval Spain*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1997, pp. 2-3, 11.

(9) ROIG, note 1, vol. 1, pp. 49, 62, 72. I discuss these images in more detail in DANGLER, note 3, p. 52.

(10) For more on the professionalization of medicine in Spain and colonial Latin America, see LANNING, John Tate. *The Royal Protomedicato: The regulation of the*

The *Spill* complies with these efforts to restrict women's medical practice, since it discourages men from relations with women healers (11). Through a variety of anecdotes about evil women doctors and midwives, Roig's misogynist book reinforces women's marginalization from their previously legitimate healing duties in fifteenth-century society, where they were learned surgeons and physicians, semilearned midwives, and illiterate providers of herbal remedies. This wide variety of everyday practitioners threatened men's attempts to homogenize healing and medical care in the late medieval and early modern periods because they often provided effective care. Historians such as Luis García-Ballester, Michael McVaugh, and Agustín Rubio Vela have documented many cases of women healers in late medieval Iberia, particularly in the Crown of Aragon, where they note an almost one-hundred-year presence of women practitioners. They cite the case of a woman doctor or *metgessa*, who in 1379 healed the hand and foot of an important citizen of Valencia, Francesc Monyoç. Other women healers included Çahud, who in 1332 practiced surgery in the royal household of the kingdom of Valencia (12); Juana, a woman given a license by the king in 1384 to practice medicine and surgery; the doctor Na Guillamona, who practiced medicine in Valencia in 1405; and, Margarida Tornerons, a doctor from Vic (13). The professionalization of medicine progressively tried to reduce these women's influence in order to achieve its goals.

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*medical professions in the Spanish Empire*, Durham, Duke University Press, 1985. Luis GARCÍA BALLESTER, Michael MCVAUGH, and Agustín RUBIO VELA treat in detail the professionalizing process in Valencia, in *Medical licensing and learning in fourteenth-century Valencia*, Philadelphia, American Philosophical Society, 1989. For more on Spain's early modern medical board see the introduction and thirteen articles in the broad monograph, *El Tribunal del Real Protomedicato en la Monarquía Hispánica, 1593-1808*, *Dynamis*, 1996, 16, pp. 17-259. The introduction and fifteen articles in the monograph, *Mujeres y salud: prácticas y saberes*, *Dynamis*, 1999, 19, pp. 17-400, provide important documentation and analysis on the social control of women practitioners.

- (11) I argue this point in more detail in chapter two of DANGLER, note 3.  
 (12) GARCÍA BALLESTER; MCVAUGH; RUBIO VELA, note 10, pp. 30-31.  
 (13) GARCÍA BALLESTER, Luis. *Historia social de la medicina en la España de los siglos XIII al XVI*, Madrid, Akal, 1976, p. 44.



Jaume Roig was intimately familiar with the late medieval changes in medicine and healing because he was a practicing physician throughout his life in Valencia. He received university degrees in medicine and the arts, and it appears that he studied at the medical faculty in Paris. He also participated in the goals of the professionalization of medicine by becoming medical examiner of Valencia in 1435, a role in which he tested and licensed physicians until his death in 1478. Roig served as physician to two Valencian hospitals, as well as to the Dominican Order and to the Franciscan women's Trinitat Convent. He further assisted royalty as a doctor to Queen Maria, wife of Alfons el Magnànim (1416-1458), the king of Aragon (14). Roig's medical work in fifteenth-century Valencia situated him directly amidst the burgeoning efforts to professionalize medicine, as evidenced by García Ballester, McVaugh, and Rubio Vela's study of the legal measures that were created in that city from the fourteenth century on to elevate male physicians and marginalize women (15).

Although these legal mechanisms did not always curb women's popular appeal, they progressively undermined women's authority (16). As García Ballester, McVaugh, and Rubio Vela maintain, women's salutary interventions were so desperately needed in many areas of Valencia and Catalonia that they could not always be excluded from licit medical practice (17). Because the legal mechanisms were sometimes ineffective in abating women's prominence as healers, writers such as Roig began to contribute to the goals of the professionalization of medicine by creating literary depictions of women as vile and deceitful. As I demonstrated in my book, the combination of these negative literary portrayals and of the legal mechanisms against women healers generated progressively detrimental effects on their social status, particularly from the fourteenth through sixteenth centuries (18).

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(14) ROIG, note 1, vol. 3.

