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The Power of Byzantium:
The Appropriation of Byzantine Miracles in the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*

by

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in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the Degree of Master of Arts

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

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Abstract

This thesis examines the appearance of Byzantine miracles in a thirteenth-century Spanish Marian miracle compilation, the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*. Commissioned by King Alfonso X of Castile and León (1221-1284), the four extant codices and their miniatures are known for their indigenous contemporary folklore and visual representations. However, the inclusion of a few Byzantine miracles and their subsequent older modes of representation in the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* disrupt the contemporaneity of the collection. This was the impetus for the following research. Examined from the perspective of the cult of Mary, using theology, history, politics and visual modes of representation, I examine how, as a symbol, a Byzantine *Maria Regina* would have performed through the *Cantigas de Santa Maria's* miniatures. In addition I propose how Alfonso appropriated Byzantine history to lend his reign and political ambitions legitimacy while simultaneously addressing the very real and contemporary issues faced by his kingdom.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Title page	i
Abstract.....	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Table of Contents.....	iv
List of Figures.....	v-viii
Introduction.....	1
The Cult of Mary.....	2
The <i>Cantigas de Santa Maria</i>	3
Methodology	7
Chapter 1 – The Cult of Mary	13
Figures.....	46
Chapter 2 – Alfonso the Learned	65
Figures.....	98
Chapter 3 – The <i>Cantigas de Santa Maria</i>.....	110
Figures.....	139
Conclusion	152
Bibliography	156
Appendix A – Translation of Gonzalo de Berceo’s Pregnant Abbess	162
Appendix B – Translation of <i>Cantiga 7</i>	178
Appendix C – Translation of <i>Cantiga 264</i>	179

List of Figures

Figure:

Chapter One

- 1.1 *Isis Nursing the Infant Harpocrates*, 3rd Century. Source: ARTstor Slide Gallery, University of California, San Diego.
- 1.2 *Icon of the Virgin*, 6th Century, CMA.1967.144. Source: The Cleveland Museum of Art Collection.
- 1.3 Catacomb of Priscilla, Rome: det.: *Virgin and Child*, 3rd Century. Source: ARTstor Slide Gallery, University of California, San Diego.
- 1.4 Catacomb of Priscilla, Rome: 3rd Century. Source: ARTstor Slide Gallery, University of California, San Diego.
- 1.5 Catacomb of Priscilla, Rome: *Christ the Good Shepherd*, 3rd Century. Source: ARTstor Slide Gallery, University of California, San Diego.
- 1.6 Catacomb of Priscilla, Rome: *Three Youths in the Fiery Furnace*, 3rd Century. Source: ARTstor Slide Gallery, University of California, San Diego.
- 1.7 Catacomb of Priscilla, Rome: *The Sacrifice of Isaac*, 3rd Century. Source: ARTstor Slide Gallery, University of California, San Diego.
- 1.8 Catacombs of Saint Sebastian, Rome: *Still Life with Bird*, 4th Century. Source: SCALA, Florence/ART RESOURCE, N.Y.
- 1.9 Santa Maria Maggiore: *The Adoration of the Magi*, c. 440. Source: <http://freeforumzone.leonardo.it/discussione.aspx?idd=354952&p=5> (accessed March 17, 2010).
- 1.10 Santa Maria Maggiore: *The Annunciation*, c. 440. Source: <http://freeforumzone.leonardo.it/discussione.aspx?idd=354952&p=5> (accessed March 17, 2010).
- 1.11 San Marco Monastery, Florence: *Orant Madonna*. Source: ARTstor Slide Gallery, University of California, San Diego.
- 1.12 S. Maria Antiqua, Rome: *Maria Regina and Angel*, 8th Century. Source: ARTstor Slide Gallery, University of California, San Diego.

- 1.13 S. Maria Antiqua, Rome: det.: *Maria Regina and Angel*, 8th Century. Source: ARTstor Slide Gallery, University of California, San Diego.
- 1.14 San Clemente, *Virgin and Child*, c. 8th Century. Source: <http://www.sacred-destinations.com/italy/rome-san-clemente-photos/> (accessed March 17, 2010).
- 1.15 St. Catherine Monastery, Mount Sinai, Egypt: *Virgin and Child with two Saints*, 6th Century. Source: Erich Lessing Culture and Fine Arts Archives/ART RESOURCE, N.Y.
- 1.16 Hagia Sophia, Constantinople: *Virgin and Child*, c. 834. Source: Erich Lessing Culture and Fine Arts Archives/ART RESOURCE, N.Y.
- 1.17 Aachen (Aix-la-Chapelle), Germany: Odo of Metz, *Palatine Chapel of Charlemagne section*, 792-805. Source: S. R. Koehler. *Architecture, Sculpture, and the Industrial Arts Among the Nations of Antiquity*. Boston: L. Prang and Company, 1879. Series II. Plate 49, figure 2.
- 1.18 Ravenna, Italy: *San Vitale longitudinal section*, 526-547. Source: S. R. Koehler. *Architecture, Sculpture, and the Industrial Arts Among the Nations of Antiquity*. Boston: L. Prang and Company, 1879, Series II. Plate 43, figure 4.
- 1.19 Godescalc Gospels: *St. Mark*, fol. 1v, 781-785. Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris (MS. nouv. acq. lat. 1203). Source: Art Images for College Teaching.
- 1.20 Soissons Gospels: *St. Mark*, fol. 81v, early 9th century. Bibliotheque National, Paris (MS. Lat. 8850). Source: Art Images for College Teaching.

Chapter Two

N.B. All figures relating to *the Cantigas de Santa Maria* have been reproduced by the author from: Alfonso X, el Sabio. *Cantigas de Santa Maria, edición facsimile del Códice T.I.1 de la Biblioteca de San Lorenzo el Real de El Escorial Siglo XIII*. Madrid: Edilan, 1979.

- 2.1 Cantigas de Santa Maria: Cantiga 99, *Saracens Cannot Deface Mary-Image*.
- 2.2 Autun, Saint-Lazare, France: Gislebertus, *Last Judgement*, west façade, central portal, tympanum, 1120-1135. Source: SCALA, Florence/ART RESOURCE, N.Y.
- 2.3 Autun, Saint-Lazare, France: det., Gislebertus, *Last Judgement*, west façade, central portal, tympanum, 1120-1135. Source: SCALA, Florence/ART RESOURCE, N.Y.

- 2.4 Paris, St. Denis: det., *Second Coming of Christ*, west façade, central portal, 1135-40. Source: ARTstor Slide Gallery, University of California, San Diego.
- 2.5 Sainte-Foy, Conques, France: det., *The Last Judgment*, tympanum above main (west) portal, c. 1130. Source: Digital Library Federation Academic Image Cooperative.
- 2.6 Cathedral of Notre Dame, Amiens, France: *Smiling Virgin and Child*, south transept portal, 1260-1270. Source: Hartill Art Associates Inc.
- 2.7 Cathedral of Notre Dame, Chartres, France: *Annunciation and Visitation*, west façade, capital frieze, central portal, 1145-1155. Source: Hartill Art Associates Inc.
- 2.8 Cathedral of Notre Dame, Chartres, France: *Royal Portal, Virgin and Child*, west façade, right portal, 1145-1155. Source: Hartill Art Associates Inc.
- 2.9 Cathedral of Notre Dame, Chartres, France: *The Coronation of the Virgin*, north facade; central portal, c. 1215. Source: Hartill Art Associates Inc.
- 2.10 The Beatus of Liebana, *Warring Angels and the Fall of Babylon*, c. 1047. Biblioteca Nacional, ms. Vit. 14-2, fol. 207. Source: ARTstor Slide Gallery, University of California, San Diego.
- 2.11 The Prayer book of Ferdinand and Sancha, *Ferdinand, Sancha and the Scribe*, 1055. Source: Wixom, William D. and Lawson, Margaret. "Picturing the Apocalypse: Illustrated Leaves from a Medieval Spanish Manuscript." *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*. vol. 59, no. 3 (Winter, 2002): 1-56.
- 2.12 Gospel Book of St. Medard Soissons: Adoration of the Lamb, early 9th century. Bibliothèque nationale de France, ms. lat. 8850 fol. 1v. Source: ARTstor Slide Gallery, University of California, San Diego.

Chapter Three

- 3.1 Beatus of Liebana: *Scriptorium in the Tower of Monastery of Tavara*, 1220. Pierpont Morgan Library, ms. 429, fol. 183. Source: ARTstor Slide Gallery, University of California, San Diego.
- 3.2 Cantigas de Santa Maria: det., Cantiga 51, *Arrow Intercepted*, panel 4. Escorial, Biblioteca Real MS T.I.1.

- 3.3 Shah Abbas Picture Bible: det., [L] *David commits adultery with Bathsheba*; [R] *David sends for Bathsheba's husband, Uriah the Hittite*, fol. 41v, c. 1250. Pierpont Morgan Library, MS 638. Source: Art Images for College Teaching.
- 3.4 Cantigas de Santa Maria: det., Cantiga 42, *Ring on the Finger of the Mary-Image*, panel 5.
- 3.5 Cantigas de Santa Maria: det., Cantiga 99, *Saracens Cannot Deface Mary-Image*, panel 3.
- 3.6 Cantigas de Santa Maria: det., Cantiga 10, *Rosa das Rosas*, panel 1.
- 3.7 Cantigas de Santa Maria: det., Cantiga 10, *Rosa das Rosas*, panel 3.
- 3.8 Cantigas de Santa Maria: det., Cantiga 10, *Rosa das Rosas*, panel 6.
- 3.9 Cantigas de Santa Maria: Cantiga 99, *Saracens cannot Deface Mary-Image*.
- 3.10 Cantigas de Santa Maria: det., Cantiga 99, *Saracens cannot Deface Mary-Image*, panel 3.
- 3.11 Cantigas de Santa Maria: det., Cantiga 34, *The Virgin's Image Insulted (Latrine)*, panel 3
- 3.12 Cantigas de Santa Maria: det., Cantiga 99, *Saracens cannot Deface Mary-Image*, panel 4.
- 3.13 Cantigas de Santa Maria: det., Cantiga 28, *Siege of Constantinople (Mantle as Shield)*, panel 4.

INTRODUCTION

“The Virgin’s icon, in particular, [is] an inexhaustible source of new inventions and allusions. If it is true that the types and names of images were freely interchanged, each bringing its own meaning into play, then a new field of historical inquiry opens for scholars. First, one must learn to understand allusions that can invoke different and even contradictory ideas in a single image, both the way the figure is shown and by the name appended to it. One must also ask which types were current at a given time in a given place and for what reasons.”¹

The above quote by Hans Belting summarizes succinctly what is attempted throughout this thesis. The image of Mary has proven time and again to historians to be a dynamic image, one that has been able to evoke as many “allusions” as patrons. This thesis attempts to trace the origins of Mary as a powerful symbol, called upon by secular rulers to propagate ideology, and to examine in the context of thirteenth-century Spain how, as a symbol, she would have been interpreted by a contemporary viewer. By examining the societal and historical environment in which one thirteenth-century Spanish artistic manifestation of the cult of Mary was produced, the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*, I hope to demonstrate the dynamic nature of the Virgin as a symbol for Alfonso X of Castile and León (1221-1284) and how he was able to call upon different “types” of the Virgin simultaneously in order to appeal to a wide audience as well as propagate ideas of political and religious legitimacy.

¹ Hans Belting. *Likeness and Presence: a History of the Image Before the Era of Art*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994, p. 30.

The Cult of Mary

The cult of Mary is a rich topic that can potentially provide an endless number of fruitful research topics for any graduate student. The role of the Virgin within Christianity was highly complex: as the Queen of heaven she functioned as the vessel of redemption for the entire human race, yet at the same time she was a humble mother, and will forever remain accessible to the earthbound, not only for veneration, but also for appropriation.

The events of the first seven centuries of Christianity, most notably in Byzantium, moulded Marian iconography from ascetic Virgin to a powerful queen: *Maria Regina*. Her popularity began to grow exponentially as papal leaders appropriated her imagery to convey a message of salvation, supremacy and devotion. Theology stated that Mary was a powerful figure as she was the vessel that brought salvation to the human race. She also commanded a privileged position in Heaven with her son, offering compassion and intercession to those who called upon her. This advantageous position within Christianity afforded Mary a contingent of devoted followers and, as her popularity began to grow, secular leaders realized the potential in Mary's potential as a symbol to communicate imperial power. In the sixth century, Mary was called upon by secular rulers in order to create parallels between the Virgin's and the Emperor's ability to protect the nation. The Virgin, as a symbol, would have relayed those messages of salvation, victory and protection to people who strongly believed in the power of icons. Mary served as a tangible bridge to Christ and eternal bliss and, if one demonstrated themselves to be a devoted servant to her, then they would be saved through her grace: "The whole world rejoices, as being redeemed through her... no man is saved except through you, *Theotokos*."²

² This quote is an excerpt from Ambrose Autpert's (d. 784) sermon on the nativity of Mary. Hilda Graef. *Mary: A History of Doctrine and Devotion*. London: Sheed & Ward, 1985, p. 165.

The Virgin as protector is a Byzantine invention, but it is one that had an enduring appeal, filtering into the West and emerging in many different manifestations of material culture. As the West began to rival the East in its political stability and artistic production, Marian iconography began to filter into western art. With the advent of the Crusades, her eastern representation as *Maria Regina*, a powerful Byzantine Queen, resonated amongst communities living with the fear instilled by ambitious church and secular leaders who invoked the threat of Muslim invasion. These leaders looked to the east for powerful imagery to evoke a sense of power, legitimacy and religious supremacy.

“...Byzantine cultural achievements were emulated because of competition with the great power they symbolized. A changing Latin Christianity found in Byzantine icons the artistic vehicle for a new interest in personal faith. And the Byzantine ‘*lingua franca*’ used at the height of the Crusades by artists of various nationalities provided a syncretic style evocative of a unified Christianity.”³

One example of an artistic manifestation of the Byzantine *Maria Regina* used to evoke a unified Christian community under the constant threat of Islam was Alfonso X’s *Cantigas de Santa Maria*.

The Cantigas de Santa Maria

Commissioned by Alfonso X during his reign over the kingdoms of Castile and León from 1252 to 1284, the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*, or “Songs of Holy Mary”, is known today in the form of four codices, prefaced by two prologues (prologue A describes Alfonso’s various titles and territories and prologue B is a profession of his desire to be Mary’s troubadour) and contain four hundred and twenty-seven poems, all praising the virtues of the Virgin. The

³Herbert Kessler. “On the State of Medieval Art History.” *The Art Bulletin*. vol. 70, no. 2 (Jun., 1988), p. 171.

majority of the poems relates to the viewer (or listener) a miracle performed on behalf of the Virgin, and every tenth poem is a hymn of praise, or *loor*. Each of the *cantigas* is set to music and is illuminated by a full page of miniatures laid out in what the modern viewer would consider to be comic strip-like fashion. Today, the four surviving codices are housed in various libraries throughout Europe: Madrid, Biblioteca Nacional MS 10069 (To); Escorial, Biblioteca Real MS T.I.1 (T); Florence, Biblioteca Nazionale, MS Banco Rari 20 (F); and Escorial, Biblioteca Real, MS b.I. 2 (E). The *Cantigas de Santa Maria* were viewed by Alfonso's court as well as performed on major feast days for the public.⁴ Written in Galician-Portuguese in order to appeal to Castilian courtly life, the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* drew upon literary and artistic trends of their day through their style and content, lending the manuscript an unprecedented accessibility.

The literary sources for the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* are varied, and many of the miracles were famous legends that were transmitted and transmuted across Europe in the Middle Ages. For example, sixty-four of the first one hundred miracles are considered to be commonplace in thirteenth-century Marian lore. The number of recycled tales drops dramatically as only seventeen of the second group of one hundred miracles are found elsewhere, eleven of the third one hundred groupings of miracles are common, and only two of the fourth group of one hundred miracles can be found in other sources.⁵

⁴George D Greenia. "The Politics of Piety: Manuscript Illumination and Narration in the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*," *Hispanic Review*. vol. 61 no. 3 (Summer, 1993), p. 340.

⁵Connie Scarborough. *Visualization and Verbalization in MS. T.J.I. of the Cantigas de Santa Maria*. Lexington: University of Kentucky, 1983, p. 15.

Considered by some to be somewhat biographical,⁶ as an illuminated manuscript, the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* strays from the typically strictly biblical content of many of its contemporaries, and provides historians a unique glimpse into the life of the King as well as of everyday life in thirteenth-century Castile and León. Many of the miracles are indigenous to Spain in both provenance and setting. The *Cantigas de Santa Maria* offers the viewer the privilege of entering into the King's private life through the illustration of some of his life events, including a glimpse into the royal bedchamber. Many day-to-day scenes such as farming, fishing, bee-keeping, silk production, relationships (including some of the most private moments in a relationship), city building, warfare and weaponry are also illustrated. While some scholars may argue the veracity of the actual events depicted in the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*, most agree that the wide array of information illustrated in the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* leads to a better understanding of thirteenth-century Spain's social structures and environment.

The function and the audience of the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* is somewhat debatable. While we will never know the specific audience of the *cantigas*, they are spoken of by most scholars in a courtly context. George D. Greenia suggests that given the political nature of many of the underlying messages of the *cantigas* that we can therefore assume that they were created to address a courtly audience, one that would have been aware of contemporary political issues.⁷ There is documentation in Alfonso's last will and testament to his wish "that all the books of the

⁶ Most notably by Joseph O'Callaghan whose book, *Alfonso X and the Cantigas de Santa Maria: A Poetic Biography*, presents the *Cantigas* alongside the factual events of the King's life and suggests how the miniatures' content can be seen as reflective of not only the events of his life, but his personal feelings as well. On the other hand, others such as George D. Greenia and Joseph Snow argue that the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* should not be read as a biography, yet they do acknowledge an element of self promotion and politics behind the miniatures (they merely stress that they should be seen more as Alfonso projecting an idealised self image; for Greenia and Snow the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* codices are an intimate piece of literature, but not a factual one).

⁷ Greenia, p. 337.

Songs in Praise of Holy Mary be in that church where our body will be buried, and that they cause them to be sung on the feasts of Holy Mary.”⁸

The compiling of all of the *cantigas* was a personal project for Alfonso and took the majority of his reign to complete. Alfonso was heavily involved both the artistic and poetic process of the creation of the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*.⁹ Produced by his royal scriptorium, the focus of the poems are relatively secular in comparison to other contemporary manuscripts. The function of the poems and their illuminations is not to serve as exegesis for sermons, but rather they function as an assertion of the Virgin’s power and subsequently an assertion of Alfonso’s power.

In order to understand the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*, a comprehension of their unique patron is required as well. Born to Ferdinand III and Queen Beatriz, Alfonso X, *el Sabio* (the wise), is considered by many to have embodied Renaissance ideals, which he predated by two centuries, through his significant contributions to a wide variety of fields such as law, astronomy, music, poetry, scholarship, and art.¹⁰ Being a scholar himself,¹¹ Alfonso surrounded himself with a lively court of ecclesiastics, doctors, musicians and scribes, as well as laymen,¹² and produced definitive manuscripts on astrology and law.¹³ Robert Anderson opines:

“The encyclopaedic nature of the work at the Royal Scriptorium was, to a certain extent, a preface to the attitude toward knowledge-gathering that flourished during the Renaissance. This is not the place to pursue the traditional question of actual authorship of individual works; the hand of the master is recognized frequently

⁸ John Esten Keller. “Daily Living as Presented in the Canticles of Alfonso the Learned.” *Speculum*. vol. 33 no. 4 (Oct., 1958), p. 486.

⁹ Greenia, p. 326.

¹⁰ Robert R. Anderson. “Alfonso X el Sabio and the Renaissance in Spain,” *Hispania*. vol. 44 no. 3 (Sept., 1961): p. 448.

¹¹ Alfonso had an extensive education and studied and valued the classics in a similar fashion as the Humanists whom he pre-dated by over two centuries. *Ibid*.

¹² Evelyn Procter. *Alfonso X of Castile: Patron of Literature and Learning*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1951, p. 115.

¹³ Specifically the Alfonsine Tables and *Siete Partidas*.

throughout. The main point is that Alfonso was the great motivator; his was the mind that envisioned the invaluable fruits of a gigantic labour. It is but conjecture to ask what would have been the course of poetry, language, politics, and law in the Iberian Peninsula without his contributions; it is safe to say, on the other hand, that the intellectual glory that was sixteenth-century Spain would have appeared much dimmer without the heritage of this truly enlightened predecessor.”¹⁴

Although Alfonso made significant artistic and academic contributions, his reign was not without its trials and tribulations. Faced with the constant threat of Muslim incursions, scheming nobles and an unsuccessful quest for the title of Holy Roman Emperor, Alfonso, like many kings before and after him, felt the societal and political pressures of his day and subsequently those pressures were manifested in some of the artistic works he oversaw at the Royal Scriptorium.¹⁵

Much has been written on the information provided in the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* on the social roles in medieval Spanish society. Studies have been conducted on the role of women,¹⁶ the complex role of the Muslim,¹⁷ and the blatantly negative portrayal of the Jew¹⁸ throughout the manuscript. Albert Bagby states:

“In the *Cantigas* Alfonso gives a detailed description of a country's peoples and customs, of a king's interests and duties; but, most important of all, whether consciously or unconsciously, he has to reveal a king's attitudes. It is here, in the

¹⁴ Anderson, p. 452.

¹⁵ Although we cannot determine the extent of Alfonso's contribution to the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*, it has been noted that Alfonso acted as an editor and would have had final say in what was included and what was not. Proctor, p. 120.

¹⁶ For example, Connie L. Scarborough's *Women in Thirteenth Century Spain as Portrayed in Alfonso X's Cantigas de Santa Maria*.

¹⁷ Albert Bagby notes, that the majority of the *cantigas* mentioning Muslims portray them in a negative light even though Alfonso's literary circle would have no doubt included several Muslim participants. In “Some Characterizations of the Moor in Alfonso X's ‘*Cantigas*,’” Bagby questions whether the negative portrayal was a personal reflection of Alfonso's beliefs. However, Joseph Snow remarks in *The Poetry of Alfonso X, El Sabio: A Critical Bibliography* that many of the poems Bagby cites are of common stock and therefore would not represent Alfonso's personal beliefs.