(15) GARCÍA BALLESTER; MCVAUGH; RUBIO VELA, note 10.

(16) DANGLER, note 3, pp. 45-49.

(17) See pp. 30-32 of GARCÍA BALLESTER; MCVAUGH; RUBIO VELA, note 10, where the authors address the continued employment of women, Jews, and Muslims, despite the licensing requirements and legal codes.

(18) DANGLER, note 3.

The *Spill* colludes with medicine's professionalizing efforts because it specifically denigrates women healers and tacitly vilifies the interventions of ordinary women through their contrast to the ideal Virgin. Roig uses the juxtaposition of sacred and earthly women in order to denigrate the latter group en masse as carriers of an intrinsic sin-illness that was inherited from Eve. He directly critiques women healers in the book, but he aims to show through women's general degradation that healers are not alone in harming men in the *Spill*. Instead, all women mediate men's well-being in detrimental ways as wives, mothers, friends, and workers, while the Virgin intercedes to men's advantage. Roig devises an impassable gap between the two groups to demonstrate that earthly women are the antithesis of the Virgin, and that they should not be sought for healing or consolation.

Roig undermines the conventional medieval relation of likeness between holy and earthly women by creating a vast divide between them. Women saints and biblical figures are untouchable and exceptional in the *Spill*, such as the holy women whom Roig favorably mentions in the third book when he reinforces Judith's strength, Rebecca's intelligence, and the virginity of Catalina and Tecla (15216-15269). The breach between earthly and holy women has important consequences for the *Spill*'s denigration of women healers because it marks a departure from the relation of likeness and resemblance between ordinary and sacred women that dominated the medieval period. In the Middle Ages, women were expected to imitate the Virgin and saints, rather than merely worship them from a distance. The Virgin and saints served as models and supports for women healers in everyday society (19). Holy women were renowned for successful healing, as evidenced by Mary's interventions in Alfonso X's *Cantigas de Santa María*, and by the miracles in Gonzalo de Berceo's *Milagros de Nuestra Señora*. For instance, in *cantiga* fifty-four, the Virgin uses her breast milk to bring a monk back to life. In miracle nineteen, she saves a pregnant woman who is about to be swept away by a river, thereby saving the woman herself, and aiding in her child's salvation. Medieval people relied on the Virgin to heal them because her ministrations were constant and

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(19) DANGLER, note 3, pp. 30-34.

efficacious. Women saints were equally beseeched, as in the case of Margaret, who was sought by pregnant women and entreated during childbirth (20). The cult of saints and relics reinforced peoples' faith in the mediation of holy women, and medieval people sought their healing services along with those of their earthly counterparts, both of whom constituted legitimate medieval healers (21). Roig tries to break the link between them, and to encourage male readers to recognize their contrast. In the process of conveying the valuable salutary information to his readers about the evils of earthly women and the beneficence of the Virgin, Roig elevates holy women to such a degree that they become abstract icons to worship rather than figures to seek out for healing services. He thus subverts the medieval relation that bound them to mundane women, and instead emphasizes their difference and the breach between them. The *Spill*'s ultimate goal is to ameliorate men's well-being and strengthen the social order, all at earthly women's expense.

### 3. RAMERÍA, OR ABJECT PILGRIMAGE IN THE SPILL

One of the ways that Roig discourages men from relations with ordinary women is through a subversion of the motif of pilgrimage, a recurring theme that permeates the *Spill*. The entire book may be construed as a textual pilgrimage toward the Virgin, since reading the *Spill* is a veritable journey toward Mary, the lily among thorns, as evidenced in the «Consulta». In order to illuminate the Virgin's goodness, the narrator-protagonist must show readers by negative example the evils of mundane women, which he does constantly in anecdotes recounted from his journeys. Roig specifically mentions a pilgrimage two times in the *Spill*, first in the second part of the

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(20) COULSON, John (ed.). *The Saints*, New York, Hawthorn Books, 1958, pp. 184-185. For other examples of healing by the Virgin and saints, see DANGLER, note 3, pp. 30-32.

(21) AMUNDSEN, Darrel W. *Medicine, society, and faith in the Ancient and Medieval worlds*, Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996, p. 177. Amundsen attests to the legitimacy of preternatural interventions in the Middle Ages.

second book when the narrator-protagonist begins one to Santiago in order to fulfill a vow (3142-3165). Second, in the final fourth book, the narrator travels to a hermitage to live a contemplative life, and then continues on a long pilgrimage through a series of monasteries, abbeys, and charterhouses (15479-15610).

Travel figures prominently in the *Spill*, even when certain journeys are not designated as pilgrimages. The first book begins with a trip to Catalonia, and soon continues with another to Tarragona and Paris where the narrator —«pilgrim»— suffers a gamut of disagreeable experiences with ordinary women who try to destroy his well-being. In agreement with the general theme of pilgrimage toward the Virgin, the male protagonist implicitly represents a holy traveler who must know earthly women before finding the Virgin. Through these unpleasant encounters, the *Spill* dissuades male readers from engaging with them, and it demonstrates their contrast to the Virgin. Roig imitates the traditional pilgrimage or *romería*, but he undermines it and converts it into its opposite, a despicable, abject *ramería* where the pilgrim encounters not the holy saints of the Christian *romería*, but the sick, sinful daughters of Eve.

Through a multitude of stories about men's encounters with these women, Roig demonstrates that they are contrary to well-being and solace. For example, in an episode in book one about his youth, the protagonist-narrator hurries along the route on his return from Paris to Valencia in order to spend the least amount of time possible in the French and Catalan towns inhabited by women who wish to make male travelers ill. On the border between Gascony and Catalonia he fears contracting the pustules that appear on the necks of men who pass through the area, maintaining that they are as large as breasts («tan grossos: / paren mamelles», 1858-1859). He attributes the sores to the potions that old, treacherous women of the region prepare and ostensibly feed to men (1860-1865). Thus, Roig shows that evil ordinary women convert normally safe food and drink into ingestible poison, unlike the Virgin whose mediations are constant and good. Episodes such as this in the *Spill* warn men that earthly women encountered along the pilgrimage-journey of life harm men's well-being and disrupt the social order.

Roig's conversion of the *romería* into an abject *ramería* indeed corresponds to the upside-down world of the carnivalesque, a concept that, like Roig's efforts to separate holy and ordinary women, depends upon the absolute division of the sacred and profane. Roig's *ramería* invokes many other features associated with the carnivalesque, such as ordinary women's tacit link to sexuality and corporality as Eve's daughters. Yet this Bahktinian notion does not explain why Roig chooses to denigrate women and undermine medieval pilgrimage, both of which are due to the *Spill*'s important connection to the goals of the professionalization of medicine. The carnivalesque describes the wedge that Roig drives between sacred and profane women, but it does not elucidate the cultural meaning of their division. The value and significance of their separation is better illuminated by a focus on how the *Spill* imitates and subverts the conventional medieval belief in pilgrimage as healing practice. Roig undermines pilgrimage's traditional, salutary value in order to dissuade male readers from relations with ordinary women, especially from contact with women healers. The concept of the carnivalesque describes the divide between sacred and secular women, but their separation is due to the erosion of their conventional medieval relation of likeness. Roig demonstrates their contrast in order to bolster the goals of the professionalization of medicine and destabilize the salutary value of pilgrimage.

### 3.1. *Strategies of subversion: The severed link between pilgrimage and healing*

Hence, Roig subverts traditional medieval pilgrimage with three main strategies: 1. he destroys the conventional medieval link between pilgrimage and healing; 2. he undermines the traditional, analogous connection between sacred and ordinary women healers; and, 3. he eradicates the conventional relation of likeness and integration between pilgrims and the men and women saints whom they found on their journeys. The *Spill*'s readers would have recognized the first strategy, the disintegration of pilgrimage's hygienic function, since journeys to the shrines of saints were a legitimate form of curing in the Middle Ages. Medieval pilgrimage was not merely a devotional practice to

venerate a saint, but many people embarked on the journey believing that contact with holy figures healed many ills. In fact, saints were frequently trusted more than physicians (22). Travel to the sites of saints' remains promised the kind of relief that is described in an example from north of the Pyrenees, where Gregory of Tours several times drank a concoction of water and dust from the tomb of St. Martin in order to heal himself of dysentery and toothaches (23). The numerous testimonies of saintly healing include those in the *Breviarium antiquum Legionensis Ecclesiae*, where the intervention of martyred saints healed a deaf person. Another account retells the case of a French pilgrim who was cured of a tumor on her eyelid that obstructed her vision (24).