¹⁸ Albert Bagby (“The Jew in the Cantigas of Alfonso X, el Sabio”), Deirdre Jackson (*Marian Anti-Semitism in Medieval Life and Legend: A Study Based on Alfonso X's Cantigas de Santa Maria*), deal with the portrayal of the Jew in the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*.

Cantigas, that we find more than a king clothed in ermine and velvet, more than a scholar wrapped in the cloak of learning, more than an example of the Christian faith; we find here a flesh-and-blood, practical man, swayed by the attitudes of his day.”¹⁹

It is precisely the contemporary attitudes that Bagby references that are examined in the following pages, more specifically, the religious and political attitudes of the patron. These attitudes characterize the patron and are communicated to the artist in creating this unique expression of the cult of Mary. The *Cantigas de Santa Maria* demonstrates Alfonso’s ability to utilize Marian imagery effectively to convey a sense of power and authority.

Through a close examination of various primary sources (such as the manuscript itself) and by researching the origins of the cult of Mary, the function of the manuscript, and the social and political environment in which it was produced, I hope to demonstrate that through the invocation of Byzantine miracles and iconography in the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* Alfonso X communicated his message of authority and legitimacy.

METHODOLOGY

The methodological approach I undertake for this thesis is one of close examination of primary as well as theological sources. The consultation of primary sources such as the facsimile of the manuscript (the majority of my study has concentrated on the Escorial M.I.1), sermons, liturgical hymns, and records of church councils provide the foundation for my study. In order to understand the development of the cult of Mary through the centuries and, as a result, the impetus behind the *cantigas*’ appropriation of the image of Mary, a major component of primary research consists of theology. In addition to the Bible, the writings of theologians such as

¹⁹ Albert Bagby. “The Jew in the Cantigas of Alfonso X, el Sabio,” *Speculum*. vol. 46 no. 4 (Oct. 1971), p. 688.

Augustine, Jerome and Justin Martyr are integral to understanding the religious messages in the manuscript. By relying on primary sources my aim is to gain a deeper understanding of the underlying messages that the Marian iconography would have conveyed to the contemporary viewer of the manuscript.

Several theories and methodologies have been used over the years when approaching the topic of the cult of Mary. To take one example, Michael P. Carroll (1983) took a psychoanalytic approach in an attempt to answer the question of why Mary would have been a powerful image with whom to associate oneself. He suggests that it is the prominence of father-ineffective families in the eleventh century that created the need for a strong female figure, proposing that Mary would have possessed a strong appeal as an authoritative figure to fill the void of the father. This argument is not one that is popular and it remains controversial due to its lack of evidentiary support. The approach of this thesis, rather, is informed by the research conducted by Deirdre Jackson, Nhora Serrano and John Osborne. Through a reliance on historical and political circumstances, I hope to demonstrate how specific iconography would relay a deliberate message chosen on behalf of the patron and postulate how that message would have been received by the appropriate, contemporary viewer.

I feel that my contribution to the existing scholarship on the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* is the continuance of a scholarship tradition of the closer inspection of individual poems. Given the *cantigas'* massive size and glimpses into the everyday of a medieval Spanish Christian, the importance of this manuscript has not gone unnoticed in the scholarly community. Perhaps not given the amount of recognition a work of this magnitude deserves, the focus of the majority of scholarship has been a somewhat general examination of the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* as a whole. I feel that by following in the research tradition of scholars such as Deirdre Jackson,

Nhora Serrano a deeper understanding of the content, intent and message of the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* can be derived. My goal of this thesis is to identify possible connections between patron and art. Could there be a deeper meaning to the poems besides entertainment? I truly believe that art is reflective of the society within which it is produced and I feel that by approaching the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* as I have, I have made a small contribution towards a deeper understanding of an amazing work of art.

By structuring my thesis on the specific *cantigas* that are of Byzantine origin it is my intention to demonstrate the effectiveness of the cult of Mary as a symbol for political legitimacy through the transmission of Byzantine legends and iconography.

This thesis is structured thematically and chronologically. Thematically, the first chapter focuses on Byzantium and the second and third chapters focus on Spain, Alfonso X and the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*. Chronologically, the first chapter will be devoted to an examination of the inception of the cult of Mary and how her iconography evolved throughout the first eight centuries of Christianity, culminating in the pivotal representation of Mary as *Maria Regina* – Queen of Heaven. The second chapter and third chapter focus on the artistic, political and literary history of Spain, concluding with the examination of the cult of Mary as seen in Alfonso's *Cantigas de Santa Maria*.

The first chapter provides the historical and theological foundations for my thesis. An examination of the scant Biblical references to Mary, as well as some of the major apocryphal references, helps in establishing a theological underpinning for Marian iconography in the first few centuries of Christianity. Tracing the cult's origins in Byzantium and studying the evolution of iconography through some of its pivotal moments helps establish Mary as a symbol for both

ecclesiastical and secular leaders, helping us better comprehend their message as delivered through this medium. By looking at these pivotal moments, (for example, the Council of Ephesus) and major theological writings (such as various apocryphal texts), evidence for Mary's evolution both in her role and iconography can be traced. An understanding of the origins of the cult is a preface to understanding the theological and political interpretation of the contemporary viewer of Mary's image throughout the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*.

The second chapter will serve to illustrate the historical setting, both politically and artistically, for the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* and further develop the period eye established in the first chapter. Spain had a unique visual vocabulary, one that was quite different from the rest of the Christian world. Vivid colour blocking, strikingly abstract and dramatic figures, and unique architectural details in Mozarabic illuminations helped differentiate Spanish manuscripts from those produced in the rest of the Christian world. However, once Spain became enmeshed in the crusading efforts of the papacy, Spanish manuscript illuminations began to reflect the political aspirations of popes and secular leaders alike through the eclipsing of local iconography by iconographies of Christian legitimacy. Indigenous visual vocabulary became relegated to minor details as figures became more universalized and identifiable through a more naturalistic rendering; subject matter became less esoteric in order to appeal to the populace, and indigenous iconography and modes of representation were gradually diffused by continental iconography. The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate visually the shift from the previous Mozarabic manuscript style to the more continental style of the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* and the extent to which Alfonso X's political, religious and societal ambitions and pressures contributed to this shift.

The focus of the third chapter is on the specific poems that reference Byzantine legends and, alongside my findings from the first and second chapters, demonstrate visually the deliberate appropriations of these legends in Alfonso's efforts to legitimize his rule. In addition to the visual examination of the miniatures, an examination of literary trends in the thirteenth century is conducted. My intention is to articulate the function of the specific miracles chosen to be included in Marian miracle collections. While we cannot possibly know the mindset of the patron, or suggest for certain why Alfonso chose to include the specific poems in the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*, by examining past functions of the popular Marian miracle compilation, my aim is to establish a precedence of intent.

The visual examination conducted in the third chapter is centred on a few individual poems, namely *cantiga* 99 and *cantiga* 264. Through a visual comparison of the illuminations of these two *cantigas*, my goal is to demonstrate clearly Alfonso's invocation of Byzantine iconography and legends in order to evoke a sense of political and religious legitimacy. Through this unique example of material culture, this thesis aims to demonstrate the effectiveness of a centuries-old tradition of appropriation of Marian imagery and the enduring appeal of the Virgin as not only a symbol of power, but of comfort and consistency, linking past successes to future conquest.

CHAPTER ONE – Mary in Byzantium

The success of early Christianity can be attributed to its inclusiveness in a world that had previously been elitist and exclusive. The Christians had a fully stocked arsenal of dogma, missionaries and figureheads of acceptance, compassion and salvation to aid in their success. In attempting to disassociate themselves from Paganism, Early Christians focused on the monotheistic aspect of Christianity, thereby systematically diminishing the role of secondary figures to the central figure of Christ. Although this served to set Christianity apart from some other religions of the time, it also left a void previously filled by the ancient tradition of the Mother goddess. As this new religion grew and became the favoured religion of the state, shrewd religious and secular leaders realised the potential for the Virgin Mary to fill the void left by popular goddesses such as Tyche, Isis and Athena.

The allure of a Virgin Goddess was undeniable and as a result the cult of the Virgin grew steadily in the epicentre of Early Christianity that was Byzantium. The cult gradually became part of Eastern orthodoxy through various ecclesiastical councils and imperial decrees over the first seven centuries of Christianity. Gospel accounts of the Virgin's life that had been left out of the New Testament, scholarly debates discussing the many virtues of the Virgin, and liturgical hymns to the Virgin were disseminated throughout Byzantium and, as a result, the Virgin's popularity began to rival her predecessors.

After iconoclasm in the eighth century her role grew exponentially as secular rulers appropriated her image as a form of legitimization. Although Mary enjoyed great popularity and power in the East, she did not figure as prominently in the religious centers of the West. The

Virgin Mary was an important figure to all Christians, however in the West the permeation of the cult of Mary and her acceptance as a figure of power occurred through several avenues of transmission from the East. Even though the adoption of Marian imagery as a tool of secular promotion was not as immediate in the West, its uses became advantageous to rulers such as Spanish King Alfonso X “*el-Sabio*” (1221-1284) at the same time as Eastern traditions became more accepted and increasingly popular. As demonstrated in the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* commissioned by Alfonso X, the cult of the Virgin became a useful vehicle for Western secular leaders to perpetuate the concept of a divine endorsement, legitimacy, righteousness and power behind their rule.

In order to fully understand the power imbued in the symbol of Mary and how a thirteenth-century Spanish audience would have interpreted it, we must trace her beginnings in Early Christianity. The transformation of Mary from humble mother to *Maria Regina* cannot only be tracked through church records but also through works of art that were being produced. Although very few monumental images of Mary have survived in Byzantium from the period before iconoclasm, we are still able to track her evolution through domestic objects, catacombs and art produced in papal Rome, as well as other cities.

Mary was not a prominent figure in the first few centuries of Christianity. She is not referenced explicitly in the Old Testament, but the latter does provide typological references to her. Christian theologians have interpreted a number of passages in the Old Testament as prefigurations of Mary and her virtues, such as purity, chastity and impenetrability. For example she is often seen as prefigured in Gideon’s fleece, the sling of David, the closed gate in the book

of Ezekiel, various fruits and trees¹, as well as the Ark of the Covenant², but these references are not embraced by Early Christian artists in their earliest depictions of Mary. Although she appears implicitly in the New Testament, her relative obscurity that does not correspond to the popularity of the cult and the iconography used to depict Mary in her various forms later in the Middle Ages. Although the worship of Mary was minimal in the first five centuries of Christianity, the presence of a female virgin goddess had played an integral role in various religions pantheons. In focusing their attention on Christ (thereby diminishing the role of the Virgin), Early Christian theologians attempted to differentiate Christianity from previous pagan religions. In his fifth century C.E. treatise against Paganism, *City of God*, Augustine of Hippo, veiled in a discussion on angelic hierarchy, warns the reader of the dangers of worshipping multiple gods:

“The multitude who are blessed become so only by participation in the unity of God. The miserable multitude of evil angels are deprived of this unity of participation; they separate in order to hinder rather than unite in order to aid in the process of blessedness. And by their very multitude they try in whatever way they can to protest and oppose and prevent us from arriving at that one, blessed good to which we are being led. We are being led not by the efforts of many, but by the work of one, true Mediator. This mediator, whose participation makes us blessed, is himself the uncreated Word of God through whom all things are made.”³

As one of the most influential theologians of his time, Augustine is an apt example of the mindset of the contemporary Christian. He asserts that the true path to God and salvation is through the love of one God. It is interesting to note that Augustine mentions only one possible

¹Jeannie K. Bartha, Annette Grant Cash, Richard Terry Mount. *The Collected Works of Gonzalo de Berceo in English Translation*. Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies (ACMRS): Tempe, 2008, p. 6.

²Marina Warner. *Alone of All Her Sex: The Myth and the Cult of the Virgin Mary*. New York: Knopf, 1976, p. 3.

³Steven Chase. *Angelic Spirituality: Medieval Perspectives on the Ways of Angels*. New York: Paulist Press, 2002, p. 83.

mediator, Christ, and makes no mention of Mary's intercession, a trait for which she was worshipped in the later centuries. This may have been intentional on Augustine's behalf in order to avoid any parallels to paganism but, at the very least, it demonstrates how little credence Mary was given in contemporary, fifth century theology. Although heavy emphasis was placed on the importance of Christ and monotheism in the writings of authors such as Augustine, one cannot say that Mary was ignored completely during Christianity's infancy.

Mary possessed a strong appeal to converted pagans who would have been comfortable with the idea of a prominent goddess. Some scholars even suggest that paganism compensated for the minimal development of Mary as an object of worship. "The paucity of references to Mary in the New Testament was compensated for early on by poetical, liturgical and iconographic developments fed by apparitions, miracles, legends and the transmutation of pagan myths."⁴

As mentioned previously, the veneration of a female virgin goddess is by no means unique to Christianity. Many scholars have attempted to draw parallels between Greek, Roman and Egyptian virgin goddesses. There are certainly a number to choose from in any religion's pantheon. The myth of a virgin conception was used throughout Ancient Greek and Roman mythology to denote a hero's birth; Romulus and Remus are just one example of this tradition.⁵ Although Mary has similarities to many ancient mother figures, the most frequently cited similarities occur between Mary and the Egyptian goddess Isis. Like Mary, Isis had been the

⁴ Nicholas Perry and Loreto Echeverria. *Under the Heel of Mary*. New York: Routledge, 1988, p. 7.

⁵ Michael P. Carroll. *The Cult of the Virgin Mary: Psychological Origins*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986, p. 7.

Mother of a god and was also considered the “great Virgin”⁶. Many of the iconographic traditions employed to depict Isis seem to have influenced the earlier representations of Mary. For example, the standard of Mary enthroned with the infant Jesus on her left knee has its origins in Isiac visual vocabulary.⁷ A frequent depiction of Isis shows her sitting on her cushioned wooden throne with her child, Horos, on her lap. She is often shown offering her breast to Horos, who does not accept and instead holds his finger to his lips, referencing his role in opening the passage for souls (fig. 1.1).⁸ This common pose can be considered a precursor to the Virgin and child depiction found throughout the centuries of Marian iconography. Although there are differences, for example Mary is never depicted with both breasts bared,⁹ the similarities are undeniable.

The domestic veneration of goddesses offer more direct connections to the earliest manifestations of Marian images. As some scholars have postulated, the development of Christian icons can be traced not only to state or the church patronage, but to domestic devotion as well.¹⁰ Second and third century C.E. Egypt was witness to a steep decline in public religious financing and, as a result, religion was privatized and the majority of religious art that survives from this era can be found in domestic settings.¹¹ Therefore, the earliest representations of Mary in Egypt are found in a domestic context that resembled the domestic shrines of pagan gods and goddesses. One example of a domestic depiction of Mary is from Late Antique House ‘D’ in

⁶ Thomas F. Matthews and Norman Muller, “Isis and Mary in Early Icons” in *Images of the Mother of God*, ed. Maria Vassilaki. King’s Lynn: Biddles Ltd., 2005, p. 5.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

Kom el-Dikka (in Alexandria).¹² The simple wall painting of Mary enthroned and surrounded by angels is clearly an early representation of her shares many similar attributes as Isis such as the throne usually present in Isiac imagery.¹³ Mary also adopts another Isiac iconographical device: the double chin (as demonstrated in figure 1.2, the Cleveland tapestry). Although not all of these devices become standards in Christianity, they clearly demonstrate the fluidity and transmission of iconography at this time.

Another standard of Isiac iconography shared by early representations of Mary is her stare. A youthful, but mature Isis demonstrates her “superhuman dignity” and maintains her reserve by not engaging her eyes with the common spectator. The iconographic similarities between Isis and Mary (the pose, the throne and the stare) are evidence of Christianity’s syncretic nature. As a new religion, Christianity required a visual vocabulary that was accessible and familiar to its followers. Christianity’s appropriation of Isiac visual vocabulary fulfilled that aim in the early centuries of Christianity.¹⁴ The appropriation of Isiac iconography also helped Early Christians flesh out the mother of Christ who appears very infrequently in the New Testament, so what is the theological basis for the cult of Mary? Like many biblical figures, Mary is pre-figured in the Old Testament, but there is little written on Mary herself in the New Testament.

Mary makes her humble appearance in the New Testament in the book of Galatians dated to 57 C.E..¹⁵ Galatians 4:4 to 4:6 states: “But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full

¹² Ibid., p. 4.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Warner, p. 3.

rights of sons". Although this passage appears diminutive on the surface, there is a powerful message behind referencing Mary: it is through Mary that human kind is to be redeemed. This brief passage is indicative of the role Mary plays throughout the New Testament. The underlying message of intercession is woven throughout the brief, but integral role Mary plays and consequently fosters an interest that not only results in the establishment of Mary as a popular avenue of veneration, but it also shapes her iconography. Another biblical passage that further solidifies Mary's intercessional nature is the miracle of Cana as described in the book of John (2:1-11):

"On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus' mother was there, and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine was gone, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine." "Dear woman, why do you involve me?" Jesus replied, "My time has not yet come." His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons. Jesus said to the servants, "Fill the jars with water"; so they filled them to the brim. Then he told them, "Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet." They did so, and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew. Then he called the bridegroom aside and said, "Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now." This, the first of his miraculous signs, Jesus performed in Cana of Galilee. He thus revealed his glory, and his disciples put their faith in him."¹⁶

This brief and brusque dialogue between mother and son has been long viewed as an example of Mary's piety, her ability to intercede between men and Christ with compassion. The connection between this miracle and the Eucharist further enhances Mary's role as intercessor.

¹⁶ King James Bible

This passage is typical of the few passages that do refer to Mary – she is a supporting character to the central figure of Christ.

The one book that does offer a glimpse into the life of the Virgin Mary before Christ is born is the book of Luke. This book provides the textual evidence for the most appearances of the Virgin in the New Testament. Events such as the Annunciation, Visitation, Nativity, and the Purification are described, but not in much detail. Although this book is where Mary is mentioned with the highest frequency in the New Testament, there are few details available to an artist or patron with which to create a unique iconography. There is no mention of her age, there are doubts as to whether or not she is a Virgin,¹⁷ and debates existed on the very nature of the Virgin. Was she divine, or was she human?

In the first century C.E., the biblical writers of the East (who at this time are comfortable with the veneration of a female goddess), compensate for the lack of information on Mary by producing apocryphal texts that lend Mary many of the virtues for which subsequently she became renowned. Texts such as the Ascension of Isaiah, the Odes of Solomon and the book of James deeply influenced the development of the cult of Mary and provide a deeper understanding of the Virgin's life. These texts were considered in the East to be authoritative accounts of the Virgin's life and character, but were not as widely accepted in the West and were consequently omitted from the New Testament.¹⁸ The texts are intriguing as some scholars such

¹⁷ John 2:3 states he is born of a "woman" but does not specifically mention a virgin birth.

¹⁸ Warner, p. 30.

as Marina Warner point out the “un-Jewish” nature of Mary’s life and suggest that these books offer a deeper connection to Paganism than to Judaism.¹⁹

For example, the theme of barrenness between Mary’s parents, Joachim and Anna, created a series of events that appear to have pagan roots. Mary’s parents, Joachim and Anna, were unable to procreate, and upon receiving knowledge of Anna’s miraculous pregnancy, Joachim and Anna decide to devote their daughter’s life to God. The stories of Mary growing up within the temple are problematic for the Jewish religion as women were never allowed in the temple itself.²⁰ Mary’s vow of chastity has been seen as the reason why she was allowed to remain in the temple even though she was at an age of sexual maturation. However the very fact that she took a vow of celibacy also goes against fundamental Jewish tradition.²¹ It was seen as unholy for a woman to purposefully avoid procreation and there was a social stigma against barrenness.

Mary living in the temple and taking the vow of chastity is very reminiscent of a pagan virgin priestess and Vestal Virgins, a tradition that would have been familiar to Eastern worshipers, especially to those in Syria.²² The whole notion of a virgin birth also has its roots in paganism as many pagan gods were born from virgins; it was a symbol of a man’s divinity to be born from a virgin. Although Mary’s life seemed to have parallels in paganism, the nature of Christ’s conception and his subsequent birth is unique to Christianity. As mentioned before, Mary was not completely ignored by Early Christian theologians. Justin Martyr, a second-

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 32

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

century theologian, argued that Jesus' birth was unique as Mary was impregnated by the word of God and was not seduced by God. He stated:

“Christ would wash those who believe in him with his own blood. For the Holy Spirit called those who receive remission of sins through him, his garments; among whom he is always present in power, but will be manifestly present at his second coming. That the Scripture mentions the blood of the grape has been evidently designed, because Christ derives blood, not from the seed of man, but from the power of God. For as God, and not man, has produced the blood of the vine, so also has (one) predicted that the blood of Christ would be, not of the seed of man, but of the power of God.”²³

Many of these Eastern texts discuss Mary's perpetual virginity and her source of power. Through these texts she is elevated from human mother to powerful deity. They emphasize her conception through the power of God (thereby distinguishing her from previous goddesses) but also praise her human-like compassion. In the Ascension of Isaiah we are offered the first account of her virginity *in partu*: “Mary straightaway looked with her eyes and saw a small babe, and she was astonished [sic]. And after she had been astonished [sic], her womb was found as formerly before she had conceived.”²⁴ This passage is the starting point for a debate that would last over many centuries on the nature of Mary's virginity. The church fathers of the East claimed that Mary conceived as a virgin, and remained a virgin even after her birth: she was a perpetual virgin.

Dated to before 150 C.E.²⁵ the Odes of Solomon continues the concept of Mary's *in partu* virginity and extols her many virtues:

²³ George H. Gilbert. “Justin Martyr on the Person of Christ.” *The American Journal of Theology*. vol. 10 no. 4 (Oct., 1906), p. 669.