The *Spill's* readers would have recognized the significance of pilgrimage since the route to Santiago de Compostela was one of the most popular in the medieval period. Its fame clearly extended beyond the merely devotional into social, political, and economic realms (25). The Jacobean route encouraged not only the cult of Santiago, but of other saints as well, such as San Millán de la Cogolla, San Zoilo, San Félix, San Isidoro, Santo Domingo de la Calzada, San Roque, and San Juan de Ortega. Many saints along the path were sought for their healing expertise, such as San Juan de Ortega, whose curative power comprised the body and soul. Isidore was also a well known healer along the route, and after his remains were transferred to León in 1063, he was renowned as the healer of paralytics, the deaf, and the speechless (26).

Medieval pilgrims often searched for women saints, such as Santa Bona of Pisa and Santa Felicia; the latter cured headaches in an allusion to her own beheading at the hands of her brother (27). But

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(22) SUMPTION, Jonathan. *Pilgrimage: An image of mediaeval religion*, New Jersey, Rowman and Littlefield, 1975, pp. 76-77.

(23) FLINT, Valerie J. The Early medieval «Medicus», the saint and the enchanter. *Social History of Medicine*, 1989, 2 (2), pp. 134, 137.

(24) GONZÁLEZ BUENO, Antonio. *El entorno sanitario del Camino de Santiago*, Madrid, Cátedra, 1994, pp. 95-96.

(25) GONZÁLEZ BUENO, note 24, p. 11.

(26) GONZÁLEZ BUENO, note 24, pp. 94-96.

(27) GONZÁLEZ BUENO, note 24, p. 97; for documentation on Felicia, see MAR-

the most legendary holy woman was the Virgin, who was incarnated in her many appearances as a healer, some of which are recounted in Berceo's *Milagros de Nuestra Señora* and Alfonso X's *Cantigas de Santa María*. Many of these miracles tell of the restoration of physical integrity, such as one that is included in both collections (cantiga 26 and miracle 8) in which the Virgin restores the life of a pilgrim to Santiago, a man called Giralt in Berceo's miracle. In cantiga 33, the Virgin saves a shipwrecked pilgrim on his way to Jerusalem, and in cantiga 179 Santa María de Salas cures a paralyzed woman:

Ca mentr' a missa cantavan  
 en que a Virgen loavan,  
 os nervios ll' assi sôavan  
 como carr' en pedregal.

Assi que sse ll' estendendo  
 foron e desencollendo,  
 e levantou-sse correndo  
 e sayu-ss' ao portal,

Loando a Groriosa (28).

Miracles such as these reinforced medieval people's confidence in the interventions of the Virgin and women saints, which they deemed effective and trustworthy. Many people sought holy women by embarking on pilgrimages to their shrines, a practice that Roig imitates in the *Spill* by fashioning the search for the Virgin as an arduous journey that ends in a salutary meeting. But Roig's abject pilgrimage is the opposite of the sacred *romería* because well-being with the Virgin is had not by setting forth on an arduous journey, but by avoiding the narrator's experiences. The narrator advises readers against the events

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TÍN DUQUE, Ángel J.; JUSUÉ SIMONENA, Carmen; MIRANDA GARCÍA, Fermín; RAMÍREZ VAQUERO, Eloísa; CORPAS MAULEÓN, Juan Ramón (eds.). *Camino de Santiago de Navarra*, Pamplona, Caja Municipal de Ahorros de Pamplona, 1991, pp. 91-92.

(28) ALFONSO X, EL SABIO. *Cantigas de Santa María*, Walter Mettmann (ed.), Vigo, Edicions Xerais de Galicia, 1981, vol. 1, p. 584.

that are recounted in the *Spill*, rather than entreating readers to imitate them.

Medieval pilgrimage did not operate in this way; the journey to a saint's shrine was imperative for a person's restored well-being. Thus, although the *Spill*'s ultimate objective is a salutary union with the Virgin, Roig destroys the traditional link between pilgrimage and healing because the male pilgrim need not travel at all for salutary fulfillment. The trip toward the Virgin is an «anti-journey» because it is an abject *ramería* that the reader should only read about instead of carrying out on his own. The *Spill*'s wretched journey is associated with the corporeality of the ordinary women encountered on the route, but the ideal encounter with the Virgin at the end is an abstract, salutary meeting. Gone is the physical contact with her healing ministrations that characterized the medieval miracles; instead, Roig emphasizes salutary devotion to the Virgin in her revised role as a static icon. In his effort to undercut the traditional medieval healing function of pilgrimage, Roig stylizes the Virgin and removes the direct contact that she had with the sick in the Middle Ages.