²⁴ Hilda Graef. *Mary: A History of Doctrine and Devotion*. London: Sheed & Ward, 1985, p. 34.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

“The womb of the Virgin caught, And received conception, And brought forth: And the Virgin became a Mother With many mercies: And she travailed And brought forth a Son Without incurring pain. Because it happened not emptily, And she had not sought a midwife (For He brought her to bear); She brought forth, As if she were a man, Of her own will, And she brought Him forth openly, And acquired Him in great power, And loved Him in salvation, And guarded Him in kindness, And showed Him in Majesty.”²⁶

It is clear in this text that the author is raising Mary above humankind. Through these passages Mary’s course is set from humble mother to powerful queen. The book of James furthers the idea of *in partu* virginity by offering an anecdote. In this passage, the doubting of St. Thomas is prefigured in the doubting of Mary’s perpetual virginity by the midwife Salome: “Salome, I have to tell you a new sight. A virgin has given birth, which her nature does not permit. And Salome said: As the Lord my God liveth, unless I place my finger and examine her nature I will not believe it.”²⁷ It is through passages such as these that the East built their concept of Mary. Although these texts did not go completely uncontested,²⁸ they became generally accepted in the East. From these apocryphal extrapolations of the New Testament, the concept of Mary began to coalesce into a vocabulary that theologians, worshippers and artists were able to draw upon for inspiration.

Although the books of Pseudo-Matthew and James were regarded as apocrypha, they provided evidence to support later Catholic claims of Mary’s virginity, thereby supporting their claims of Jesus’ divinity. While the East relied on the Apocrypha for the defence of the Virgin’s perpetual virginity, the West relied on the more sobering works of Jerome and Ambrose.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 35.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ One of the most controversial opponents of Mary’s perpetual virginity was Origen (d. 253). He opposed the widely held belief that Mary was without faults and believed that she did not remain a Virgin; for his evidence he cites the book of Luke.

Jerome was an erudite scholar, having travelled around Christendom and studied under some of the most influential thinkers of his time, such as St. Gregory of Nazianzus and St. Gregory of Nyssa.²⁹ He became a renowned scholar and was sought after by both Eastern and Western churches.³⁰ In 383 C.E. Jerome penned an influential treatise on the perpetual virginity of Mary in response to a pamphlet written by a relatively unknown Helvidius.³¹ Jerome entered a debate on the semantics of Scripture by responding to statements Helvidius offers as evidence of Mary's relationship with her husband. Helvidius also called upon numerous passages that made reference to Jesus' brethren, suggesting that these references were intended to mean brothers in the literal sense. Jerome counters by stating that they were brothers in race:³² "... you will be shown that individuals are given the title of brothers in Sacred Scripture for four reasons, namely, birth, race, kinship, and affections. Esau, Jacob, the twelve Patriarchs, Andrew and Peter, James and John are called brothers by reason of birth. Individuals are called brothers by reason of race, the way that all Jews call themselves brothers as in Deuteronomy..."³³ Although Jerome defends Mary's perpetual virginity, the conclusion to his defence remains true to his Christological focus:

"But just as we do not deny these statements which have been written down, so also, by the same token, we do deny those things which have not been written down. We believe that God was born of a virgin, because we have read such a statement. We do not believe that Mary married after she brought forth her son, because we have not read such a statement. We are not saying this in order to condemn marriage; virginity itself, to be sure, is the fruit of marriage; but because it is not right for us to make rash judgments about holy men. For if we base our judgment on probability, we can argue that Joseph had many wives, because

²⁹ John N Hritz. *Saint Jerome: Dogmatic and Polemic Works*. Washington: The Catholic University of America Press, 1965, p. x.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., p. xi.

³² Ibid., p. 26.

³³ Ibid., p. 31.

Abraham had many wives, because Jacob had many wives; and that the brothers of the Lord were born of these wives, as many imagine is the case, based not so much on a pious as on a brazen rashness. You say that Mary did not remain a virgin; as for me, I claim more emphatically that Joseph himself was also a virgin through Mary, so that a virgin son might be born of a virgin wedlock. For of fornication ill befits a holy man, and it is not written down that he had a second wife, but was the guardian rather than the husband of Mary whom he supposedly possessed as his own, the conclusion follows that he, who was deemed worthy to be called the father of the Lord, remained a virgin with Mary.”³⁴

Like Augustine, Jerome’s writings are reflective of contemporary theology. While Christ is the central figure of Christianity, Mary garners attention vicariously through Christ. Through his Vulgate bible, Jerome became a well known scholar on theology and remained extremely influential throughout Western Christianity.³⁵ The focus of his rebuttal to Helvidius was clearly the ascetic aspects of the Virgin’s life. For Jerome, Mary was a figure of chastity and virtue rather than power and strength. His statements can be seen as ideological; through the Virgin he is creating an example of chastity and purity that women could emulate. While his subject matter was reflective of fourth and fifth-century debates, his ideologies and focus held fast in the West for many more centuries than it did in the East.

Considered to be the father of Western Mariology,³⁶ Ambrose (339-397) also placed Mary within a firm Christological context and by doing so emphasized her moral attributes and diminished her superhuman powers of intercession. To Ambrose, Mary was an example of perfect physical and moral purity. He stated: “What is nobler than the Mother of God? What more glorious than she who was chosen by the [divine] Glory, what more chaste than she who brought forth a body without bodily contact? And what shall I say of her other virtues? She was

³⁴ Ibid., pp. 38-39

³⁵ William P. Kitchin. “The Literary Influence of St. Jerome.” *The Catholic Historical Review*. vol. 7 no. 2 (Jul., 1921), p. 165.

³⁶ Graef, p. 88.

a virgin not only in body but also in spirit, whose pure mind had never been spoiled by any deceit... Such was Mary, that the life of this one virgin might be the example of all.”³⁷ Although Ambrose elevated Mary to a figure worthy of emulation, he stressed the differences between veneration and emulation. He reminded the good Christian that God is the only figure to be venerated: “Without doubt the Holy Spirit, too, must be adored when we adore him, who is born from the Spirit according to the flesh. But let no one apply this to Mary: for Mary was the temple of God, not the God of the temple. And therefore he alone is to be adored, who worked in the temple.”³⁸ Ambrose’s language is clear: Mary is an exemplar of chastity, purity and perfection, but not a deity to be worshipped. Emphasis was still placed on the importance of Christ and the monotheistic aspect of the religion.

The ideas of Augustine, Ambrose and Jerome remained a constant in the Christian West for many centuries after their deaths. While the East was engaged in heated battles over some of Mary’s more superhuman traits, the West remained followers of the older traditions of the Latin fathers.³⁹ Although the cult of Mary endured through turbulent times in the East, some scholars reason that the stagnation of Western Mariology was due to civil unrest. Hilda Graef states: “The later Latin Fathers added practically nothing to Mariology. The whole Christian West was constantly troubled by barbarian invasions; all the Church could do was preserve the Catholic inheritance intact, especially against the Arian Goths and Vandals and against the Monophysites in Africa.”⁴⁰

³⁷ Ibid., p. 87.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 88.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 115.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 118.

Marian theology certainly did not stop evolving after the fourth century;⁴¹ however, by the fourth century theology had progressed to such a level that artists and patrons in the East now had a more developed and unique vocabulary of the Virgin through the apocrypha. While the supporting texts of the apocrypha and the patristic writings of the Latin Fathers helped to define Mary as a person and to differentiate her from previous pagan goddesses (but not to the extent that she became inaccessible to the previously pagan worshippers) amongst scholars and the literate, the cult of Mary required a higher level of patronage to visually elevate her from domestic, ascetic virgin to a symbol of power in order to reach a wider audience.

The Catholic Church witnessed a major event in the development of the cult of Mary in the fifth century: the Council of Ephesus in 431 C.E. The Council was coordinated by the Bishops at Ephesus to discuss the dual nature of Christ. Headed by St. Cyril, Patriarch of Alexandria, the Bishops argued that Christ was a God at the moment of his birth (and therefore Mary would have been the bearer of God) opposing Nestorius, the Patriarch of Constantinople.⁴² Nestorius contended that Christ had a dual nature: he was both man and a God. He believed that Mary should bear the title of *Christotokos*, meaning she bore Jesus as a human as opposed to the favoured title of *Theotokos*, meaning she was the bearer of a God.⁴³ Nestorius stated: “I have learned from scripture that God passed through the Virgin Mother of Christ; That God was born of her I have never learned.”⁴⁴ Although it was not the intention of the Council to focus on Mary, by embracing Mary as *Theotokos*, it inadvertently instilled a level of power and prestige in

⁴¹ Although Hilda Graef states that it significantly slowed down in both the East and the West until eleventh century theologian Fulbert of Chartres and twelfth century theologian Anselm of Canterbury once again took up the cause and influenced whole new generations of Marian thinkers.

⁴² Maurice Hamington. *Hail Mary? The Struggle for Ultimate Womanhood in Catholicism*. New York: Routledge, 1995, p. 14.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

the very nature of the Virgin and thereby contributed to her effectiveness as a symbol to communicate strength and power to the masses.

The Bishops were successful in their argument and the title of *Theotokos* has since been associated with Mary. Nestorius was excommunicated and the people of Ephesus sought his hasty expulsion via flaming torches.⁴⁵ The public saw this as a direct endorsement of Mary as a devotional figure. The title created some confusion amongst the illiterate as some believed it to designate Mary as the Mother of God rather than a “mere” bearer of God.⁴⁶ Maurice Hamington states: “The less educated populace was already devoted to Mary, and merely sought greater official justification for its beliefs. The hierarchy of the Church and the faithful had different interests and different perspectives on Mary: One was theological, one was devotional.”⁴⁷ Through the official justification Mary begins to emulate contemporary queens in her iconography.

The Council of Ephesus provides art historians with valuable information to assist in dating what few images of Mary are still in existence from Early Christianity. It provides us with a concrete moment in history that enables us to track stylistically the impact such events as the Council of Ephesus had on the portrayal of the Virgin Mary and the subsequent development of her iconography.

One of the earliest images that survives of the Virgin Mary is located in the Priscilla catacombs in Rome. Dated to the second quarter of the third century,⁴⁸ the fresco is an apt example of the method of depicting Mary before she was endowed with the title of *Maria Regina*

⁴⁵ Perry and Echeverria, p. 9.

⁴⁶ Hamington, p. 15.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ John Osborne, “Images of the Mother of God in Early Medieval Rome” in eds. Eastmond, Antony and James, Liz. *Icon and Word: The Power of Images in Byzantium*. Burlington: Ashgate, 2003, p. 136.

after the Council of Ephesus. The fresco (fig. 1.3) depicts the Virgin seated with child and flanked by a saint. Although the fresco has been damaged throughout the centuries, we can see that the Virgin is humbly rendered. She is not adorned with jewels nor is she seated on a throne; rather she is given little emphasis, she is more of a marginal figure (fig. 1.4) and is shown in clothing that does not denote any kind of royalty. Rather than dwelling on Christ's birth and life with his Mother, scenes found in third-century catacombs typically focus on God's omnipotence and the salvific nature of Christianity⁴⁹ through iconography such as Jesus as the Good Shepherd (fig. 1.5), the three youths in the fiery furnace (fig. 1.6) and the Sacrifice of Isaac (fig. 1.7).

In the fifth century, after the Council of Ephesus, there seems to be more frequent depictions of Mary. One example of Marian imagery that appears to have been inspired by the ruling at the council is the decoration of the Roman church of Santa Maria Maggiore.⁵⁰ The basilica built by Pope Sixtus III (432-440) and erected upon one of Rome's most preeminent vistas, the Esquiline Hill, boasts mosaics that celebrate Mary's new-found prominence within Christianity. Throughout the various cycles Mary is sumptuously dressed; she wears a robe of gold and is adorned with an understated diadem.⁵¹ As one of the first examples of a major monument built by the papacy, the depictions of Mary in Santa Maria Maggiore had a profound effect on the changing iconography of Mary.

Gone are the frescos and simple depictions of a humble Mary. In their place are lavish gold mosaics and a plethora of depicted jewels. Placed in the triumphal arch above the apse, the mosaics contain Christological images, but only ones in which Mary is present. Even though

⁴⁹ Clark D. Lamberton, "The Development of Christian Symbolism as illustrated in Roman Catacomb Painting," *American Journal of Archaeology*, Vol. 15, No. 4 (Oct-Dec., 1911), p. 514.

⁵⁰ John Osborne, "Early Medieval Painting in San Clemente, Rome: The Madonna and Child in the Niche," *Gesta*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (1981), p. 304.

⁵¹ Osborne, "Images of the Mother of God in Early Medieval Rome", p. 136.

Mary enjoys an elevated status in this basilica, she is still shown as being secondary to Christ. As demonstrated by the Adoration of the Magi (fig. 1.8), the Christ child is seated on a bejewelled throne separate from his mother. Mary is equal to her son in terms of spatial hierarchy, but her subordinate role is clearly articulated through her understated robes and “throne”.

Santa Maria Maggiore also features an Annunciation mosaic that further demonstrates Mary’s regal authority (fig. 1.9). Here her diadem is clearly visible as Gabriel and the Holy Spirit determine her fate. She is also shown in clothing more befitting her title; her robes are now gold and bejewelled instead of the plain robes of earlier catacomb renderings of a humble Mary. While images of Mary began to emulate contemporary Byzantine rulers through her dress and authority, she continued to evolve into a more regal figure as her popularity and official patronage continued to grow.

Mary’s increasing popularity in the fifth century is evident not only through domestic objects and papal patronage, but through imperial appropriation of her imagery. She began to assume the role of previous civic deities, Victoria and Tyche, as a symbol of legitimate imperial power.⁵² By the sixth century, Marian imagery had filtered to major public sites for imperial cults such as the no longer extant Blachernai in Constantinople.⁵³ In this way we are able to track her popularity with secular rulers through literature and liturgical practices.

⁵² Bissera V. Pentcheva. *Icons and Power: The Mother of God in Byzantium*. University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006, p. 12.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

In the years 527-565 C.E., Emperor Justinian I demonstrated official sponsorship of the cult of Mary by introducing the major Marian feasts into the calendar.⁵⁴ The feasts of the Annunciation, Nativity and the Entry into the Temple were now part of daily life. Not only was Mary beginning to feature prominently in art and daily life but also in literature through the *Akathistos* hymn. Although the date and attribution is subject to debate (proposed dates and author have ranged from Sergios I in 626 to Germanos I in 717-718 to the early sixth century),⁵⁵ this hymn remained extremely influential in liturgical practices for many centuries as it praised the virtues of the Virgin, seeking her intercession and protection. To be sung on March 25th, the feast of the Annunciation,⁵⁶ the twenty-third strophe stated:

“Hail, tabernacle of God the Word,
 Hail, holier than the saints,
 Hail, treasure chest filled with gold for the spirit,
 Hail, inexhaustible treasure of life;
 Hail, precious diadem of reverent kings,
 Hail, august boast of devout priests,
 Hail, unshaken tower of the church,
 Hail, unconquered wall of the Kingdom;
 Hail, thou to whom trophies are raised,
 Hail, thou through whom the enemies fall,
 Hail, leadership for my spirit,
 Hail, nurture of my life,
 Hail, bride unwed.”⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 15.

⁵⁵ Alexander P. Kazhdan, ed. *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*. New York, Oxford University Press, 1991, p. 44.

⁵⁶ Egon Wellesz, “The ‘Akathistos’. A Study in Byzantine Hymnography,” *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, Vol. 9 (1956), p. 141.

⁵⁷ Marjorie Carpenter, trans. *Kontakia of Romanos, Byzantine Melodist II: On Christian Life*. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1973, pp. 308-309.

The hymn may be connected to the seventh-century siege of Constantinople by the Avars.⁵⁸ The victory over the Avars was attributed to the Virgin and legend states that the hymn was sung all night at the Blachernai: “And the people of Constantinople, who were so dear to God, sang the hymn standing and without any respite during the whole night, as a thanksgiving to the Mother of God, as She had kept watch over them and with Her great might had achieved the monument of victory over the enemies.”⁵⁹ What is interesting with regard to the hymn and an aspect that further demonstrates the link between the state and the cult of Mary, is the language used. She is described as the “precious diadem of reverent kings”, the “unshaken tower of the church” and the “unconquered wall of the Kingdom” to name a few. The language is clearly creating a link between the Virgin and the state. She is also addressed with the salutation “hail”, a salutation that was used in addressing a victorious emperor.⁶⁰ Mary’s role as mediatrix was heavily emphasized in Constantinople at this time in order to lend an otherwise tenuous reign stability and comfort to a people who believed in the power of idol worshipping. This idea of Mary protecting a city clearly resonated with many Christians as iconography corresponding to the hymn’s message can be seen in many different manifestations throughout Christendom. It is such a powerful message that it even makes an appearance over six hundred years later in the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*; an appearance to be discussed at length later.

While the Virgin was enjoying a new-found popularity and power in the East, the Western equivalent of the *Akathistos* hymn was much more subdued and conveyed a completely different message. The Italian poet Venantius Fortunatus (c. 530 – c. 600) composed the hymn

⁵⁸ Wellesz, p. 142.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 152.

⁶⁰ Pentcheva, p. 16.

Quem Terra, Pontus, Aethera that became part of Western liturgy to be sung on the feasts of the Virgin.⁶¹ The poem states:

“The God whom earth, and sea, and sky
adore, and laud, and magnify,
who o'er their threefold fabric reigns,
the Virgin's spotless womb contains.

The God whose will by moon, and sun,
and all things in due course is done,
is borne upon a Maiden's breast,
by fullest heavenly grace possessed.

How blest that Mother, in whose shrine
the great Artificer Divine,
whose hand contains the earth and sky,
vouchsafed, as in His ark, to lie.

Blest, in the message Gabriel brought;
blest, by the work the Spirit wrought;
from whom the great Desire of earth
took human flesh and human birth.

All honor, laud, and glory be,
o Jesu Virgin-born, to Thee,
whom with the Father we adore,
and Holy Ghost for evermore. Amen.”⁶²

In contrast to the *Akathistos*' focus on Mary's power and ability to conquer her enemies, Venantius' hymn focused more on the demure and feminine aspects of her virtues. Like previous Latin theologians, Venantius was concerned with placing the Virgin within a Christological context. She is the paragon of chastity, but all the glory belongs to Christ. Accounting for the differences we see between Eastern and the Western poetry, Averil Cameron states: “It could be argued that Venantius' poetry reflects a different Western emphasis here –

⁶¹ Graef, p. 130.

⁶² J.M. Neal. *Hymns of the Eastern Church*. New York: AMS Press, 1971, p 45.

appropriate to his life-long role as friend and advisor to an aristocratic community of nuns headed indeed by a queen. The poems of Venantius point the way to the Virgin of the troubadours, the heavenly queen who is the recipient of the same kind of courtly love as that expressed to living aristocratic ladies.”⁶³

In another poem entitled: “In Praise of the Holy Virgin Mary” Venantius furthers his use of language more befitting of a troubadour than a venerator. He uses words such as: dear, benign, radiant, holy, lovely, flower, adornment, altar, splendour, palm, crown, chastity.⁶⁴ Through the use of these words, Venantius created a feminine ideal, one that his aristocratic community could emulate in real life. In this context she was no longer accessible as a figure of worship by men and she was subsequently reduced to an object of desire. As a lovely flower Mary could not possibly be seen as an avenue for powerful intercession, but more as an ideal. She is the good to Eve’s evil; she was relegated to serving as an allegory for the contemporary woman. This was in stark contrast to the *Akathistos* hymn which barely made any reference to her sex and no reference to “traditional” female attributes. These differences illustrate the divide between Eastern and Western Marian theology in the sixth and seventh centuries. To the West she was an exemplar of female behaviour and to the East (especially Constantinople), she was their Athena. She was a protector, a warrior and a goddess. Cameron suggests that the differences are more socially motivated than the result of religious differences: “Constantinople was not at this point [sixth century] concerned to make ideological statements about families or the respective roles of the sexes; its interests were far more immediate and universal. ...

⁶³ Averil Cameron. “The Theotokos in Sixth Century Constantinople: A City Finds its Symbol,” *The Journal of Theological Studies*, vol. 29 no. 1 (1978), p. 81.

⁶⁴ Graef, p. 130.

Intercession, in fact, leads us to deeper conclusions about Byzantium in the late sixth century, in which indeed religion is perhaps as much a symptom and a social mechanism as a reality in itself.”⁶⁵ As the Emperor’s role in Byzantium became increasingly intertwined with religion,⁶⁶ we can start to see the influence of these popular hymns and ideas in art sponsored by both the state and the papacy.

As there are few surviving monumental works from Byzantium for us to trace the iconographic development of Mary, we must look a little further West to Rome, as the culture of Byzantium and the Greek East began to filter into the West through the papacy. The Byzantine *Maria Regina* can be found in many papal commissions in Rome. Pope John VII reigned for only a brief two years (705-707 C.E.), but the impact this pontiff had on the advancement of the cult of Mary was major.⁶⁷ Thanks to the seventeenth-century drawings of Old St. Peter’s by Jacopo Grimaldi, we know that this Pope’s connection to the cult was strong.⁶⁸ In order to ensure his entry into heaven, Pope John VII arranged burial *ad sanctum* and decorated his funerary chapel with an image of the Virgin (fig. 1.10). Here Mary is continuing the iconography of *Maria Regina* as inspired by the Council of Ephesus through her powerful presence. She is an imposing figure with her stoic facial expressions and elaborate crown and clothing befitting a queen, yet her *orant* stance implies an act of kindness as the imagery is intended to show the Virgin’s support of the Pope by praying for his soul. The platform she stands upon suggests a certain inaccessibility, as if she were removed from humanity, yet her

⁶⁵ Cameron, p. 82.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 83.

⁶⁷ John Osborne, “The Cult of Mary Regina in Early Medieval Rome,” *Acta Ad Archaeologiam Et Artium Historiam Perinentia*, Vol. 21, No. 7 (2008), p. 97.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 97.

hands reach out past her frame into the viewer's space. She is exemplifying her dual nature as both an earthly mother and a heavenly queen.

Another representation of Mary as *Maria Regina*, one that is possibly the earliest of such representations still in existence today, is located in Santa Maria Antiqua in Rome. The church, which unfortunately has been damaged by earthquakes, contains various depictions of Mary as *Maria Regina*. Mary (fig. 1.11) is shown in the traditional Isis manner seated on a throne that is reminiscent of the descriptions of the New Jerusalem in its adornment with precious jewels. Unlike Santa Maria Maggiore, there is no mistaking that she is the regal presence in this depiction. She holds her son on her lap and if one looks closely, one can see the hint of a double chin (fig. 1.12), an early Marian trait, now expressed in a new visual vocabulary.