These attempts roughly coincide with the progressive change in pilgrimage's purpose, from a frequently salutary practice to a devotional ritual that increasingly lacked the early medieval emphasis on well-being (29). Devotion and physical health were conflated in medieval pilgrimage, as the journey promised both spiritual and corporeal benefits (30). But they began to be separated in late medieval, early modern Iberia as church authorities and medical professionals collaborated to determine and sanction the limits of licit salutary and religious practice. Doctors healed physical ailments, while religious authorities aided spiritual dilemmas, as both authoritarian figures increasingly became arbiters of the moral and social orders (31). Roig's

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(29) MARTÍNEZ GARCÍA, Luis. La asistencia hospitalaria a los peregrinos en Castilla y León durante la Edad Media. In: *Vida y peregrinación*, Madrid, Electa, Ministerio de Cultura, 1993, p. 69.

(30) GONZÁLEZ BUENO, note 24, pp. 94-95.

(31) GRACIA GUILLÉN, Diego. Judaism, Medicine, and the Inquisitorial Mind in Sixteenth-Century Spain. In: Ángel Alcalá (ed.), *The Spanish inquisition and*



conversion of the Virgin into an icon of piety at the end of the *ramería* corresponds to the change in pilgrimage's purpose, since men's well-being in the *Spill* is determined by their devotion to her renovated image as a distant religious symbol, and not as a tangible healer.

### 3.2. *The Broken Parallel Between Sacred and Earthly Women Healers*

This alteration in the Virgin's depiction is part of Roig's second strategy for converting the salutary *romería* into a damaging *ramería*, which he undertakes by upending the traditional, parallel relation between sacred and earthly women healers. Holy women legitimized and reinforced the hygienic mediations of ordinary women healers because their interventions were analogous. In the *Spill*, however, everyday women do not promise consolation and well-being like their sacred counterparts. Instead of encountering the solace of holy women on his journey, the *Spill*'s protagonist finds ordinary women who wish to do him harm. Roig tries to subvert the customary resemblance that medieval people expected between the healing interventions of worldly and holy women along pilgrim routes such as the road to Santiago de Compostela. These paths were populated by sacred healers in the shrines of women saints, and by mundane healers in the women workers who often provided sustenance and healing services in shelters and other lodging along the route. The road to Santiago was replete with a plethora of hotels, refuges, and hospitals that served largely as way stations for pilgrims to receive food, lodging, and sometimes medical assistance. The modern hospital and clinic did not exist in medieval society like they do today. Medieval hospitals were largely created by religious orders that sought to carry out acts of charity to the poor, and healing was only one of the various services they provided (32). They were generally managed by friars and nuns who at times possessed theoretical and practical knowledge of medicine in order to aid the

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*the inquisitorial mind*, Boulder, CO, Social Science Monographs, 1987, pp. 376 and 392.

(32) RUBIO VELA, Agustín. *Pobreza, enfermedad y asistencia hospitalaria en la Valencia del siglo XIV*, Valencia, Diputación Provincial de Valencia, 1984, p. 13; GONZÁLEZ BUENO, note 24, p. 48.

poor and sick (33). The link between hospitals and monasteries indicates that monks and nuns aided members of their own orders, but it is evident that the laity also received assistance (34). By the early twelfth century, hospitals populated most of the stages of the Camino, such as those at Jaca (1084), Pamplona (1087), Burgos (1085), Frómista (1066), and Foncebadón (1103) (35). Yet, they generally provided shelter and sustenance, and not necessarily medical assistance. Fifteenth-century documents evidence only occasional medical attention in hospitals, and consistent medical care was only regularized in the sixteenth century (36).