One cannot overlook the uniquely Byzantine traits of these Marian images that figure Mary as a Byzantine Queen. In the Santa Maria Antiqua image she wears a pearl-studded crown and a jewelled silk sash. Her clothing also has imperial connotations; her white tunic and purple dalmatica are unique to Byzantine rulers.⁶⁹ This is a trait that disappears from Marian imagery in the West as the connection to Constantinople weakens.⁷⁰ When combined with the hymn of *Akathistos*, Santa Maria Antiqua would have been a powerful platform with which to espouse the virtues of the Virgin and to ensure her popularity amongst influential papal authorities. Scholars have suggested that the location of the frescos at Santa Maria Antiqua were unique in that they were more on the spectator's level, thereby enhancing the experience of the clergy and emphasizing the accessibility of the Virgin's intercession. "Not only were images brought closer

⁶⁹ Pentcheva, p. 16.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

to the level of the beholder, but, as the example of Santa Maria Antiqua shows, they were also apt to be associated with spots where liturgical activities took place”.⁷¹

Another example of Mary as *Maria Regina* that is more difficult to date, but has been considered to be close to the same date as the mid-eighth-century portions of Santa Maria Antiqua based on its similar iconography, is the niche decoration in San Clemente (fig. 1.13).⁷² Like the Santa Maria Antiqua fresco, the image of Mary is fragmentary, but enough of the image survives to indicate that this depiction of her is a continuation of the *Maria Regina* theme. Mary is once again in imperial clothing (as opposed to the courtly robes of the Santa Maria Maggiore virgin)⁷³ and is adorned with an elaborate crown. What is most interesting about this depiction of Mary is not necessarily how she is depicted, but why she is there at all. As demonstrated by the increase in state and church sponsored buildings dedicated to Mary, interest in the cult was no doubt growing amongst the lay population. The niche at San Clemente is an example of this flourishing interest. Questions have arisen as to the purpose of the image, and it has been suggested that it was possibly intended for female veneration only.⁷⁴ This is difficult to discern as there is a lack of written records from this period with clear language on the separation of the laity.⁷⁵ We are aware that from the time of Pope Gregory IV (827-844) the sexes were separated, placing the females on the right hand side of the church.⁷⁶ When taking into consideration the placement of the images of Mary from both Santa Maria Antiqua and San Clemente, it could be

⁷¹ W. Eugene Kleinbauer, ed. *The Art of Byzantium and the Medieval West: Selected Studies*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976, p. 197.

⁷² John Osborne, “Early Medieval Painting in San Clemente, Rome: The Madonna and Child in the Niche,” p. 306

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 304.

⁷⁴ John Osborne, “Images of the Mother of God in Early Medieval Rome”, p. 142.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 142.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

postulated that they were intended for a female audience as they were both located on the right hand side of their respective churches.⁷⁷

An interesting avenue of research follows this line of questioning in relation to domestic objects that rendered images of the Virgin Mary. Was Mary only associated with female domestic objects, or is she more gender neutral? The cult of Mary seems to have taken longer to filter into the domestic arts than imperial sites in which pagan subject matter remained en vogue for the first six centuries of Christianity in Byzantium.⁷⁸ However, the cult of the Virgin began to gain momentum and the domestic objects that have been found dated to the sixth century are, for the majority, found in a female context.⁷⁹ Discovered in Turkey, an armband that would have been worn by a woman was found in a pit along with coins bearing Justinian's image, thus dating the armband to circa 527.⁸⁰ This armband bears the inscription: "Mother of God, help Anna. Grace."⁸¹ Through that inscription we may be able to discern that it was intended for female use. There is not an abundance of domestic objects that survive from this early Byzantine era, but Henry Maguire suggests that the majority, but not all, of domestic objects that contain inscriptions were intended for female use.⁸² Maguire does make the interesting observation that domestic objects invoking the protection of the Virgin greatly increases for both sexes.⁸³

Maguire suggests that instances of state sponsored art occurred before the prominence of Mary in domestic objects. When the images are in a public context they are considered to be

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 143.

⁷⁸ Henry Maguire, "Byzantine domestic art as evidence for the early cult of the Virgin" in: *Images of the Mother of God*, ed. Maria Vassilaki. King's Lynn: Biddles Ltd., 2005, p. 190.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 190.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 184.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid., p. 188.

⁸³ Ibid.

gender neutral as both sexes would have invoked the protection of the Virgin. In terms of the domestic objects, the trend seems to be that objects of more value, such as large intricate medallions, can be dated earlier than cruder armbands (although I have to wonder if this is just as a result of the value of the object – if it is worth more, it is probably more durable and one would take better care of it than something of lesser value...) and suggests that Marian imagery filtered downwards from state sponsored art to the wealthier classes. Maguire also notes that, before Iconoclasm, objects that depicted the Virgin were not oriented towards a specific sex and were not even as prolific as other Christian figures or even older pagan images. However, after Iconoclasm, the number of domestic objects containing images of the Virgin greatly increased for both sexes.⁸⁴

Iconoclasm decimated the number of images of Mary from early Byzantium; however, it was during and after Iconoclasm that the cult really took hold and the image of Mary was appropriated yet again by ruling factions to support their claims of legitimacy. This period marked a significant change in the way Mary was depicted and it established the cult and its visual vocabulary for centuries to come. Production of religious images was banned and pre-existing religious images destroyed over a period of nearly a century. However, there were fluctuating levels of enforcement of this ban and some images were protected under Muslim rule, such as the icons housed at St. Catherine's monastery in Sinai (fig. 1.14).⁸⁵ Seen as an imperial imposition, the smashing of icons became synonymous with imperial authority and, as a result, created a rift between church and state, one that would be repeated in the sixteenth century.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Robin Cormack. *Writing in Gold: Byzantine Society and its Icons*. London: George Philip, 1985, p. 98.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 118.

Many monks were persecuted for their beliefs and some were eventually thought of as martyrs for their protection of the icons. One such monk was St. Stephen (d. 765) who was killed for his pro-icon beliefs and whose story was taken up by the iconophiles who, under the veil of pseudo-history, disseminated their ideals through the biography *The Life of St. Stephen the Younger*.⁸⁷ After the iconophiles were victorious, Constantinople began the process of rebuilding under a more stable empire.

At the end of the iconoclast period in the mid ninth century, images of Christ and the Virgin began to reappear in imperial commissions. One such notable commission was the reinstating of an image of the Virgin and child in the apse of Hagia Sophia (fig. 1.15). The Patriarch of Constantinople, Photios, in the presence of the emperor delivered a sermon celebrating the reinstatement of the image of the Virgin:

“...Piety has set up a sign to mark its victory over the anti-Christian impiety of the part-barbarian and bastard tribes who took over the throne of Byzantium; these shameful emperors are now universally deplored. Today we have a loved pair of pious emperors, father and son, both shining in royal purple. Their orthodoxy is the cause of what we see today: the representation of the Virgin. This welcomes us, not with an offering of wine, but with a beautiful sight through which the thinking part of our soul, nourished through our eyes and helped in its growth towards the divine love of orthodoxy, achieves the most exact vision of truth. So the grace of the Virgin delights us, comforts us and strengthens us through her icons. A Virgin with a Child reclining in her arms for our salvation is a Christian mystery. She is both mother and virgin at the same time, but no shame to either condition. Through art we see a lifelike imitation of her. She looks with affection at the child, yet her expression is detached and distant towards the emotionless and supernatural child. She looks as if she might speak if someone were to ask how she could be both virgin and mother, for the painting makes her lips seem of real flesh, pressed together and still as in the sacraments; it is as if this is the stillness and the beauty of the original.”⁸⁸

⁸⁷ Ibid., pp. 118-120.

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 149.

This excerpt from Photios' sermon is indicative of the power imbued in religious icons. In this one quote he references the connection between the pious emperors and the Virgin not only through their piety, but also visually. He describes the emperors as dressed in purple robes and, if one were attending the sermon, one would be able to see the Virgin is also dressed in her royal robes. Although the Hagia Sophia image is more subdued than earlier *Maria Regina* depictions Mary is none the less clothed in imperial garb and sits on an elaborate throne. Photios even alludes to the gaze previously associated with Isis, and whether the contemporary audience would have been aware of the Isiac tradition or not, it is compelling evidence for the persistence of effective iconography. It is clear by this sermon and images erected post-iconoclasm that the power of the cult of the Virgin remained intact. The Virgin continued to be a powerful symbol to appeal to the masses as demonstrated by the imperial appropriation of her image to infer power, piety and victory.

Although the cult of the Virgin survived Iconoclasm in the East, its popularity in the West continued to lag by comparison. Political unrest and instability left the West lacking by comparison to the East in Marian theology and artistic production. The problem of the seeming lack of artistic development of Marian iconography in the West is compounded by the fact that most monumental paintings have been destroyed leaving us with little evidence to track Mary's evolution visually.⁸⁹ As the West began to gain strength and stability in the eighth century through leaders such as Charlemagne, a visual vocabulary was sought that would convey its new-found prominence upon the European political and cultural landscape. In the search for such a visual vocabulary, the West turned to the East for inspiration. Art influenced by Byzantine iconography and style became a regular occurrence in the West, beginning in the

⁸⁹ Otto Demus. *Byzantine Art and the West*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1970, p. 3.

eighth century and continuing until the Humanists of the Renaissance.⁹⁰ Constantinople was viewed as the pinnacle of artistic production and preservation and, as such, the Western leaders deliberately adopted Eastern artistic methods and iconography as a means of conveying a sense of cultural legitimacy⁹¹. Erwin Panofsky states:

“When Charlemagne set out to reform political and ecclesiastical administration, communications and the calendar, art and literature, and – as a basis for all this – script and language (the documents emanating from his own chancellery during the early years of his regime still tend to be very illiterate), his guiding idea was the *renovatio imperii romani*... [it was] a deliberate attempt to reclaim the heritage of Rome, ‘Rome’ meaning Julius Caesar and Augustus as well as Constantine the Great.”⁹²

Furthering Panofsky’s example of Charlemagne, Otto Demus emphasizes the role that Byzantium played when leaders such as Charlemagne looked further East for their inspiration: “This high regard accorded to Byzantine art by Western artists was paralleled, on the part of the patrons, by its great political prestige as the art of the Christian Empire of the East. It was felt that Byzantine, art and especially certain techniques of this art conferred on patrons a semblance of rank which no other art was able to bestow.”⁹³ This appropriation of Byzantine art can be found in numerous Western art forms beginning with the Carolingian revival. The church of San Vitale in Ravenna, Italy seems to have been a particularly influential monument, as there are many existing examples of similar techniques and forms in Western architecture. For example, if one were to do a formal comparison of Charlemagne’s ninth-century Palace Chapel at Aachen

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 3.

⁹¹ Constantinople was home to one of the largest ancient Greek statuary caches in the world. Ibid., p. 10.

⁹² Erwin Panofsky. *Renaissance and Resuscitations in Western Art*. New York: Harper and Row, 1972, p.44.

⁹³ Demus, p. 18.

(fig. 1.16) and Ravenna's sixth-century San Vitale (fig. 1.17), one can find numerous similarities including the unique octagonal shape and dome.

The influence of Byzantine art in the West cannot only be seen in architectural forms, but also in mosaics, in manuscript illuminations and even in religious content.⁹⁴ The previously discussed frescoes at Santa Maria Antiqua have been described as "purely Byzantine" in their strongly formalized outlines and abstract schematism of figures.⁹⁵ Manuscripts in the eighth, ninth and tenth century also demonstrate Byzantine influence through iconographic formulas, figural compositions, modelling and psychological atmosphere.⁹⁶ As the Western scriptorium moved away from the non-figural and zoomorphic styles of early pagan-influenced carpet pages and abstract representations, Eastern manuscripts provided the models for a successful method of figural representation. Charlemagne's scriptorium produced manuscripts that have been discussed as being heavily influenced by Byzantium: "...the chief product of what is often called the 'Palace School' of Charlemagne, give an impression so deceptively antique that they have been ascribed to artists from Byzantium; so vigorous is the modeling of the bodies beneath their white draperies, so gracefully are they posed in front of what has been called impressionistic landscapes."⁹⁷ The Godescalc Gospels author page of St. Mark (fig. 1.18) demonstrates a Byzantine influence through the figural modelling alluded to by Panofsky. This is not a one-dimensional figure, forever static in his author page. He is a dynamic figure, full of divine inspiration. His body is clearly articulated through the careful rendering of his toga and the zig zag pattern of his hem adds to the fluidity of his robes lending the figure movement and vitality.

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 55.

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 46.

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 90.

⁹⁷ Panofsky, p. 49.

These distinctive characteristics can also be found a generation later in the depiction of St. Mark (fig. 1.19) in the Soissons Gospels from the same scriptorium.⁹⁸ These examples are just two of many of the visual manifestations of the cultural exchanges that were occurring between the East and the West at this time. Beginning in the seventh and eighth century the influx of artists seeking asylum in the West from their iconoclastic rulers in the East increased; and as the West continued to grow as a political power, the acquisition of Byzantine art became more frequent by means of purchase, gifting, commission and even plundering.⁹⁹

The visual vocabulary that we now associate with the Virgin Mary is by no means a static language. It was not a vocabulary that was instantaneously derived from the few Marian episodes in the New Testament and apocrypha. As the practice of the veneration of a Virgin goddess would have appealed to the traditions of newly converted Christians, the cult of Mary resulted in a syncretic vocabulary that absorbed other cultures' iconography to appeal to new congregations. After the Council of Ephesus in the fifth century and with pressure from the public, Mary began to develop unique iconography when she was deemed *Theotokos*. As Mary became favoured amongst popes and emperors, her cult and iconography grew correspondingly. Papal churches in Rome demonstrate connections to Byzantium in their depiction of Mary as *Maria Regina*: a regal Virgin dressed in the guise of a contemporary Byzantine Empress. After iconoclasm the cult of Mary grew in leaps and bounds. Although she lost some of the ostentatious regal features of earlier *Maria Regina* depictions as the connection to Byzantium weakened,¹⁰⁰ both secular and ecclesiastical leaders continued to appropriate her image as a form of legitimization. The events of the first seven centuries of Christianity shaped the role of the

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 56.

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 20.

¹⁰⁰ Pentcheva, pp. 15.

Virgin within Catholicism. Her popularity amongst people who believed in her abilities to protect them (as demonstrated in the *Akathistos* hymn) made her a symbol of comfort and consistency in an uncertain world. These ideas were also embraced by secular rulers who adopted her patronage to create parallels between the Virgin's and the Emperor's ability to protect the nation. As the Crusades laid the groundwork for increased cultural exchange, a more politically stable West, and an influx of Byzantine artists and art, the West was prepared for the transmission of Eastern Christian ideologies as well. As we will see in the forthcoming chapters, the West not only adopts Eastern iconography, but the ideology behind the iconography as well. It is through the above-mentioned cultural exchanges that Eastern theology begins to influence the West and the cult of Mary becomes an episode of Byzantine "revival" that aids rulers such as Alfonso X to appropriate a powerful and successful political and cultural heritage through visual means.

FIGURES



Figure 1.1 - *Isis Nursing the Infant Harpocrates*, 3rd Century. Source: ARTstor Slide Gallery, University of California, San Diego.

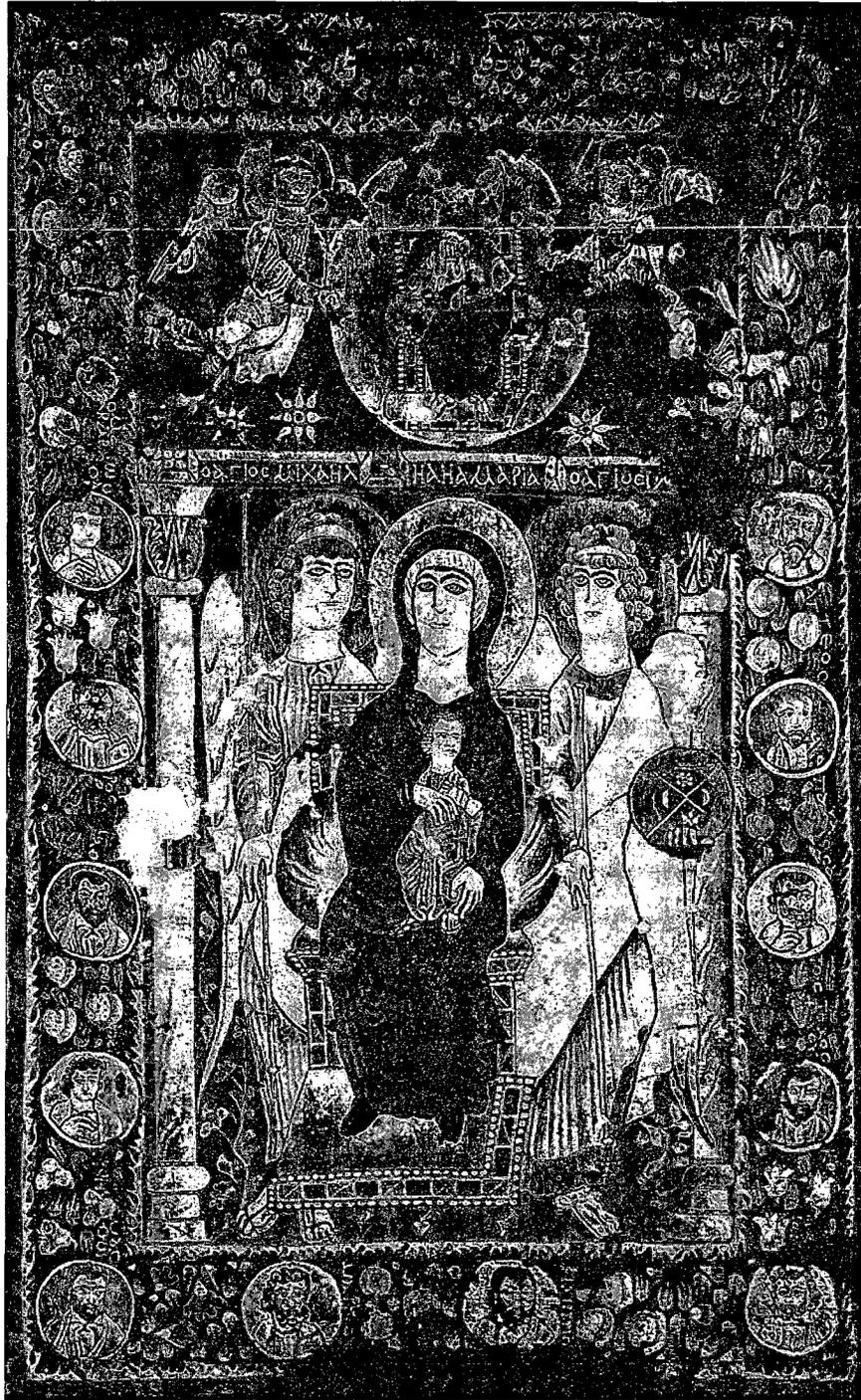


Figure 1.2 - *Icon of the Virgin*, 6th Century. The Cleveland Museum of Art Collection, CMA.1967.144.
Source: The Cleveland Museum of Art Collection.



Figure 1.3 - Catacomb of Priscilla, Rome: det.: *Virgin and Child*, 3rd Century. Source: ARTstor Slide Gallery, University of California, San Diego.

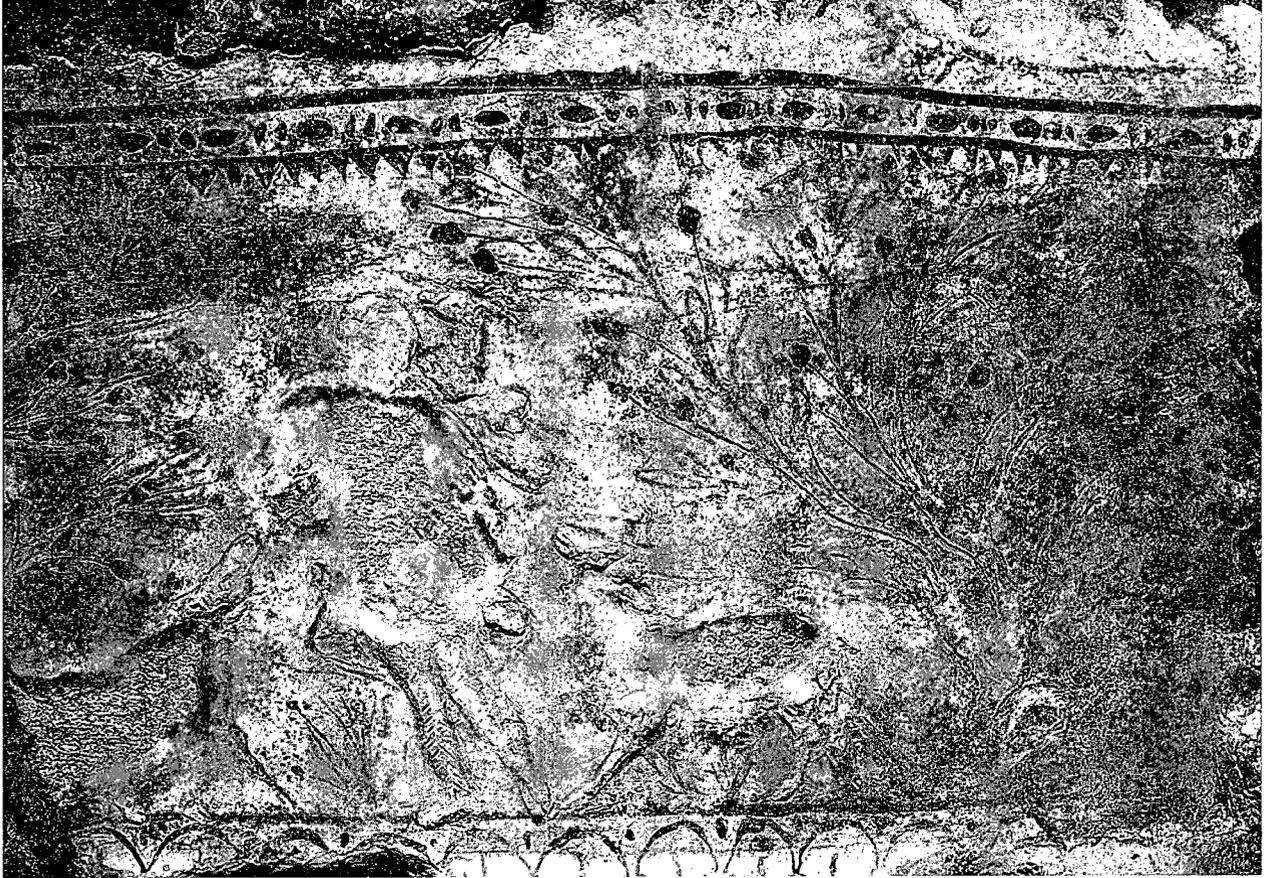


Figure 1.4 - Catacomb of Priscilla, Rome: *The Good Shepherd*, 3rd Century. Source: ARTstor Slide Gallery, University of California, San Diego.