The conventional medieval analogy between ordinary and sacred women healers would have applied to medieval pilgrimage routes where pilgrims probably viewed everyday healers, such as nuns in «hospitals» or secular women in hotels or inns, not as divergent from sacred healers, but as parallel to them. Historians demonstrate that many medieval hospitals, inns, and refuges employed women in a wide variety of salutary and other service capacities. For instance, in hospitals in the fourteenth-century kingdom of Valencia, women cared for other women who were sick, prepared food, made beds, and even worked as wet nurses (37). Pilar Sánchez Vicente argues that the pilgrimage route to Santiago de Compostela caused the development and flourishing of many different kinds of occupations for women in and around the city of Santiago, such as bakers (*panaderas*), dressmakers (*textiles*), tailors (*confección*), and hotel keepers (*hostelería*) (38). Medieval Iberian

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(33) For information on hospitals and healing, see RUBIO VELA, note 32, GONZÁLEZ BUENO, note 24, pp. 47-85; SIRAIISI, Nancy G. *Medieval and Early Renaissance medicine: An introduction to knowledge and practice*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1990, p. 39; SUMPTION, note 23, pp. 198-202; AMUNDSEN, Darrel W. The medieval catholic tradition. In: Ronald L. Numbers and Darrel W. Amundsen (Eds.), *Caring and curing: Health and medicine in the western religious traditions*, New York, Macmillan, 1986, pp. 65-107.

(34) AMUNDSEN, note 33, pp. 83-84.

(35) MARTÍNEZ GARCÍA, note 29, p. 60.

(36) GONZÁLEZ BUENO, note 24, pp. 48, 55.

(37) RUBIO VELA, note 32, p. 119.

(38) SÁNCHEZ VICENTE, Pilar. El trabajo de las mujeres en el medievo hispánico: fueros municipales de Santiago y su tierra. In: Ángela Muñoz Fernández and

women worked as inn and tavern keepers and employed and managed the labor of other women, including prostitutes, as demonstrated by evidence from fifteenth-century Catalonia (39).

Thus, medieval inns, hotels, and hospitals employed women in a vast range of occupations, from those directly related to healing, to others in nutrition, to the more salacious vocation of prostitution. Roig undermines the general principle of resemblance between sacred and earthly women on the traditional *romería* in basing the *ramería* on the contrast between them, and not on the similar effects of their interventions. Instead of finding cure and consolation with ordinary women on Roig's *ramería*, the male pilgrim encounters the opposite, illness and pain. Roig eliminates the sacred women normally found on pilgrimages and substitutes them with ordinary women who only wish to harm the pilgrim's well-being. For example, mundane women never pay attention to doctors' prescriptions, preferring to kill men rather than heal them:

May lo consell  
del metge tenen:  
elles s'entenem;  
la malaltia  
no'l mataria:  
ffer l'[h]a morir  
sols l'enbotir  
he ffassiment. (8098-8105)

In another example, wet nurses do not feed newborns, but instead they poison them with their contaminated milk (5252-5305). With these kinds of stories and examples, the *Spill* advises that ordinary women generally are contrary to healing and seek to damage the pilgrim-

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Cristina Segura Graiño (eds.), *El trabajo de las mujeres en la Edad Media Hispana*, Madrid, Asociación Cultural al-Mudayna, 1988, pp. 179-200.

- (39) CARRASCO, Eva; ALMAZÁN, Ismael. Prostitución y criminalidad en Cataluña en la época moderna. In: Raphaël Carrasco (ed.), *La prostitution en Espagne: de l'époque des Rois Catholiques à la IIe République*, Paris, Annales Littéraires de l'Université de Besançon, 526, 1994, pp. 32-33.

reader, instead of curing or aiding him like women saints and the Virgin.

### 3.3. *The Lost Integration of Pilgrims and Saints*

The gap between sacred and earthly women further extends to the gender divide between women and men, since Roig aligns men with the Virgin and earthly women with Eve. These breaches are part of his third strategy to undermine pilgrimage and healing, since he ruptures the traditional relation of integration and likeness between the pilgrim and the men and women saints found along the pilgrimage path. According to the *Spill*, ordinary women should repel rather than attract pilgrims because they differ so entirely from the Virgin and her male offspring. This repulsion marks a change in the formerly intimate connection between the pilgrim and the variety of hosts that the pilgrim encountered at inns, hotels, shrines, and hospitals. One of the journey's most important objectives was to incorporate the medieval traveler into the Christian community that she or he encountered along the way. The traditional *romería* was characterized by the effort to convert the *hostis* (in Latin this meant foreigner, stranger, and enemy) into a *hospes*, a word that signified both the host and the guest. Thus, the ideal pilgrimage consisted of embracing the pilgrim and host in the same sphere of Christian charity (40). The pilgrim-stranger reached incorporation not only at the end of his or her journey, but also in the process of travel and meetings with others along the way. Hence, just as the female and male saints encountered on the journey were means of Christian integration, so were the hosts at lodgings and hospitals along the routes.