Figure 1.5 - Catacomb of Priscilla, Rome: *Christ the Good Shepherd*, 3rd Century. Source: ARTstor Slide Gallery, University of California, San Diego.

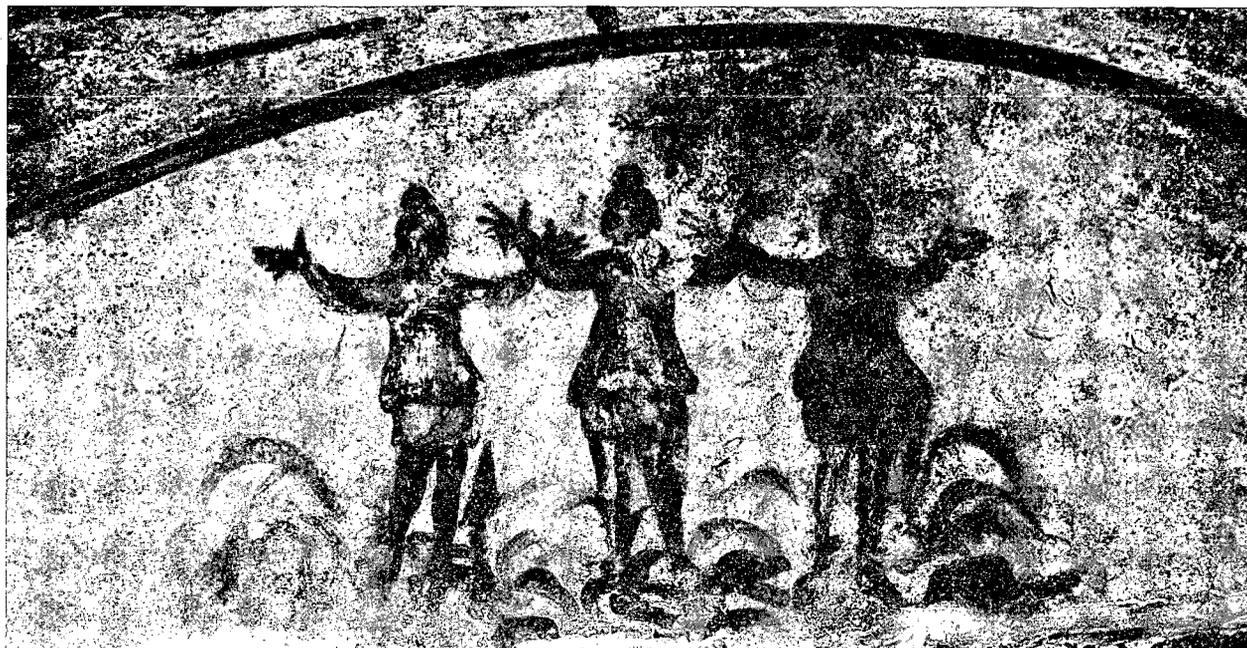


Figure 1.6 – Catacomb of Priscilla, Rome: *Three youths in the Fiery Furnace*, 3rd Century. Source: ARTstor Slide Gallery, University of California, San Diego.

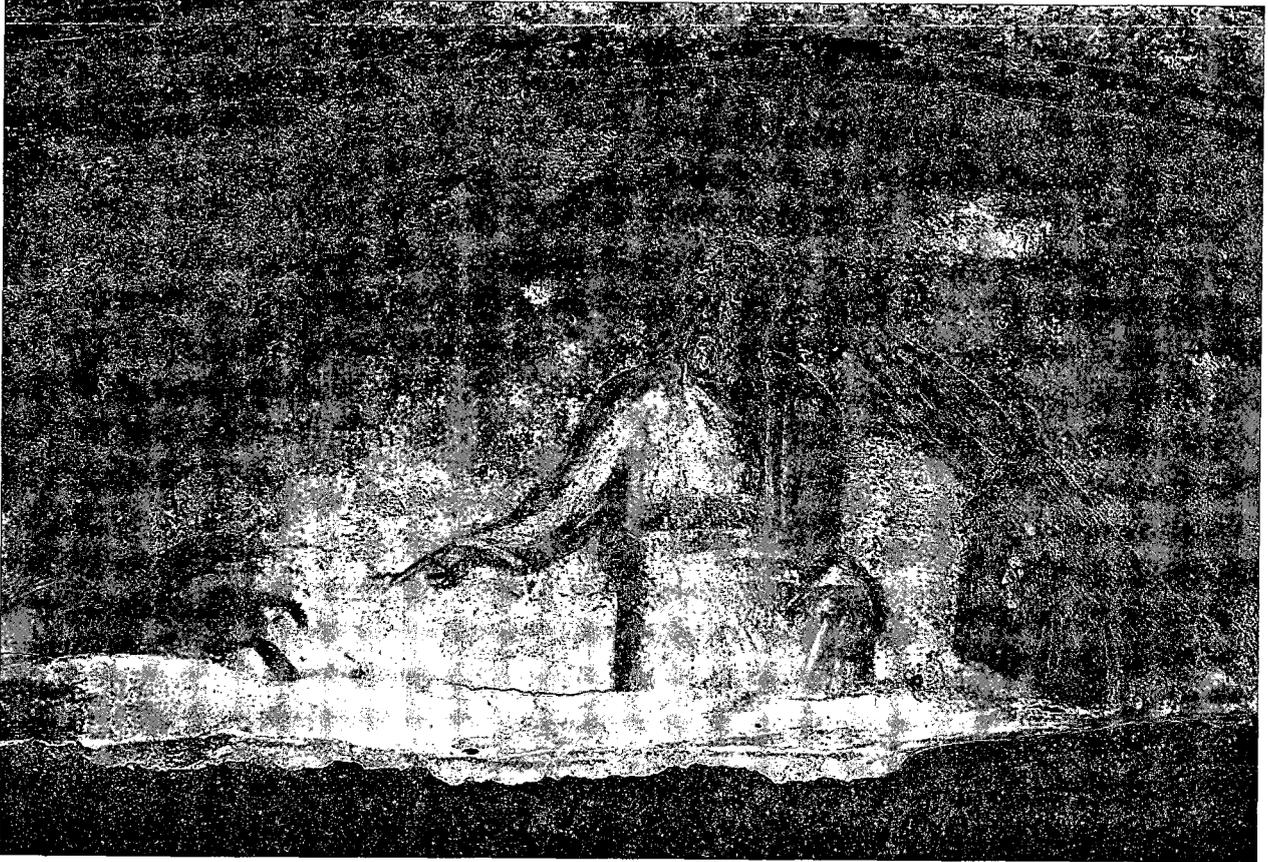


Figure 1.7 - Catacomb of Priscilla, Rome: *The Sacrifice of Isaac*, 3rd Century. Source: ARTstor Slide Gallery, University of California, San Diego.



Figure 1.8 - Santa Maria Maggiore: *The Adoration of the Magi*, c. 440. Source: <http://freeforumzone.leonardo.it/discussione.aspx?idd=354952&p=5> (accessed March 17, 2010).



Figure 1.9 - Santa Maria Maggiore: *The Annunciation*, c. 440. Source:

<http://freeforumzone.leonardo.it/discussione.aspx?idd=354952&p=5> (accessed March 17, 2010).



Figure 1.10 - San Marco Monastery, Florence: *Orant Madonna*. Source: ARTstor Slide Gallery, University of California, San Diego.



Figure 1.11 - S. Maria Antiqua, Rome: *Maria Regina and Angel*, 8th Century. Source: ARTstor Slide Gallery, University of California, San Diego.



Figure 1.12 –S. Maria Antiqua, Rome: det.: Maria Regina and Angel, 8th Century. Source: ARTstor Slide Gallery, University of California, San Diego.



Figure 1.13 - San Clemente, *Virgin and Child*, c. 8th Century. Source: <http://www.sacred-destinations.com/italy/rome-san-clemente-photos/> (accessed March 17, 2010)



Figure 1.14 - St. Catherine Monastery, Mount Sinai, Egypt: *Virgin and Child with two Saints*, 6th Century. Source: Erich Lessing Culture and Fine Arts Archives/ART RESOURCE, N.Y.



Figure 1.15 - Hagia Sophia, Constantinople: *Virgin and Child*, c. 834. Source: Erich Lessing Culture and Fine Arts Archives/ART RESOURCE, N.Y.

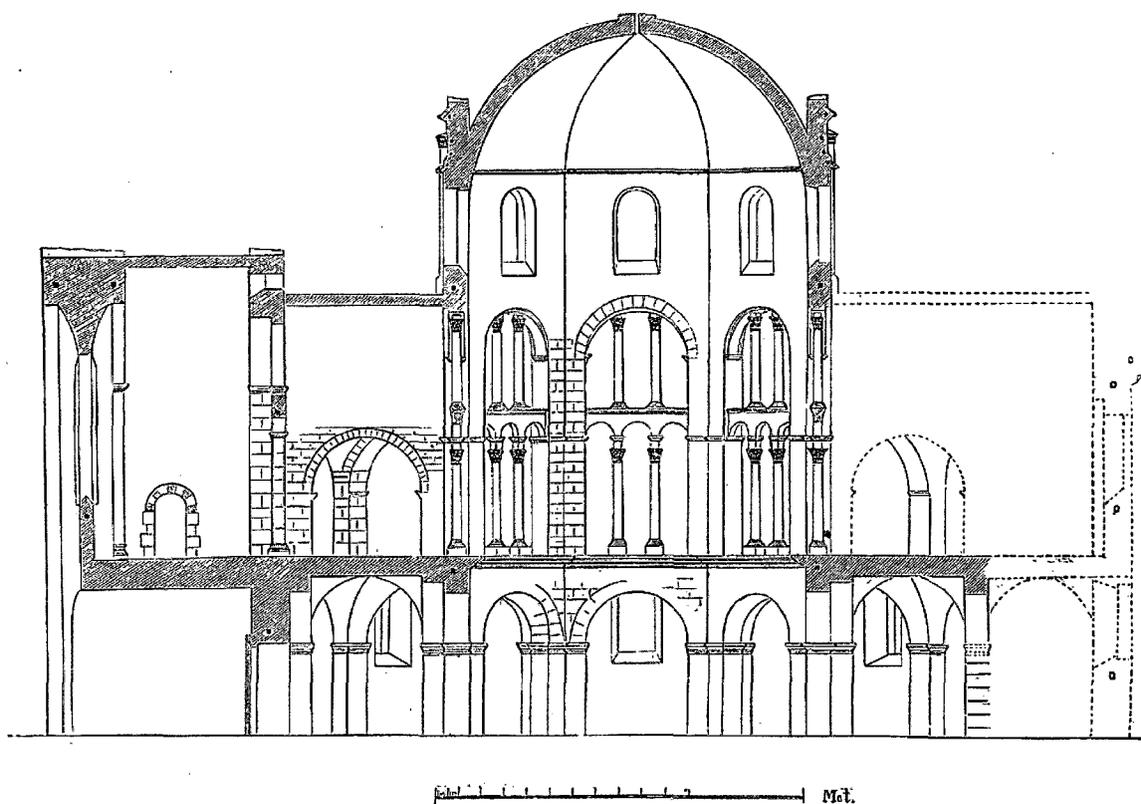


Figure 1.16 - Aachen (Aix-la-Chapelle), Germany: Odo of Metz, Palatine Chapel of Charlemagne section, 792-805.

Source: S. R. Koehler. *Architecture, Sculpture, and the Industrial Arts Among the Nations of Antiquity*. Boston: L. Prang and Company, 1879. Series II. Plate 49, figure 2.

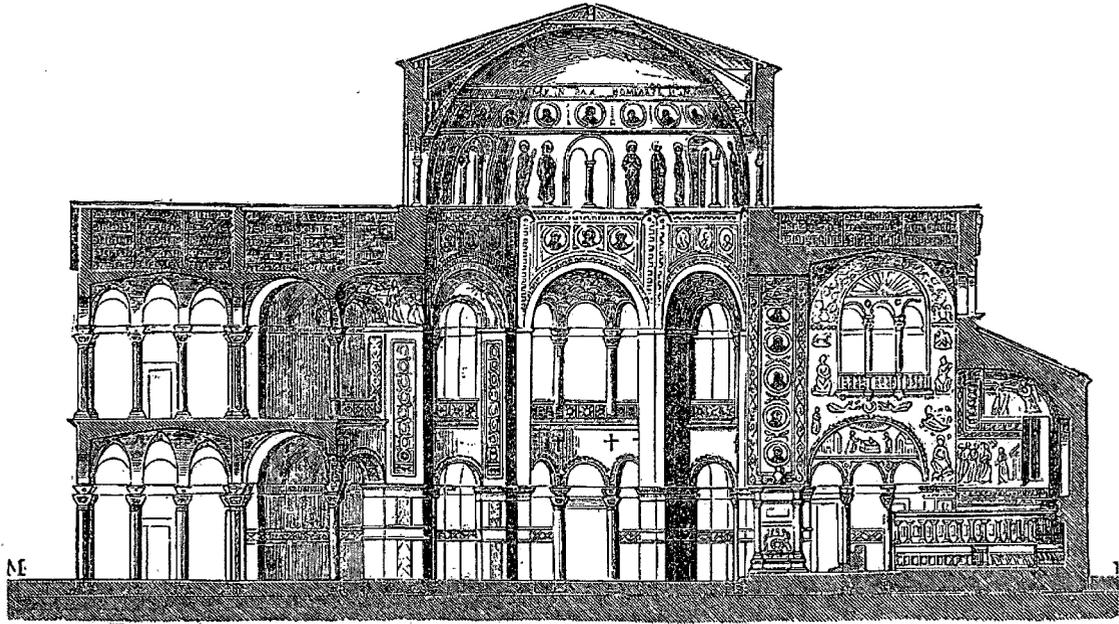


Figure 1.17 – Ravenna, Italy: *San Vitale longitudinal section, 526-547*. Source: S. R. Koehler. *Architecture, Sculpture, and the Industrial Arts Among the Nations of Antiquity*. Boston: L. Prang and Company, 1879, Series II. Plate 43, figure 4.



Figure 1.18 - Godescalc Gospels: *St. Mark*, fol. 1v, 781-785. Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris (MS. nouv. acq. lat. 1203). Source: Art Images for College Teaching.

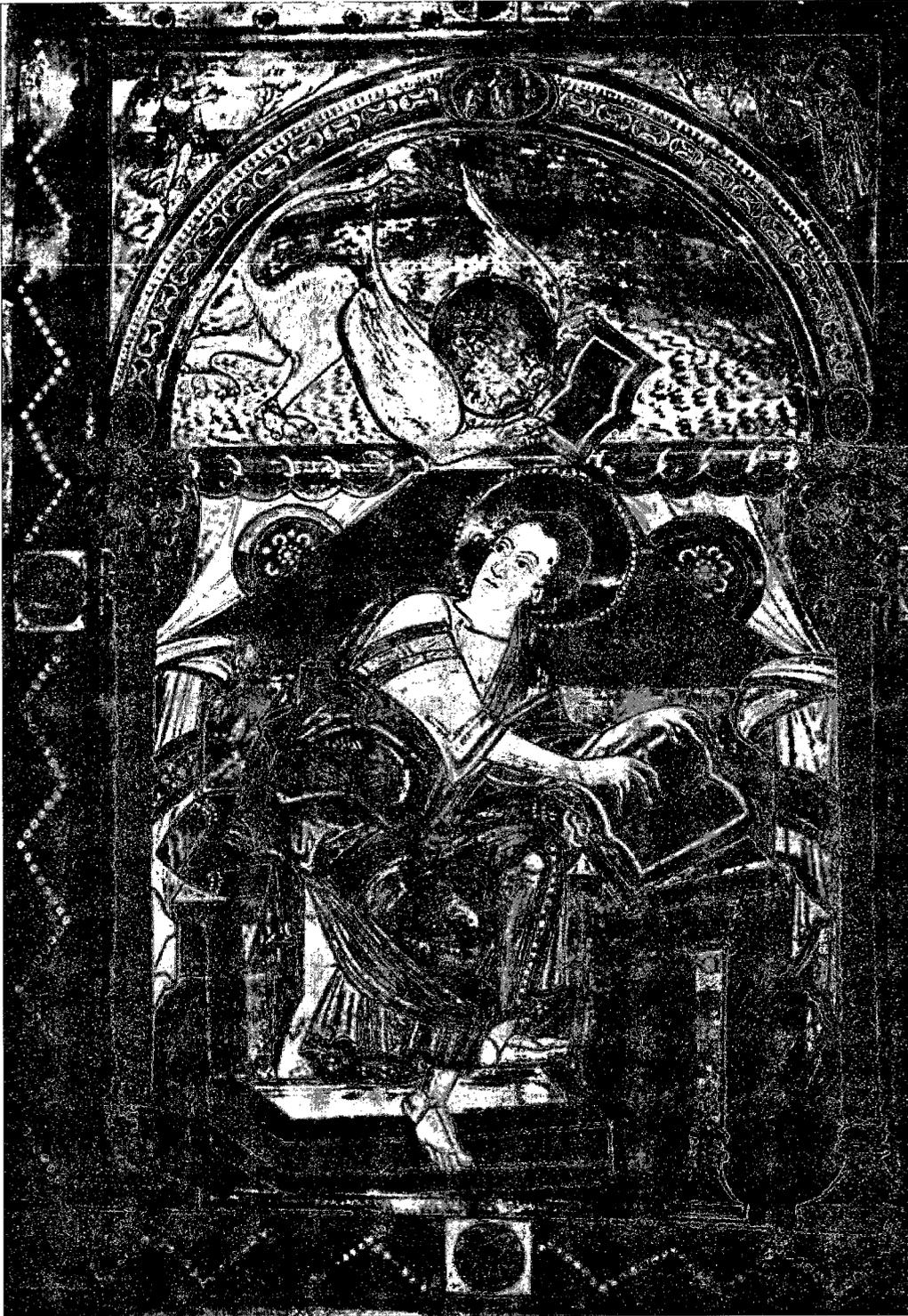


Figure 1.19 - Soissons Gospels: *St. Mark*, fol. 81v, early 9th century. Bibliotheque National, Paris (MS. Lat. 8850). Source: Art Images for College Teaching.

CHAPTER TWO – Alfonso the Learned

The *Cantigas de Santa Maria* produced in the thirteenth century by King Alfonso X of Castile and León are unique manifestations of the cult of Mary in the West. Although in many ways they represent the contemporary medieval context in their tone, style and subject matter, they possess content that on the surface may seem anachronistic and peculiar. The inclusion of Byzantine poems and iconography in the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* poses interesting questions. Were they a deliberate inclusion on the patron's behalf? Do they represent a purposeful stylistic inclusion of Byzantine art much like the Carolingian propensity towards Byzantine art? Can they be seen as a form of propaganda during a turbulent time for Spain? There is no one simple answer to the question behind the inclusion of these poems. We cannot speculate on the mindset of the patron; however we can consider other societal, artistic and literary factors in attempting to understand how these images would have been received by the contemporary viewer, thereby gaining an understanding of the society in which these poems were created and consumed.

Written in the later years of Alfonso's life, the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* exist today in the form of four codices and over four hundred poems. This work was viewed by Alfonso's court as well as performed on major feast days for the public.¹ The poems' central focus is the Virgin Mary with illuminations many of which were accompanied by a complementary piece of music. Accessible in their style and content, the *Cantigas* drew upon literary and artistic trends of their day.

¹George D. Greenia. "The Politics of Piety: Manuscript Illumination and Narration in the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*," *Hispanic Review*. vol. 61. no. 3 (Summer, 1993), p. 340.

Scholars have not reached a consensus as to the exact stylistic influences on the manuscript as influences can be drawn from many different sources, including French, German, and Arabic. Perhaps best described as uniquely Spanish, the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* illustrates in each miracle six separate panels relaying the miracle to the viewer in what we would consider to be comic-strip like fashion (fig. 2.1). Brightly coloured and highly detailed, the miniatures are accessible in their lifelike rendering of figures, the avoidance of esoteric typological references through the depiction of everyday stories and people, and in content through the central focus on the Virgin's intercessory powers. The *Cantigas de Santa Maria's* poems are almost completely devoted to indigenous stories and folktales. However, the inclusion of a handful of Byzantine miracles poses an interesting question as these miracles employ older iconography and content that certainly is not unique to Spain. By understanding the culture and historical circumstances surrounding the production of the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* one can hopefully gain insight as to how these poems were received and what kind of message they would have conveyed to the contemporary viewer.

In attempting to demonstrate the coexistence of two conflicting styles, in his seminal essay "From Mozarabic to Romanesque in Silos" Meyer Schapiro explains that in order for two styles to coexist within the same monument or manuscript, the social conditions must be right for two styles to be produced and received simultaneously. Although his essay has since been challenged,² the framework he applies to the art produced by the Silos monastery in the twelfth century is still useful when examining the Byzantine appearances in the otherwise Gothic manuscript of the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*. Given the didactic nature of medieval art, one must

²Most notably by John Williams in 2003 with his article entitled: "Meyer Schapiro in Silos: Pursuing and Iconography of Style." *The Art Bulletin*. vol. 85. no. 3 (2003): 442-468.

turn to the social landscape of thirteenth-century Spain in order to fully understand the inclusion of Byzantine Marian miracles and subsequent iconography. By doing so we can develop a “period eye” and better understand the reception of the foreign poems and images and therefore postulate as to the impetus behind their inclusion.

In the previous chapter the development of the cult of Mary was discussed from an Eastern perspective where the popularity of the cult and its Imperial patronage fostered a growing interest not only amongst emperors and popes, but amongst the lay congregation as well. The first eight centuries of Christianity were witness to a flurry of patristic writing on Mary, which in turn laid the foundations upon which the cult was to build. Although during this period the West did not seem to embrace the cult of Mary with as much fervour as the East, there were individuals who were strong patrons of the cult in the West. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Rome served as a metaphorical bridge between the East and West for the transmission of Marian ideology. Pope John VII (705-707) was a dedicated servant to Mary, to the extent that the *Liber Pontificalis* considered his connection to the cult to be notable: “He adorned with painting the basilica of the holy mother of God which is called *Antiqua*.”³ Pope John VII emphasized the Virgin as *Maria Regina* through monumental papal projects such as Santa Maria Antiqua and began a tradition of Marian imagery as being synonymous with papal authority in Italy.⁴

³Raymond Davis, ed. *The Book of Pontiffs (Liber Pontificalis): The Ancient Biographies of the First Ninety Roman Bishops to AD 715*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000, p. 90.

⁴Depictions of the pope in supplication at the feet of Mary asserted the pope’s legitimacy as conduit to the divine that was on par with the emperor’s claim. These depictions have been connected with John VII’s and Sergius I’s stand against Justinian II’s intrusive legislation. Warner, p. 107.

Although fertile fields did exist for the cult of Mary in the earlier centuries of Western Christianity, the cult began to make significant strides in the twelfth century. It gained momentum in the West with writers such as Bernard of Clairvaux and Norbert of Prémontré who made the virtues of the Virgin central to their writings and teachings. Marina Warner stresses the impact that the influential Bernard had on the cult:

“By the mid-twelfth century, the experiences of pilgrims, crusaders, and merchants in Byzantium, where the Virgin had long been the object of ardent faith and love, had passed into the common store of western Christendom; and men like St. Bernard, in his unfettered delight, reflected the upsurge of popular emotion. Bernard also profoundly influenced the development of devotion to the Virgin, for his order, the Cistercians, after the original foundation of Citeaux in 1100, established hundreds of abbeys all over Europe and took the Gospel beyond the Pyrenees into Aragon and Castile and Portugal on the edge of Moslem territory... thus extending hugely the empire of the Church.”⁵

Bernard of Clairvaux approached the Virgin in such a way that he inspired both his brethren and his congregation. His many sermons on the Virgin Mary contained language that not only spoke to the powerful intercessory nature of the Virgin, but also spoke to the more romantic and loving aspect of the Virgin.⁶ Using language that would later characterize the poems of the chivalric troubadours, Bernard spoke of the Virgin in a very intimate, love-lyric fashion.⁷ For example, in Bernard’s sermon on the Nativity he describes the Virgin in the following terms: “She who comes forth as the rising dawn, beautiful as the moon, sublime as the sun.”⁸ Bernard seems to choose his language carefully, speaking in terms that would have been appealing to the listener. He creates through his sermon a figure who moves between heaven and earth; she is a figure capable of love and capable of intercession:

⁵Warner, p. 131.

⁶M.B. Pranger. *Bernard of Clairvaux and the Shape of Monastic Thought: Broken Dreams*. New York: E.J. Brill, 1994, p. 148.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ibid., p. 154.

“Do you want to have an advocate with God? Go to Mary. Because her humanity is pure, not only pure through the lack of contamination but pure by the uniqueness of her nature, her Son will hear the prayer of his mother, in the same way as the Father will hear the prayer of his Son.”⁹

Aided by the influence of the aforementioned Western monastic leaders, the cult of the Virgin became so popular amongst both the clergy and congregation that it subsequently permeated through to the visual arts. Her increasing popularity is illustrated clearly in the various sculptural programmes adorning French cathedral facades. Previously, the Last Judgement was the most common theme to adorn cathedral facades as it had proven effective in its ability to teach sinners what awaits them in the afterlife should they continue down their road of sin and debauchery. Daunting images of a judging, powerful Christ enthroned in a mandorla, terrifying maws of beasts and graphic images of hell and tortured souls can be found throughout Romanesque cathedrals in France. An image such as Gislebertus’ Last Judgement portal at Autun (fig. 2.2) is an apt example of the dramatic nature of Romanesque portal sculpture. The entire right portion of the tympanum is dedicated to the horrors of hell (fig. 2.3). With images of greedy devils anxious to snatch marred souls weighing down the scales of the angels, figures being dangled from their heads by a pair of monstrous hands, the sheer sense of anguish of the inhabitants of hell would have served as powerful imagery to impress a captive audience.

Many other cathedrals in the surrounding areas employed similar apocalyptic imagery. Various sculptural programmes, at churches such as St. Denis (fig. 2.4) and St. Foy (fig. 2.5), demonstrate the fear-inspiring iconography of the second coming of Christ. Like the portal at Autun, these two examples depict the terrors of hell complete with gaping hell mouths, grotesque

⁹Ibid., p. 155.

devils and tormented souls. Although these horrific themes seemed to be popular in France during the early twelfth century, they all but disappeared around the year 1170.¹⁰ Images of hell were relegated to marginal spaces of church fronts and, in their place, an optimistic and more hopeful iconography was depicted: the Virgin Mary. Willibald Saurländer discusses the shift:

“We have come far indeed from the image of Judgement current in the first half of the twelfth century, which expressed itself through distorted forms and menacing inscriptions. In the centre of the picture we now have an expression of hope, hope of the grace obtainable through the intercession of the Mother of God and the ‘disciple, whom Jesus loved’ [John the Evangelist].”¹¹

With the increase in interest within the religious community (due to prominent figures such as Bernard of Clairvaux) and in the secular arena (as demonstrated by writers such as Gautier de Coinci), the Virgin became such a prominent figure in French architectural sculpture that she began to rival her Son in prominence and spatial hierarchy. Mary makes her debut as a regal Queen of Byzantine origin¹² in French architecture, but gradually evolves into a more intimate figure, exuding humanity and compassion.¹³ This shift in character has been attributed not only to her increasing popularity, but also to rumination and innovation in methods of depiction (as mentioned above with the increase in accessibility and humanity) and new iconographical cycles such as the Coronation of the Virgin.¹⁴ An example of the ‘new’ Virgin can be seen at Amiens (fig. 2.6) where the Virgin and Child are depicted sharing a tender moment as Mary, sporting a slight smile, gazes lovingly down at her son.

¹⁰Willibald Saurländer. *Gothic Sculpture in France 1140-1270*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1972, p. 28.

¹¹Ibid., p. 30.

¹²Byzantine influences can be seen at Chartres where she is depicted as the Theotokos. The Byzantine convention of the standing Hodegetria can also be found throughout France. Ibid., pp. 33-34.

¹³Ibid., p. 34.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 33.

France's shift from imposing apocalyptic imagery to the more hopeful imagery associated with the Virgin is perhaps most obvious in the sculptural programmes at Chartres. Chartres had a particular affinity towards the Virgin as the town's folkloric roots, dating back to France's pagan beginnings, had been associated with a mother goddess figure.¹⁵ Veneration practices had been closely associated with the area's folkloric traditions and therefore embraced the Gothic notion of a more human Christ and accessible mother figure. The sculptural programme at Chartres is unique and very audience specific as it references the site's ancient traditions through its iconography.¹⁶ Unlike previous depictions of the Virgin's intercessory powers, the artists of Chartres deliberately focused more on the human aspects of her life which resulted in one of the first life cycles of the Virgin in the West.¹⁷ If one considers Jean le Marchant's *Miracles de Notre Dame de Chartres* (1262),¹⁸ a collection of thirty-two Marian miracles used as part of a fundraising effort to recoup the damages of a late twelfth-century fire, as a companion piece to the sculptural programme, the power that the cult of Mary held in inspiring the local population becomes evident.¹⁹

Paralleling the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*, Jean le Marchant's *Miracles* was strategic in its use of a language other than Latin to appeal to a specific audience. It was written in the vernacular in order to appeal to a more rural and local following.²⁰ The *Miracles*, much like the *Cantigas*, had a local focus in their content, many involving ordinary circumstances.²¹ Like many Marian miracle collections in the thirteenth century, Marchant's *Miracles* were based on a

¹⁵Laura Spitzer. "Cult of the Virgin and Gothic Sculpture: Evaluating Opposition in the Chartres West Façade Capital Frieze." *Gesta*. vol. 33 no. 2 (1994), p. 139.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 135.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 132.

¹⁸Chartres MS. 1027.

¹⁹Spitzer, p. 139.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Ibid.

Latin original but altered to include local stories in order to appeal to the local congregation for donations. Should they have relied on a more generalized iconography,²² they would appeal to fewer people, and due to the unpredictability of international visitors, donations would not have been as plentiful. The Chartres collection even contains a miracle closely resembling the *Akathistos* hymn but, instead of a mantle, the Virgin's tunic was used to defend Chartres from invading forces (Normans, not Muslims).²³ The adaptation of this miracle demonstrates the effectiveness and possible motivation behind collecting stories of the Virgin's powers as effective for propagandistic purposes. The economic hardships the cathedral of Chartres faced after the fire of 1194 and the subsequent rebuilding projects, inspired church officials to propagate stories of a religious figure who offers hope and salvation. Who better than Mary, could inspire the community to assist in the rebuilding of the cathedral? The cathedral was home to an important relic in the Virgin's tunic,²⁴ and these miracles would emphasize the cathedral's precious relics and reinforce the healing and protective powers that the church could offer not only pilgrims, but the local community surrounding Chartres.

The effectiveness of the cult of Mary in the *Miracles* is enhanced by the Marian program of Chartres' west facade. For the first time in the West, the life of the Virgin is unfolded on a massive scale.²⁵ Figure 2.7, illustrating the Annunciation and Visitation, are just two of the moments in the Virgin's life that adorn Chartres' west facade. The capital friezes at Chartres boast other aspects of the Virgin's life, some unprecedented at this time in France, including: the events that transpire between Joachim and Anna before Mary's conception, the bath of the Virgin, her walk with Joachim and Anna to the temple, Mary's betrothal, the Nativity, the Visit of

²²Ibid.

²³Ibid., p. 141.

²⁴Ibid., p. 143.

²⁵Ibid., p. 132.

the Magi and the Flight into Egypt.²⁶ Although the capital frieze sculptures offer excellent evidence of the Virgin's importance at Chartres and the growing interest in the humanity of Christ by emphasizing the more accessible and human aspects of his life through her, it is the tympanum sculptures that communicate Mary's popularity and effectively demonstrates the shift from the previous Christological focus to a more empathetic and accessible focus.²⁷

The west facade's central portal (fig. 2.8) contains typical Marian imagery of a seated Virgin with Christ on her lap. She is a regal presence; dominating the tympanum in size and adorned with a crown she typifies the Byzantine *Maria Regina*. However, it is the north facade that most fully embodies the "Gothic spirit" and growing interest in the cult of Mary. Carved at a later date than the *Virgin and Child*, the *Coronation of the Virgin* (fig. 2.9) is an example of French innovation in a new Gothic style of increased naturalism and accessibility of forms. The Virgin is on the same hierarchical plane as her son and, although her head is bowed in respect for her son's authority, her prominence is communicated through her size and regal accoutrements. Laura Spitzer describes the advent of new iconography as being related to the shift to Gothic style: "The new imagery can also be related to the Gothic figural style: the more humanistic style with greater anatomical and proportional accuracy and the calmness and nobility of the figures

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷In her article "Cult of the Virgin and Gothic Sculpture: Evaluating Opposition in the Chartres West Façade Capital Frieze," Laura Spitzer connects the capital frieze on the west facade with a more female-centric cult following. She connects the iconography on the frieze sculptures, such as the Massacre of the Innocents, with the practice of Mothers praying to the Virgin on behalf of the sick or dead child. She also draws upon archaeological evidence that suggests the Marian imagery on the West facade was in connection with the entrance to the subterranean part of the church in which the majority of the veneration of the Virgin would occur. However, with the Virgin adorning both the west facade and north facade tympanum sculptures, she becomes visible to a wider audience: both the "high" and "low" congregation would be exposed to Marian iconography.

can be explained as a consequence of devotion to the Virgin who as mother of Jesus is the sign of this humanity.”²⁸

Chartres offers an excellent example of the connections that can be drawn between the cult of Mary and the role the local population played in determining iconography. Through the efforts of twelfth-century theologians such as Bernard of Clairvaux, the ideology of the cult of Mary was able to filter down from the cloisters to the local congregation. As interest in the cult grew, so did the need for a new iconography to accommodate the changing medieval psyche. The Gothic preoccupation with the humanity of Christ aided in cementing the cult of Mary as a popular avenue of veneration as well as dictating a new figural style. The manifestations of the cult of Mary at Chartres (as demonstrated through the sculptural programme and Jean le Marchant’s companion manuscript, *Miracles de Notre Dame de Chartres*) reflect these happenings visually and offers insight to the effectiveness, use and proliferation of this new iconography. Although France is the impetus behind many of the new developments in the popularity of the cult of Mary and offers art historians many visual examples of this increasing popularity, other manifestations of the heightened interest and effectiveness of Marian imagery can be found throughout later medieval Europe.

Under an ever-increasing continental European influence in the Middle Ages, Spain, too, was not immune to the lure of the cult of Mary. In the seventh century, Spain was home to three scholars who disseminated Marian ideology throughout the Christian community. Leander of Seville (d. c. 600), Ildefonsus of Toledo (d. 667) and Isidore (d. 636) did not add to the existing Marian theology, but they are noteworthy in their devotion to Mary and for the subsequent

²⁸Ibid., p. 135.

expansion of the cult in Spain.²⁹ All three focus their writings on the perpetual virginity of Mary and continue many Eastern traditions such as the allegorical parallel of Mary and the Church and her intercessory powers.³⁰ In his treatise on her perpetual virginity, Ildefonsus, the foremost advocate of Marian devotion of the above mentioned scholars, stresses the Virgin's intercessory abilities unlike any previous writer in the West:

“And now I come to you, sole Mother and Virgin of God... I ask you to obtain for me that my sins be done away with, that you make me love the glory of your virginity... that you may grant me to cleave to God and to you... to him as my Creator, to you as the mother of our Maker... to his as God, to you as the Mother of God, to him as to my Redeemer, to you as to the work of my redemption. For what he has effected in my redemption, he has formed in the truth of your person.”

While Leander, Ildefonsus and Isidore demonstrate Spain's growing interest in the cult of Mary in the seventh century, the Christian community was to endure a seven centuries long struggle for dominance that would both hinder and foster the growth and popularity of the cult of Mary.³¹

An event that changed the political, cultural, and religious landscape of Spain forever was the Muslim conquest of 711. The Muslim conquest of Christian Spain was a monumental event that propelled Spain to the forefront of the Christian struggle against the expansion of Islam. Under the strong military leadership of Tariq ibn Ziyad, governor of Tangier, the Muslims took advantage of warring Visigothic families and gained control of Córdoba in October of 711 and the rest of Spain soon after.³² Although the Muslims were relatively tolerant with respect to

²⁹Graef, p. 140.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹The Christians in Spain reclaimed Spain in the eleventh century; however Muslims maintained the territory of Granada until 1492. Derek W. Lomax. *The Reconquest of Spain*. New York: Longman Group Limited, 1978, p. 162.

³²Ibid., p. 13.

religious freedom³³, Christianity faced legal stipulations that limited the growth of the religion.³⁴ Forbidden to hold religious processions, faced with the constant emigration of church leaders and even prohibited from ringing church bells,³⁵ Spanish Christians were concerned with survival and this mindset is reflected in contemporary art.

Although very few monumental works of art survive from the Visigothic era and the following few centuries under Muslim rule, manuscript illuminations fill this cultural void and give us insight to the Christian mindset. In parallel to Christian rulers, artists attempted to maintain some semblance of Visigothic visual culture in their art³⁶ and, as a result, Spanish Christian art adopted a unique, syncretic visual vocabulary that is unlike any other produced in Europe. Prominent Spanish art historian John Williams states:

“...Spain fashioned her own counterpart to the medieval culture forged by her Christian neighbours. This began in the ninth century, largely on the basis of Spain’s own artistic legacy. It continued in the tenth century along radically different lines, when monastic scribes creatively fashioned an independent style from various ingredients. Some of these were chosen from Spain’s own traditions. Others were borrowed from Christian centers beyond the Pyrenees. Still others, however, were taken from her pagan neighbours in the south of the peninsula, whose presence imparted to Spanish medieval life a cultural dynamic peculiar to Spain... the presence of an alien people of pagan faith would impart a special fervor and awareness of cultural identity for those who longed to restore the integrity of the peninsula as a unified Christian kingdom.”³⁷

Even before Crusader art espoused the Christian victory over the followers of the false prophet Mohammed, Christian Spain was creating works of art that illustrated their spiritual victory. In

³³There was no forced conversion of Christians and Jewish people. They were however, subject to monthly taxes, land taxes, had to wear clothes that differentiated them from Muslims, and had limited personal rights. *Ibid.*, p. 19.

³⁴*Ibid.*, p. 19.

³⁵*Ibid.*

³⁶John Williams. *Early Spanish Manuscript Illumination*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1977, p. 12.

³⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

an attempt to assert their identity in the midst of social upheaval, Christian Spain turned to the powerful imagery of the Apocalypse to communicate their religious authority.³⁸

The tradition of illuminating the events of the Apocalypse began in the eighth century³⁹ with the writing of a commentary by the Asturian monk Beatus of Liebana, although the theme had been instilled as an integral part of Spanish liturgy by the Fourth Council of Toledo in 632: “The Apocalypse is a canonical book and should be read in the church from Easter to Pentecost; whoever objects, may he be excommunicated.”⁴⁰ Faced with heresies from within Christianity⁴¹ and externally, the Apocalypse, with its powerful imagery of the triumph of righteous Christians at the end of time, would have assured the reader that the path they were on would lead them to ultimate salvation.

While Spanish Christians would no doubt have been familiar with the cult of Mary, they found in the Apocalypse an iconography that reflected and validated their concerns. Images such as the image of “*Warring Angels and the Fall of Babylon*” from the Beatus of Liebana manuscript dated to circa 1047 (fig. 2.10) illustrate the powerful imagery derived from the book of Revelations. The manuscript page illustrates Revelations 18:1-24 which states:

“After this I saw another angel coming down from heaven. He had great authority, and the earth was illuminated by his splendour. With a mighty voice he shouted: ‘Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great! She has become a home for demons and a haunt for every evil spirit, a haunt for every unclean and detestable bird. For all the nations have drunk the maddening wine of her adulteries. The kings of the earth committed adultery with her, and the merchants of the earth grew rich from her excessive luxuries... Therefore in one day her plagues will

³⁸Ibid., p. 24.

³⁹The first one was composed circa 776. Ibid.

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Adoptionism, the belief that Jesus was not divine from birth but was “adopted” by God and therefore evolved into a divine being, was a doctrinal controversy at this time. William D. Wixom and Margaret Lawson. “Picturing the Apocalypse: Illustrated Leaves from a Medieval Spanish Manuscript” in *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*. vol. 59 no. 3 (Winter, 2002), p. 6.

overtake her: death, mourning and famine. She will be consumed by fire, for mighty is the Lord God who judges her... Then a mighty angel picked up a boulder the size of a large millstone and threw it into the sea, and said: 'With such violence the great city of Babylon will be thrown down, never to be found again. The music of harpists and musicians, flute players and trumpeters, will never be heard in you again. No workman of any trade will ever be found in you again. The sound of a millstone will never be heard in you again. The light of a lamp will never shine in you again. The voice of bridegroom and bride will never be heard in you again. Your merchants were the world's great men. By your magic spell all the nations were led astray. In her was found the blood of prophets and of the saints, and of all who have been killed on the earth."⁴²

In a unique Spanish style the accompanying illumination illustrates this dramatic scene. The strong colour blocks clearly demarcate the heavens from earth, and the righteous from the fallen. Scholars have suggested that this technique of colour blocking served an exegetical purpose and that the use of colour is uniquely treated in Spanish manuscripts.⁴³ In Elizabeth S. Bolman's study of colour in Beatus manuscripts, she argues that the colours used (particularly in tenth and early eleventh century manuscripts) are closely correlated to the passages and therefore serve an exegetical function; and that although the use of colour can be considered intuitive and "natural" in their relation to the text, the adherence to twentieth-century conception of natural colour cannot be too closely followed when reading these manuscripts.⁴⁴

If we further examine the Beatus of Liebana's, *Warring Angels and the Fall of Babylon* (fig. 2.10) in relation to the text, the colours used can aid us in our understanding of the passage. The angels in heaven are depicted on a backdrop of royal blue and are clothed in richly coloured fabrics. The blue can be considered a rendering of what someone could envision heaven to be

⁴² King James Bible

⁴³ Elizabeth S. Bolman. "De Coloribus: The Meaning of Color in Beatus Manuscripts." *Gesta*. vol. 38 no. 1 (1999), p. 22.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

when looking at it through human eyes. The millstones being thrown from the heavens take on an otherworldly aspect as this cool white colour seems almost to twinkle in the deep blue sky of heaven. Our notion of colour is challenged however, when we look to the damned below, struggling to stay alive in the mayhem of destruction. As the distinctive Mozarabic horseshoe-arched architecture falls around the damned, one cannot help but notice the lack of colour and general pallor of the poor souls. Bolman states: “The absence of chromatic *varietas* in their [the damned] clothing singles them out from the throngs of the saved, who are all dressed in multi-coloured clothing...”⁴⁵ The damned in our manuscript page have even been stripped of their clothing and their skin tone is pale and dark at the same time.