Medieval pilgrimage tried to reduce the distance between «the other», that is, the pilgrim, and the sacred and mundane hosts in order to create an integrated sphere of Christian harmony. The

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(40) SPACCARELLI, Thomas D. *A medieval pilgrim's companion: Reassessing El libro de los huéspedes (Escorial MS. h.I.13)* Chapel Hill, North Carolina Studies in the Romance Languages and Literatures, 1999, p. 31.

innkeeper-host could forget about fear of the other and give him or herself over to the wholeness of Christian plenitude by trusting in God's abundance. In the same way that hospitality was a key element of Christian charity, embracing the *hostis* as if he were Jesus Christ made possible the realization of Christian goodness (41). Thus, medieval pilgrimage was characterized by a concept of Christian charity that had both spiritual and corporeal, salutary meaning. As evidenced by the services that many religious orders offered along the route to Santiago in the medieval period, hosts provided the *hostis* with food, shelter, and occasional medical attention because such aid constituted good works that promised salvation. This concept of Christian charity had both sacred and practical significance in edifying the host and ameliorating the pilgrim's physical well-being.

The *Spill* counters this objective of hospitality and fusion of the pilgrim and host because the book's *ramería* creates a distance between the male pilgrim and earthly women. On the *ramería*, the male pilgrim opposes every woman he meets. The *ramería* negates the possibility of integrating the pilgrim in a community of evil, earthly women because the narrator rejects them at every turn. In a parody of good, Christian integration, the *Spill* advises that the women on the *ramería* wish to assimilate the pilgrim in their network of vice and destruction. Through a variety of tricks and techniques that include marriage, illness, sex, and pregnancy, ordinary women try to hook the male pilgrim into their web of deceit, not in order to integrate him into a Christian community of shared values, but to impair his well-being. With the *ramería*, Roig creates an «anti-community» that is marked by the gap between evil women and the male pilgrim, who is their victim. The ordinary women of the *ramería* do not embrace or welcome the pilgrim in order to commune with him, but they undermine every opportunity for alliance and union, as evidenced by what happens when the pilgrim-narrator's second wife consults a variety of questionable healers for advice on why she is unable to conceive (4534-4601). The *Spill*'s narrator attributes her difficulties to the fact that she is over forty, although one woman doctor (a healer whom Roig

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(41) SPACCARELLI, note 40, pp. 31-34; SUMPTION, note 22, pp. 198-203.

calls both a *metgessa* and a *madrina*) blames her husband's semen for the problem:

dant-los a 'ntendre,  
per la llavor  
poquet impur  
del marit llur  
res no y [hi] valia. (4550-4555)

The doctor also maintains a «stable» of virile young men whose job is to impregnate women who are married to defective husbands like the *Spill*'s storyteller. Women such as the doctor and the narrator's wife obstruct the fulfillment of men's desires, since in this case the *metgessa* manages to strip husbands of their paternity rights, and of the certitude of their producing male heirs. According to Roig's warning in recounting this episode, earthly women always subvert the normative values of patriarchal, homosocial society. Integration never occurs between ordinary women and men in the *Spill*, since men's desire contrasts women's.

The counterposition of the narrator-pilgrim and earthly women creates an «anti-community» that is characterized by division rather than likeness. Unlike women's frequently auspicious role in the medieval *romería*, Roig's ordinary women are not an integrative, linking part of the *Spill*. Rather, they cause fragmentation and chaos. Mundane women promised pilgrims healing and salvation on the traditional medieval pilgrimage, not only because of the common medieval belief in their resemblance to the Virgin, but also because of the example of conversion that was represented in the hagiographies of ordinary people who were converted into saints. Hagiography assured common people of their own possible repentance and conversion, and of their integration in the Christian community.

Lives of saints offered medieval pilgrims one more way in which ordinary women played an exemplary and integrative role in medieval pilgrimage. Thomas Spacarelli concurs in his study of the newly-coined *Libro de los huéspedes*, numbered manuscript H.I.13 at El Escorial. The work contains nine extraordinary stories about women and men,

including Santa Marta, Santa Maria Egiçiaça, Plaçidas the Knight, and King Gujllleme. Spaccarelli believes that the *Libro* constituted an attempt to edify reader-pilgrims along the Camino de Santiago (42). He argues that these stories about ordinary men and women, such as Maria Egiçiaça, a prostitute who repented and spent forty years in exile, were meant to teach, entertain, and encourage pilgrims on their arduous journey (43). The main goal of this edifying book was that women and men pilgrims would see themselves reflected in the lives of men and women saints, and would meld themselves with them through emulation. Thus, the medieval use of the *Libro de los huéspedes* reinforced the principle of integration that was crucial to pilgrimage, and it demonstrated that pilgrims relied on women saints (many of whom were formerly ordinary women) as exemplary figures.