While it may seem to the untrained eye that the brown colour used on the bodies of the damned may be a failed attempt at shading, Bolman argues for a more contextually consistent interpretation. While Bolman mentions that the lack of colour denotes the damned, the literal use of colour was also employed by Spanish artists at this time. Dark colours such as black and brown were not considered to be racially charged, but denote evil and wickedness. Bolman states: “...white is often linked to a symbolic cluster including brightness, purity, sanctity, cleanliness, chastity, and the Lamb of God... This is in contrast to the coloration of the devil, for whom all of the three hues used [black, brown, blue] to render darkness were employed.”⁴⁶ Figure ten demonstrates this hypothesis quite succinctly. The sinners of Babylon with their dark and marred souls are cleansed through the pure white millstones of heaven as the colourfully robed Christians look on, spared from God’s wrath.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 30

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 27

These illustrations of the wicked being damned and the Christians being saved at the end of time would have served as powerful imagery for the contemporary viewer. While not explicitly identifying Muslims as the damned, the Apocalypse admonishes indulgences such as idolatry, luxury and sins of the flesh, which were also commonly associated with Muslims by Spanish Christians.⁴⁷ The Apocalypse was easily adapted to contain the hopes for reconquest and, as such, its popularity as a theme endured throughout the Muslim occupation and into the thirteenth century. John Williams states: “It was to be, whatever its associations at the time Beatus wrote, the Book of the *Reconquista*, Spain’s drive to eliminate Muslim power in the peninsula.”⁴⁸

While these Beatus manuscripts reflect a message of Christian supremacy over Muslims while retaining the syncretic nature of Spanish culture, a shift many scholars identify in the late eleventh century. Beatus manuscripts begin to reflect more of a continental influence than the traditional Mozarabic style of flattened, stylized figures and clothing, dramatic colour blocking and teardrop shaped eyes. Manuscripts also began to shift in their content as well. Much like on the cathedrals of France, apocalypse imagery began to lose its effectiveness and a new theme took its place: Marian imagery.

This shift of style and content has been attributed to the changing of liturgy in the Spanish church⁴⁹ and increasing pressure from continental Europe. The Council of Burgos in 1080 was a turning point in Spain’s history as it marked the beginning of the transition of the

⁴⁷Williams, p. 27.

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Bolman, pp. 24.

country from a peripheral nation to an integral part of the Christian quest for domination.⁵⁰ Vigorously supported by Pope Gregory VII (1073-1085), the intention of the Council was to unify Christian Spain with the rest of Europe by conforming their liturgical practices to those of Rome.⁵¹

Along with the conformity of peninsular liturgical rites to those of the rest of Europe, Spanish manuscripts also began to reflect the impact of continental influences. This began before the Council of Burgos, as can be seen in Ferdinand and Sancha's prayer book⁵² dated to 1055 (fig. 2.11).⁵³ This illumination, Ferdinand, Sancha and the scribe from this manuscript is quite a departure from previous Spanish manuscripts demonstrate Carolingian and Byzantine influences through the more natural rendering of the figures than in prior Spanish conventions, the zig zag hems of the robes, and the dot-contour ornaments. Another departure from Mozarabic manuscripts is the handling of the background of the manuscript page. Previously, backgrounds were simple and limited with architectural details restricted to simple colour blocking and the odd architectural ornament. The curtain that splays open to show the reader the figures of Ferdinand, Sancha and the scribe in the prayer book illumination is less Mozarabic than Carolingian in style⁵⁴. The curtain is reminiscent of the architectural detail in French manuscripts such as the *Adoration of the Lamb* in the Soissons Gospels⁵⁵ (fig. 2.12) and Byzantine-style Evangelist portraiture (see fig. 1.20 of chapter one).⁵⁶ The adoption of

⁵⁰Rose Walker. *Views of Transition: Liturgy and Illumination in Medieval Spain*. Toronto: The University of Toronto Press, 1998, p. 21.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 24.

⁵²Biblioteca Universitaria de Santiago de Compostela (Rs. 1, fol. 3v).

⁵³Such as the increasing presence of Cluniac monks in Spain. Wixom and Lawrence, p. 9.

⁵⁴John Williams. "A Castilian Tradition of Bible Illustration. The Romanesque Bible from San Millán." *The Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*. vol. 28 (1965), p. 79

⁵⁵Bibliothèque nationale de France, MS. lat. 8850.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 79.

Carolingian and Byzantine elements in this manuscript signals a shift from a visual vocabulary of an isolated Christian community to a more pan-European Romanesque style.

Although the shift from a Mozarabic style to a more Romanesque style was not widespread and all encompassing at the time, the prayer book of Fernando and Sancha is the beginning of a change. Scholars have reconciled the co-existence of Romanesque and Mozarabic styles in different ways.⁵⁷ While the Beatus Apocalypse manuscripts played an integral role in the Church's liturgical rites in Spain, the prayer book served a devotional, non-liturgical function for the King and Queen. As the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth-century Spanish church was witness to an ever-increasing European influence, Spanish manuscripts began to reflect this shift in their content, and style.

As the process of "*europaización*"⁵⁸ swept through Spain, an already syncretic Spanish culture absorbed continental forms into their culture. Their liturgy underwent a major change, becoming more unified with the rest of Europe, and their art began to reflect European trends (if a little belatedly). As the Crusades became a focus of European Christian conscience, Spain also took up the cause of the Holy War, but in their own backyard.

To say that the Crusades were the impetus for the Christian "reconquest" of Spain would be incorrect as the idea of retaliating against the Muslims had been a goal since the very first Christian uprising in 718.⁵⁹ This first successful uprising lingered within the Christian community's psyche and evolved into what has been labelled the "reconquest mentality".

⁵⁷Wixom and Lawrence, p. 7.

⁵⁸*Europaización* is a term used to describe the increasing influence of European culture in Spain most notably through the French Cluniac monks. Francisco Marquez Villanueva, Alberto Vega Carlos. *Alfonso X of Castile, The Learned King, 1221-184: An International Symposium, Harvard University, 17 November 1984*. Cambridge: Dept. Of Romance Languages and Literatures of Harvard University, 1990, p. 79.

⁵⁹Asturian Pelayo resisted the Ummayyad rulers and established his own Christian kingdom which he ruled until his death in 737. Lomax, pp. 25-26.

Spanish Christians saw the Muslim conquest as sacrilege and though it was only a matter of time before they would reclaim what was rightly theirs. Historian Christopher Tyerman states:

“Ninth century concerns fashioned accounts of the creation of the Asturian kingdom by a king Pelayo, ostensibly of Visigothic royal blood, after a victory over the Moors in 722. In this triumph against the odds, so the myth insisted, the inevitable recovery of Christian Spain was born. Although claims were fictive, this fashioning of perceptions established important and lasting traditions. Wars of defence and conquest against the Moors were projected as possessing a fundamental religious purpose, the salvation (*salus*) of Spain.”⁶⁰

With the dawn of the Crusades and an ever-increasing instability in the Spanish caliphate in the eleventh century, Christian Spain saw an opportunity to launch its own “Holy War” against what they saw as usurping infidels.⁶¹ Once again, feeling the pressures of *europaización*, Spain followed Rome’s lead and began a campaign against the Muslims. Tyerman states: “... it has been argued that the application of crusading formulae to the wars in the [Iberian] peninsula provided a barometer of northern influences and the integration of Spanish society and culture within the norms of Latin Christendom.”⁶² No other Spanish ruler embodied the reconquest mentality whilst viewing *europaización* as being advantageous to his cause more than Fernando III (d. 1252).

Even before Fernando’s thirteenth-century reign, Spain was viewed by the papacy as a place of interest. Beginning with Gregory VII (1073-1085) in the eleventh century, Spain became the target of papal attempts at conversion.⁶³ Other leaders such as Bernard of Clairvaux, Pope Lucius III (1181-1185) and Pope Innocent III (1198-1216), all stressed the importance of

⁶⁰Christopher Tyerman. *God’s War: A New History of the Crusades*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006, p. 656.

⁶¹Lomax, p. 173.

⁶²Tyerman, p. 653.

⁶³Robert Burns, “Christian-Islamic Confrontation in the West: The Thirteenth-Century Dream of Conversion,” *The American Historical Review*. vol. 76 no. 5 (Dec., 1971), p. 1392.

conversion in Spain. When giving his orders to the Order of Santiago in 1184 Pope Lucius “stringently commanded that they aim at one thing alone in their fighting against the Saracens – not love of worldly praise, not desire of shedding blood, not greed over land acquisition – but either that they defend Christians from their onslaught or else that they may be able to draw these [Saracens] to practise the Christian faith.”⁶⁴ Relying on Islam’s tolerance and appreciation for holy men and philosophy,⁶⁵ Fernando III, like the papal leaders before him, stressed the importance of studying the enemy and advocated conversion versus expulsion (the latter being a concept which would trouble his son in later years).

Fernando III, through his lineage, permanently unified the previously separated kingdoms of Castile and León in 1230.⁶⁶ This new-found stability instilled a goal of unification that would come to characterize his reign and mould future Spanish leaders, none more so than his son, Alfonso X (1221-1284). In an unfinished treatise on princes, *Setenario*, Alfonso X stresses the importance of “the reunion of the kingdoms of Spain... that other kings had lost because of poor judgement and erroneous counsel, resulting in many wars and much destruction of land and killing of people.”⁶⁷ Through the recent unification of Castile and León and through taking advantage of the papacy’s crusading mentality, Fernando was able to fund his ambitious project through the pope’s granting of indulgences similar to those awarded to Eastern crusaders in 1225 and 1231.⁶⁸

Fernando’s conquests were so great that he has been considered the most successful Crusader by historians as well as his contemporaries, having conquered more Islamic territory

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 1396.

⁶⁶Castile and León had been two separate states since the death of Alfonso VII in 1157. O’Callaghan, p. 42.

⁶⁷Ibid., p.42.

⁶⁸Lomax, p. 157.

than any other Christian.⁶⁹ Matthew Paris (d. 1259), an English monk, commented on Fernando's conquests with admiration: "that king alone has done more for the honour and profit of Christ's Church than the pope and all his crusaders... and all the Templars and Hospitallers."⁷⁰ Although Ferdinand's conquests were great, at the time of his death in 1252 he felt his mission to be incomplete. It was his ambition to continue his crusading efforts into Africa and, although he was unable to fulfill this desire, he entrusted this important task to his son, Alfonso X.

Born in 1221 to Fernando and Queen Beatriz, Alfonso was given all the tools he could possibly need to become a successful ruler. His childhood was typical in medieval royal terms; he spent most of his younger years away from court, in Galicia under the tutelage of Don Garci Fernandez.⁷¹ It was during these formative years that Alfonso gained an appreciation for the arts, troubadours, and rural superstitions and legends.⁷² Alfonso became a well rounded prince having received an excellent education that fostered a life-long passion for learning. He was also a competent soldier, having served under his father against the Muslim uprisings in Andalusia and Seville.⁷³

Alfonso's admiration for his father is evident through many of the works he commissioned, such as the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* and the *Setenario*. Portions of Fernando III's life and conquests are discussed in seven poems of the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* (CSM 122, 221, 256, 292, 324, 345, 386) clearly demonstrating Alfonso's pride in his father. Striving to

⁶⁹Lomax, p. 156.

⁷⁰Ibid.

⁷¹John Esten Keller. *Pious Brief Narrative in Medieval Castilian and Galician Verse: From Berceo to Alfonso X*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky: 1978, p. 80.

⁷²Ibid.

⁷³Robert R. Anderson. "Alfonso X el Sabio and the Renaissance in Spain," *Hispania*. vol. 44 no. 3 (Sept., 1961), p. 452.

continue Fernando's legacy of success, Alfonso took to heart what his father supposedly said to him in his deathbed:

“My Lord, I leave you the whole realm from sea hither that the Moors won from Rodrigo, King of Spain. All of it is in your dominion, part of it conquered, the other part tributary. If you know how to preserve in this state what I leave you, you will be as good a king as I; and if you win more for yourself you will be better than I; but if you diminish it, you will not be as good as I.”⁷⁴

In a pointed demonstration of the “reconquest mentality”, Fernando challenges his son to complete what he could not: the African crusade.

Although the remaining Muslims living within Spain had not revealed themselves to be a cause for concern at the outset of Alfonso's reign,⁷⁵ planning for a crusade forged onwards. The first two decades of Alfonso's rule were dominated by persistent Muslim incursions, proving to be a consistent threat to the king's successful fulfillment of his father's last wishes. Alfonso had every intention of following through with his father's plan to increase Spain's territory into Africa and, with support from the papacy, he developed plans for an expedition south in the years 1252-1254.⁷⁶ However, the next ten years proved to be a challenge for Alfonso and his African campaign due to two constituencies that would continually plague the king throughout his reign: the Spanish nobility and the Moors.

The African crusade was put on hold after a Muslim revolt in the city of Salé in 1260⁷⁷ and for the next few years Alfonso had to contend with numerous other uprisings from both

⁷⁴O'Callaghan, p. 94.

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 99.

⁷⁶Lomax, p. 160.

⁷⁷Ibid.

Muslims and the Spanish nobility. Considered to be a careless spender,⁷⁸ and in poor health,⁷⁹ Alfonso fell out of favour with a large contingent of Spain's nobility. As a result, a major portion of his funding for various projects was lost and his throne became the target for challenges.⁸⁰ It has been suggested that Alfonso suffered from squamous-cell carcinoma in his face that was both debilitating and humiliating as it mimicked the effects of leprosy.⁸¹ This condition, which was exacerbated by several riding incidents, including falls and kicks to the head, affected the king greatly. It was perceived that he was concentrating on his health more than on the challenges facing his kingdom. Several periods of long convalescence afforded scheming nobles the opportunity to voice their concerns in public. In a letter to his son, Alfonso expresses his concerns about his health and the consequences of his convalescence: "I was in Avila where I came to speak with the councils of León and Extremadura, which I convoked there, and I was sick with rheum and a little fever, and I was greatly distressed that this should happen to me at such a time."⁸²

The discord amongst the nobility remained an issue for Alfonso until his death in 1284. As Muslim incursions became less frequent in the decade of 1270, Alfonso turned his sights on the title of Holy Roman Emperor. However, he was not supported in his campaign for the title by either the Spanish nobility or by the papacy.⁸³ As a result Alfonso was never able to attain his imperialistic goals and became vulnerable to scheming nobles during his long and frequent absences from Spain due to his campaigning efforts. Beginning in 1271 and persisting for the

⁷⁸The cost of the failed African crusade, the cost of constant conflicts within Spain and a costly marriage ceremony held in honour of his son Fernando's marriage to Blanche (the daughter of Louis IX) and the subsequent rise in taxes contributed to this perception. Richard Kinkade. "Alfonso X, Cantiga 235, and the Events of 1269-1278." *Speculum*. vol. 67. no. 2 (Apr., 1992), p. 290.

⁷⁹Ibid., p. 288.

⁸⁰Ibid., p. 289.

⁸¹In 1280 the pressure behind his right eye was so great that it forced his eyeball from its orbit. Ibid., p 290.

⁸²Ibid., p. 301.

⁸³Ibid.

remainder of his reign, nobles disgruntled with the increasing taxes and Alfonso's quest for the title of Holy Roman Emperor sought to replace Alfonso with his son, Sancho.⁸⁴ Although severely punished by the king as well as the papacy,⁸⁵ the Spanish nobles were successful in 1282 with the complete transfer of Alfonso's power to Sancho.⁸⁶

The treachery of the Spanish nobility was not taken lightly by Alfonso and was subsequently a fitting subject for his *Cantigas de Santa Maria*. Believing that the Virgin would right the wrongs done by the nobility, several *cantigas* were composed to remind the reader that Alfonso's reign was endorsed by the Virgin and those opposing him would suffer the consequences (CSM 169, 235, 386, 401, 406).⁸⁷ Some of Alfonso's poems written in his final days give us insight into the depths to which the treachery cut. In his *Cantigas d'escarnho* (songs of derision) Alfonso speaks of stepping away from his royal duties and becoming a simple merchant "where the scorpion neither black nor white cannot blame me."⁸⁸ Employing language of someone who is reflecting on the frustrations of his life, Alfonso is recorded in the *General Estoria* as saying:

"I left my land to serve God
and I lost whatever I had from January to April
and the whole kingdom of Castile as far as the Guadalquivir.
I trusted the bishops and prelates to make peace
but they failed in this and sowed trouble enough
between me and my sons as is not right;

⁸⁴O'Callaghan, p. 128.

⁸⁵Pope Gregory X condemned the conspirators in a papal bull of 1274 stating: "[the conspirators] who by their actions had thwarted Castilian efforts to subdue the infidel while inviting Muslim intervention in the South of Spain." Kinkade, p. 303.

⁸⁶O'Callaghan, p. 223.

⁸⁷Ibid., p. 221.

⁸⁸Ibid., p. 201.

not secretly but loudly as the trumpet sounds.
 My friends left me and the relatives that I had,
 with goods and bodies and troops of knights.
 Help me Jesus Christ and Holy Virgin Mary
 to whom I commend myself by night and day.
 I have no one else to whom to say it, nor to whom I can complain
 for fear of Don Sancho they have abandoned me.
 May God not abandon me when he sends for me.
 Another time I heard tell of another kings
 who, abandoned, put out on the high seas
 to die in the waves or to seek adventures.
 That was Apolonio and I will do as much.”⁸⁹

Alfonso’s reign was one filled with its share of failed aspirations and constant threats. In contrast to the language employed to describe the threats from the nobles, the language used to describe Muslim skirmishes was boastful and triumphant as the majority of these skirmishes proved to be successful in gaining new territory for Christian Spain and became a source of pride for the king. This is demonstrated in Prologue A of the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*:

“Don Alfonso of Castile,
 of Toledo and León,
 King, indeed from Compostela,
 to the kingdom of Aragón,

Of Cordoba and Jaén

⁸⁹Ibid., p. 225.

and of Seville also
and of Murcia where God did
him a great good, as I learned,

Of the Algarve, which he won
from the Moors and there
established our faith and
populated Badajoz,

Which is a most ancient
kingdom, and who took from
the Moors Niebla and Jerez;
and seized Vejer, Medina and
Alcalá another time,

And who is King and Lord
of the Romans by right;
he made this book, as I found,
to the honour and praise

Of the Virgin Holy Mary
who is the Mother of God
in whom he trusts greatly.
Wherefore of her miracles

he made canticles and songs
sweet to sing

all with their own themes
as you may discover.”⁹⁰

As demonstrated by Prologue A of the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*, Alfonso’s battles against Muslims were generally more successful than his battles against the feuding nobility and, as such, a great deal of his rule was focused on the “Christianizing” of Spain. After the uprising of Salé in 1260, Alfonso focused on quashing other uprisings in the remaining Muslim territories, such as Niebla, Granada, Jerez and Arcos.⁹¹ Alfonso took great strides in “Christianizing” Spain by repopulating these territories with Spanish Christians as he did in 1262, when he expelled all Muslim inhabitants from Niebla and resettled the area with Christians.⁹² He continued this pattern of resettlement in 1264 with the cities of Jerez and Arcos and deposed Muslim vassal kings, replacing them with Christian governors.⁹³ It is during this time that the first documentation of Alfonso’s devotion to the Virgin Mary appears in writing. In the charter declaring the recently reclaimed lands to be Christian by right, Alfonso states “that he acted out of love for the Virgin Holy Mary... that she may aid us and guide us in everything that we do so that it may be to the service of God and of herself, and to the honour of ourselves and of our kingdoms and of all Christendom, and to the destruction of the enemies of our faith.”⁹⁴

Mary continued to be an important patron for Alfonso in his efforts to Christianize Spain and thereby served as a symbolic figure of a righteous Christian rule. Influenced by existing

⁹⁰O’Callaghan, p. 59

⁹¹Lomax, p. 161.

⁹²Ibid.

⁹³Ibid.

⁹⁴O’Callaghan, p. 120.

practices,⁹⁵ Alfonso invoked the Virgin as protector and continued the practice of the conversion of mosques into churches dedicated to the Virgin.⁹⁶ In one of the *cantigas* (169), Alfonso speaks of this practice: “Muhammed will never have power there because she [the Virgin Mary] conquered it and furthermore she will conquer Spain and Morocco and Ceuta and Asila.”⁹⁷

Although the cult of the Virgin had been present in Spain where previous rulers had likewise employed Marian iconography as a symbol of Christian rule over Muslims, the Virgin was of a particular importance to Alfonso’s family. The Virgin had been a presence throughout Alfonso’s life. His mother, father and grandmother were all believers in the ability of the Virgin to heal and to intercede (a theme that proved to be prevalent in the more personal *cantigas*). The Virgin’s powers were called upon by Alfonso’s grandmother when Fernando fell very ill. His grandmother supposedly said: “I will take him there [Oña], may God help me, because I really believe that the Virgin will give him life and health.”⁹⁸ The *Cantigas de Santa Maria* recounts a similar supplication by Alfonso’s family to the Virgin’s ability to aid the sick in *cantiga* 256. In this particular *cantiga*, it is Alfonso’s mother who is the recipient of Mary’s benefaction. After becoming deathly ill due to a complication during pregnancy, Queen Beatriz called upon the Virgin for help. *Cantiga* 256 recalls Beatriz’s plea:

“This will be my help,
for when I come to her image I firmly believe
that I will recover quickly from all these ills.
Wherefore may she come to me and I will kiss

⁹⁵Accounts of Mary as a defensive patron have been found in Spain since the eleventh century. Sharon Farmer, and Barbara H. Rosenwein, eds. *Monks and Nuns, Saints and Outcasts: Religion in Medieval Society: Essays in Honour of Lester K. Little*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000, p. 199.

⁹⁶Ibid., p. 203.

⁹⁷Ibid., p. 204.

⁹⁸Ibid., p. 44.

her hands and feet for she will bring me great benefit.”⁹⁹

Alfonso’s lifelong devotion to the Virgin is evident through his actions and productions. His devotion to Mary was so intense that in one *cantiga* (10) Alfonso professes his love for the Virgin by swearing off deceitful, ordinary women.¹⁰⁰ This profession could possibly have been motivated by the treachery of his wife, Queen Violente, who not only left him but supported various conspiracies to overthrow Alfonso’s rule.¹⁰¹ Although his motivations were surely complex, Alfonso’s dedication to the Virgin remained a constant until his death.

One of the last poems he ever wrote is an example of his devotion. Mimicking the poem concerning the treacherous nobility above, the poem contains an air of desperation and frustration over failed ambitions:

“Lady, for the love of God,
take some pity on me,
for my eyes like rivers
run from the day I saw you;
Brothers and cousins and uncles;
I’ve lost them all for you,
If you don’t think of me.”¹⁰²

The Virgin was a very personal and powerful figure for Alfonso. Her dual nature of powerful deity and merciful mother proved to be the ultimate focus for veneration of the troubled king’s.

⁹⁹O’Callaghan, p. 49.

¹⁰⁰Ibid., p. 219.

¹⁰¹Ibid.

¹⁰²Ibid., p. 227.