The *Spill's* abject *ramería* proposes the contrary, since Roig replaces saints with vile, ordinary women. Earthly women occupy the same positions as the Virgin and holy women of the traditional medieval pilgrimage, but they do not constitute positive, edifying models. Rather, they are figures of disdain and rejection. Male readers do not perceive themselves in these women; instead, they see in them difference and contradiction. Roig uses gender contrast as an integral element in the division between the male pilgrim and the vengeful, ordinary women of the *ramería*. He distances women from men through the sin-disease that they naturally inherit from Eve, and he aligns men with the purity of the Virgin. The earthly women of the *ramería* not only are contrary to men, but they are also the antithesis of the Virgin. The Virgin of the *Spill* does not represent a model to imitate like she did in the Middle Ages, but she is an elevated, untouchable, privileged icon of solace and well-being. In contrast, the contagious women of the *ramería* wish

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(42) SPACCARELLI, note 40, has devised theories about the manuscript that are new in two ways. First, he offers a codicological advance in refusing to divide the manuscript in nine separate parts about individual saints, such as Maria Madalena and Maria Egiçiaça. Previous scholars preferred to deal with the manuscript in story fragments, p. 15. Secondly, Spaccarelli offers a novel social argument in theorizing about the manuscript's everyday use along the road to Santiago.

(43) SPACCARELLI, note 40, p. 16.

to harm and sabotage male pilgrims instead of healing and consoling them.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The negative effect of earthly women's interventions is evident at the end of the *Spill*, when the pilgrim-narrator declares the symptoms and diseases that he suffers from because of contact with infectious, ordinary women, including lovesickness, fever, jaundice, mange, and frenzy (11972-12006). In order to prevent them, Roig proposes that the male pilgrim avoid contact with mundane women, and instead direct himself to the Virgin. In this way, he will assure the preservation of his well-being, as well as the stability of the general patriarchal order. The *Spill* demonstrates and confirms the rejection of worldly women in an episode at the book's end, when the narrator initiates a trip to a hermitage in order to spend a quiet time of contemplation with other men. The narrator emphasizes the exclusively homosocial environment of the hermitage when he asserts that the visit of a group of women, which includes the Queen «dona Maria», provokes an extreme reaction from the hermits:

. . . me digueren  
 que la reyna  
 dona Marina,  
 desafaynada  
 huna jornada,  
 sols per mirar  
 hi volch entrar  
 ab ses donzelles:  
 claustra, capelles,  
 quant calçiguaren,  
 tot ho llavaren  
 he fort ragueren (15530-15541)

The invasion by these women of the male, homosocial space prompts the hermits to scrub the floors where the women stepped, in an effort



to protect their sacred terrain from any harmful effects of the female group.

The narrator's sojourn in the hermitage ends when he claims that he learned many lessons from his colleagues, and that he needed to begin another pilgrimage on the road to Santa Creus, a journey that makes evident all that the *Spill's* narrator-pilgrim has learned through the *ramería*. He evokes the names of famous holy sites such as Montserrat, Vallbona, and Val de Cristo in order to show that he has gleaned something positive from the negative *ramería*, which is how to undertake a sacred *romería* (15560-15610). The anti-exemplarity of the earthly women of the *ramería*, and the favorable examples of the hermits at the end of his life finally affect the narrator in a worthwhile way.

From the beginning to the end, the *Spill's ramería* subverts traditional medieval pilgrimage by breaking the common link between pilgrimage and healing, by rupturing the resemblance between earthly and holy women, and by disrupting the normal integration of pilgrims, saints, and ordinary people encountered on the pilgrim's journey. Roig bolsters the goals of the professionalization of medicine, but his *ramería* has further tangible consequences for readers; it dissuades them not only from seeking the interventions of ordinary healers in the readers' society, but from respecting and esteeming earthly women in their social roles as friends, wives, lovers, mothers, and workers.