Her role as Queen of Heaven paralleled the role of the king and was considered the ideal ruler by Alfonso in her ability to triumph over heretics and her ability to physically protect and defend against attacks. She was also a figure of love, compassion and healing and thereby fulfilled his childhood experiences of poetry and familial tradition. Although it would seem to be a very personal decision to produce a collection of miracles on the virtues of the Virgin, many scholars have noted a very political element to the manuscript. George D. Greenia states:

“We can be confident that an anthology nursed along as vigilantly as Alfonso shepherded this one does not stray from what the king himself wished to say or see. In the best sense-and in a rather intimate one in this case-his coauthors knew the mind of the king and helped him to graphically project it. The wonderfully diverse ways of praising and painting the Virgin ostensibly narrate stories of her favours, but are really focused on a non-progressive and non- sequential piety, dwelling on her abiding care. As courtly product, they formed an ongoing project for the religious welfare of the masses, and as an unobtrusive educational tool as well as for the nobles who contemplated the miniatures. Alfonso showed keen political savvy in promoting a monarchy which could fuse personal spiritual leadership with royal authority and remarkable subtlety in merging these recursive lyrics and images in the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*.”¹⁰³

While the goal of an African crusade, the quest for the title of Holy Roman Emperor, and the constant struggle of maintaining a unified Spain comprised a large portion of Alfonso’s mental, economic, and physical enterprises, they did not define his reign. Alfonso’s more academic, artistic and literary pursuits have been the focus of scholarly interest for many years.

It is through Alfonso’s artistic and literary commissions that we are able to track what was previously discussed in the context of the Byzantine cult of Mary and Chartres: the culmination of many factors including an increased interest in the humanity of Christ, the cult of Mary, economic hardships, propaganda and the emergence of the Gothic style. Alfonso took

¹⁰³Greenia, p. 340.

such an interest in the arts that historian Robert Anderson has gone as far as labelling Alfonso's rule as a kind of 'proto-renaissance':

"Perhaps eventually we shall come to think of him not merely as a thirteenth century intellectual who fostered learning and erudition in his own time, but as a man of vision whose thoughts and achievements in many respects actually foreshadowed the dawn of modern civilization... Alfonso as king of Castile, represents better than any other medieval ruler, the spirit of national unity and political expansion that realized its final and greatest expression in Spain during the Renaissance... The works of Alfonso and his collaborators betray a relentless search of all kinds of knowledge, a 'universal' approach to learning as contrasted with the cloistered, individualized type often associated with the Middle Ages."¹⁰⁴

Alfonso was certainly ahead of his time in certain aspects of his rule. For example, he established many schools in Seville, Toledo and Murcia¹⁰⁵ as well as sponsoring universities.¹⁰⁶ He went to great lengths in his attempts to unify Spain through language; he wrote specifically in the vernacular to reach a wider audience.¹⁰⁷ He translated many ancient texts such as the Talmud and the Koran which would contribute greatly to the development of medieval literature.¹⁰⁸ While writing in the vernacular instils national pride and certainly allows for more literature to be accessible, some scholars believe that in Alfonso's decision to forgo the language of the learned, Latin, for the more widely used and understood vernacular.¹⁰⁹

Along with contributing to the proliferation of a single language, Alfonso contributed greatly to the sciences, music, law and history. Surrounding himself with a diverse literary

¹⁰⁴ Anderson, pp. 450-456.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 452

¹⁰⁶ Higini Angles. "Hispanic Musical Culture from the 6th to the 14th Century," *The Musical Quarterly*. vol. 26 no. 4 (Oct., 1940), p. 520.

¹⁰⁷ Evelyn Proctor. *Alfonso X of Castile: Patron of Literature and Learning*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1951, p. 3.

¹⁰⁸ Some believe that it was Alfonso's translations that indirectly served as Dante's source for his Divine Comedy. Working from French translations of Alfonso's original Castilian translations, Dante was inspired by the passages describing Mohammed's journey to the after world. Proctor, p. 16.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 3.

following, Alfonso was quite prolific during his reign. With the relative lack of written history in Spain,¹¹⁰ Alfonso attempted to fill the void of historical writings through his *General Estoria*, a tome that stretched from the beginning of time with Adam and Eve to contemporary Spain that developed into another publication on the history of Spain itself.¹¹¹ Being a precursor to what has been called the “Renaissance man”; Alfonso made significant contributions to science through his astrological Alfonsine tables and to law with his *Siete Partidas*. However, it is with his *Cantigas de Santa Maria* that Alfonso demonstrates the culmination of all the previously mentioned historical factors and pressures. The Gothic style of the manuscript demonstrates contemporary continental influence, the presence of a powerful Virgin demonstrates the shift from popularity of Apocalypse imagery to the increasingly popular Marian imagery, and the content of the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* themselves illustrates the “reconquest mentality” and reflects the king’s perceptions and goals for his reign.

John Ellis characterizes the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* succinctly when stating in his doctoral thesis: “In this iconographic society, King Alfonso appears as the exemplary Christian ruler and the devotee of Mary, singing her praises and exhorting others to do the same. This dual representation suggests that the pictorial cycle of his Marian project is not merely pious, but also politically motivated and forming part of Alfonso’s greater ambition, the crown of Holy Roman Emperor.”¹¹² By paralleling the life of Alfonso with specific miracles, a trend of purpose and intent becomes evident on the part of the patron. While we cannot say for certain whether or not the inclusion of Byzantine Marian miracles was intentional, by tracing the parallels of his rule in

¹¹⁰There is a scarcity of records of contemporary events for the majority of the twelfth century. Proctor, p. 78.

¹¹¹Anderson, p. 449.

¹¹²John C. Ellis. *Textual-Pictorial Conventions as Politics in the Cantigas de Santa Maria (MS. ESCORIAL T.I.1) of Alfonso el Sabio*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Amherst, 2004, p. 7.

the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* combined with thirteenth-century artistic, literary, and religious trends, I suggest that the seemingly anachronistic Byzantine iconography and setting would have resonated with a thirteenth-century Spanish audience.

FIGURES

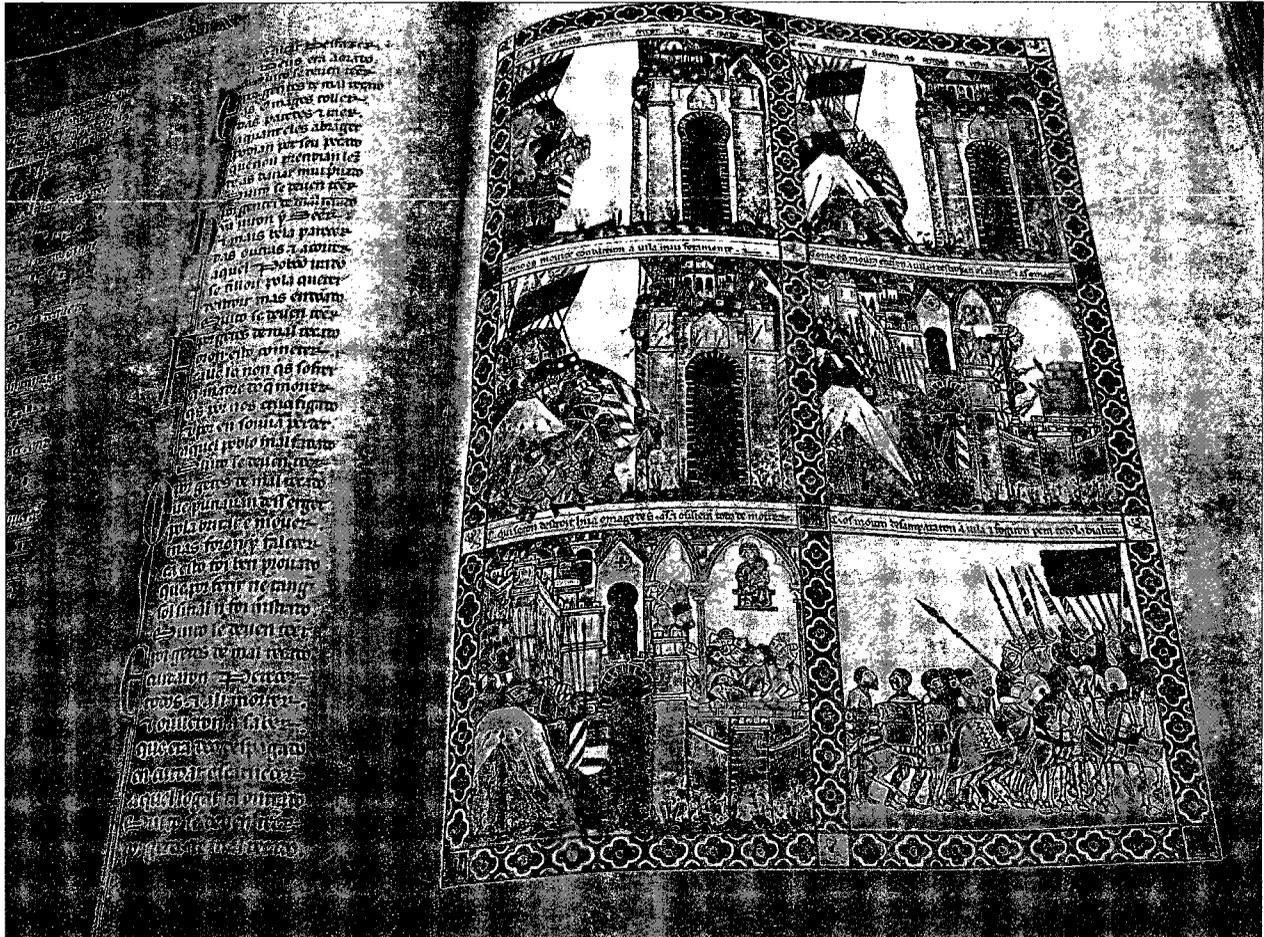


Figure 2.1 *Cantigas de Santa Maria*: Cantiga 99, *Saracens Cannot Deface Mary-Image*. Source: Alfonso X, el Sabio.

Cantigas de Santa Maria, edición facsimile del Códice T.I.1 de la Biblioteca de San Lorenzo el Real de El Escorial Siglo XIII.

Madrid: Edilan, 1979. Photo by author.

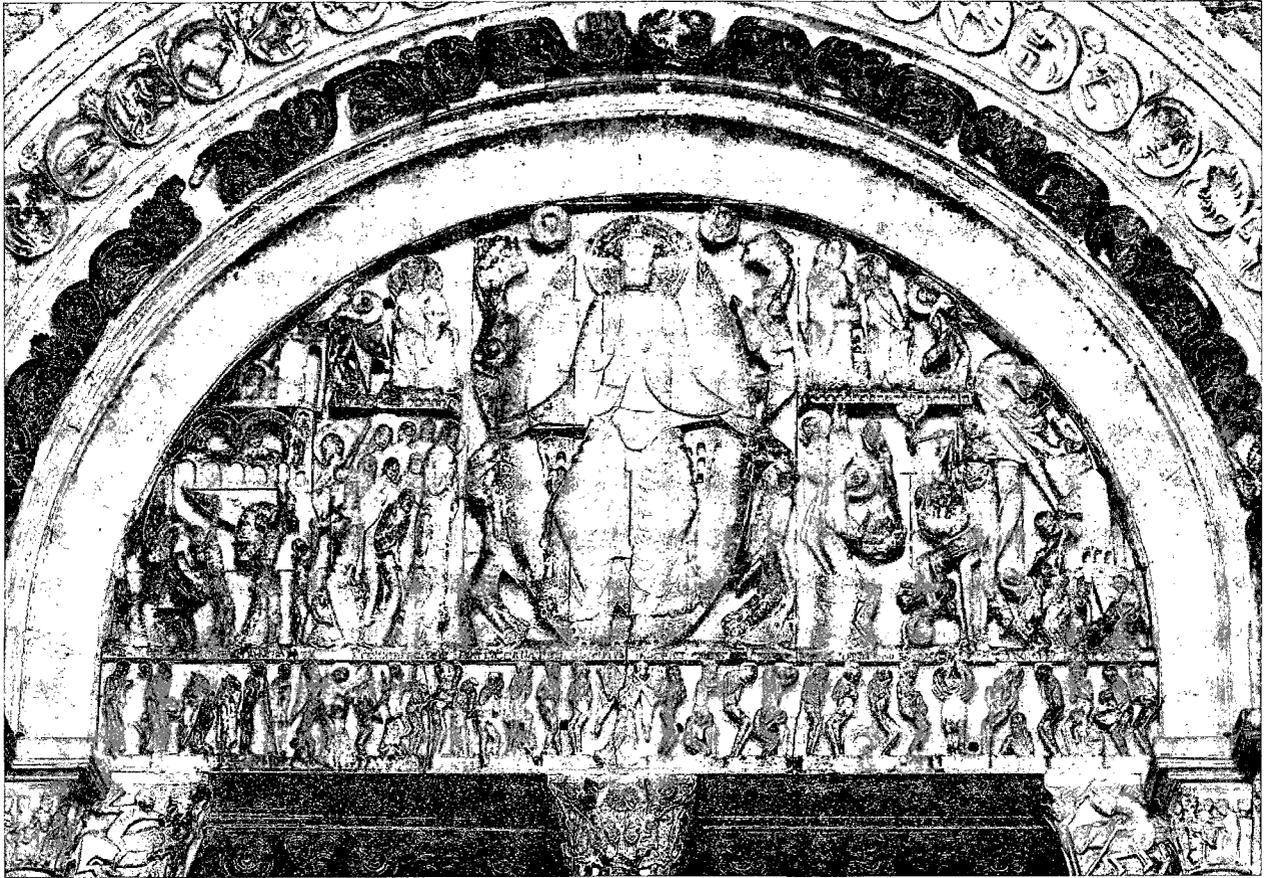


Figure 2.2 – Autun, Saint-Lazare, France: Gislebertus, *Last Judgement*, west façade, central portal, tympanum, 1120-1135.
Source: SCALA, Florence/ART RESOURCE, N.Y.

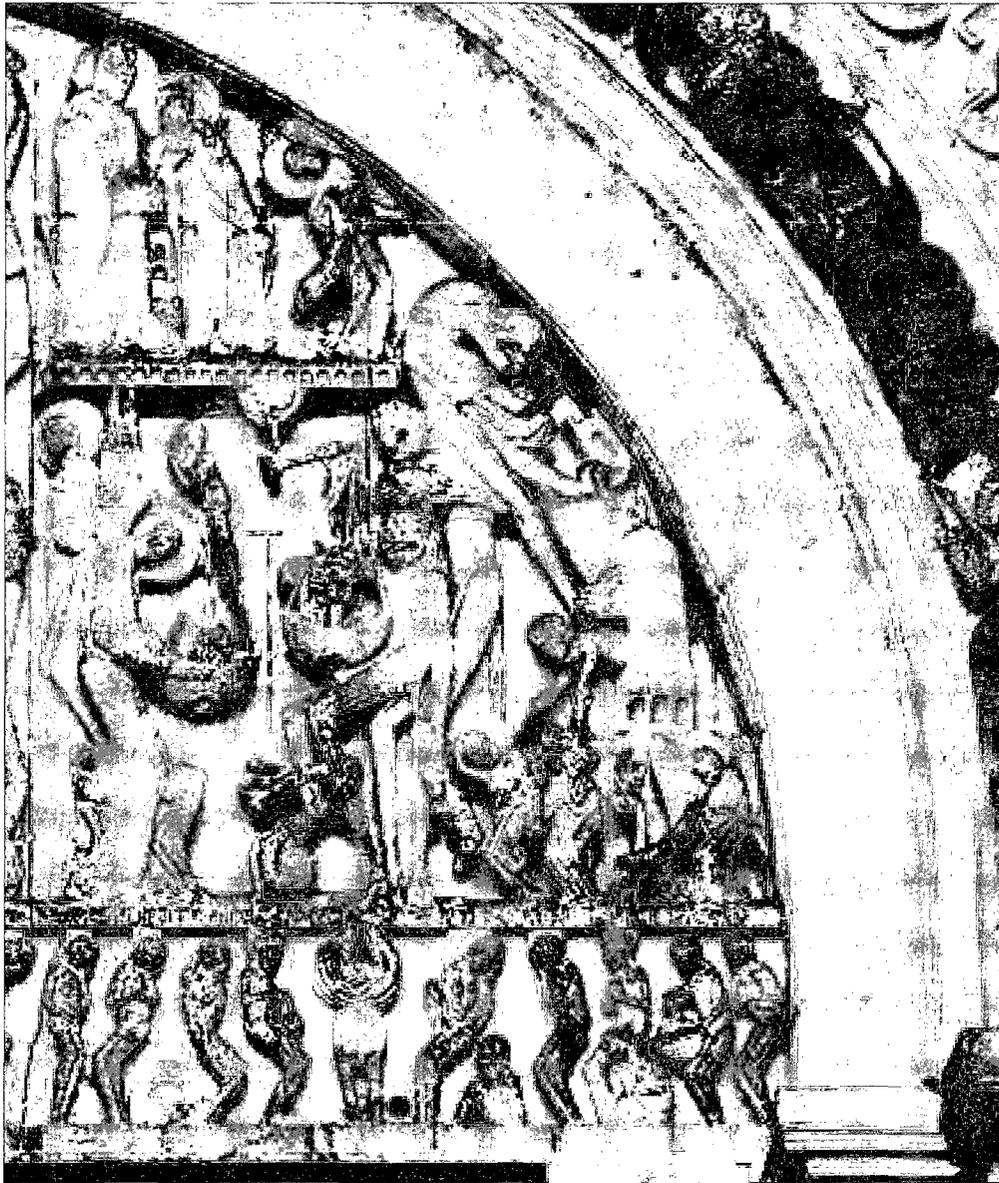


Figure 2.3 – Autun, Saint-Lazare, France: det., Gislebertus, *Last Judgement*, west façade, central portal, 1120-1135. Source: SCALA, Florence/ART RESOURCE, N.Y.



Figure 2.4 – St. Denis, Paris, France: det., *Second Coming of Christ*, west façade, central portal, 1135-40. Source: ARTstor Slide Gallery, University of California, San Diego.

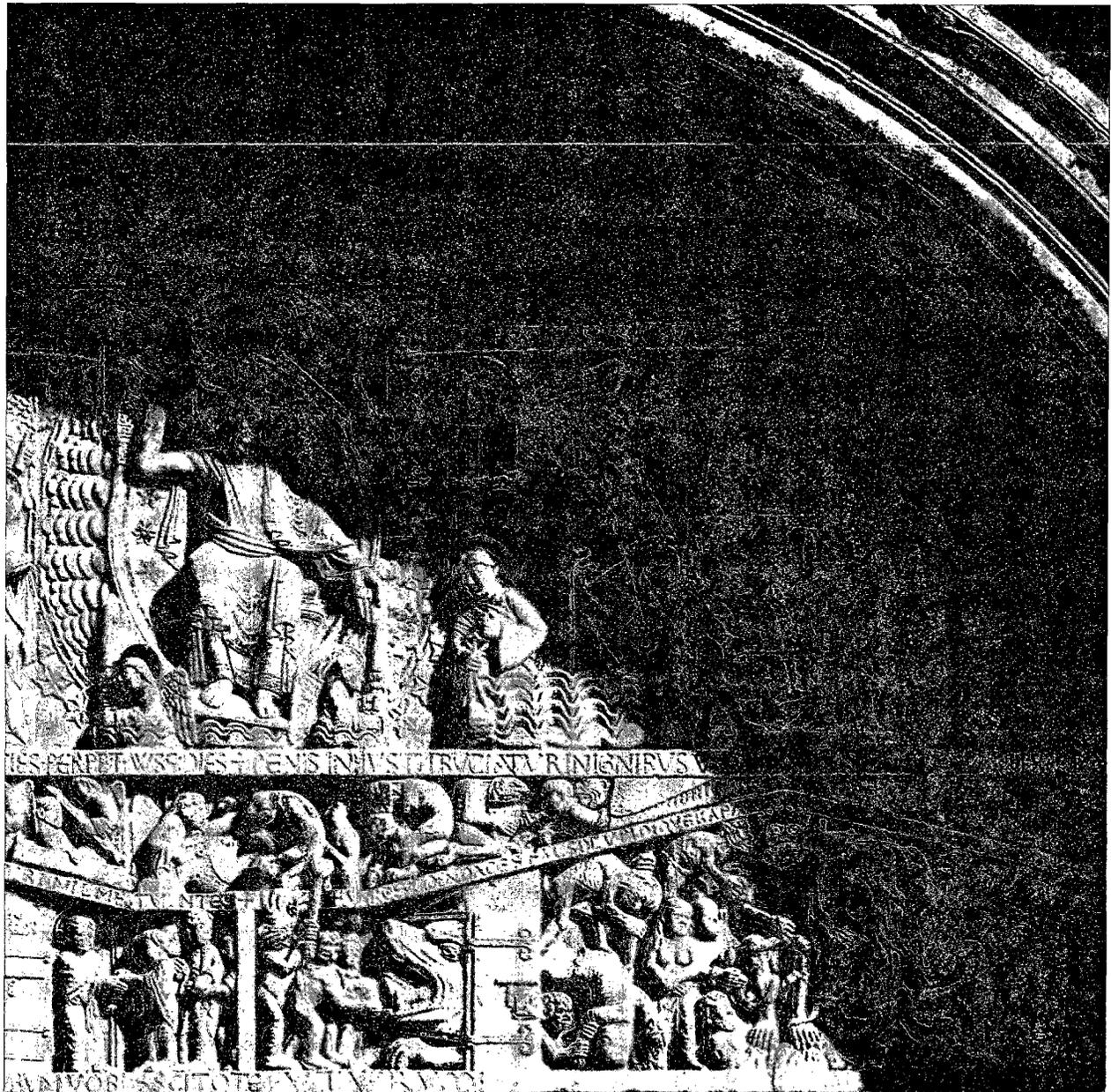


Figure 2.5 – Sainte-Foy, Conques, France: det., *The Last Judgment*, tympanum above main (west) portal, c. 1130. Source: Digital Library Federation Academic Image Cooperative.



Figure 2.6 – Cathedral of Notre Dame, Amiens, France: *Smiling Virgin and Child*, south transept portal, 1260-1270. Source: Hartill Art Associates Inc.



Figure 2.7 – Cathedral of Notre Dame, Chartres, France: *Annunciation and Visitation*, west façade, capital frieze, central portal, 1145-1155. Source: Hartill Art Associates Inc.

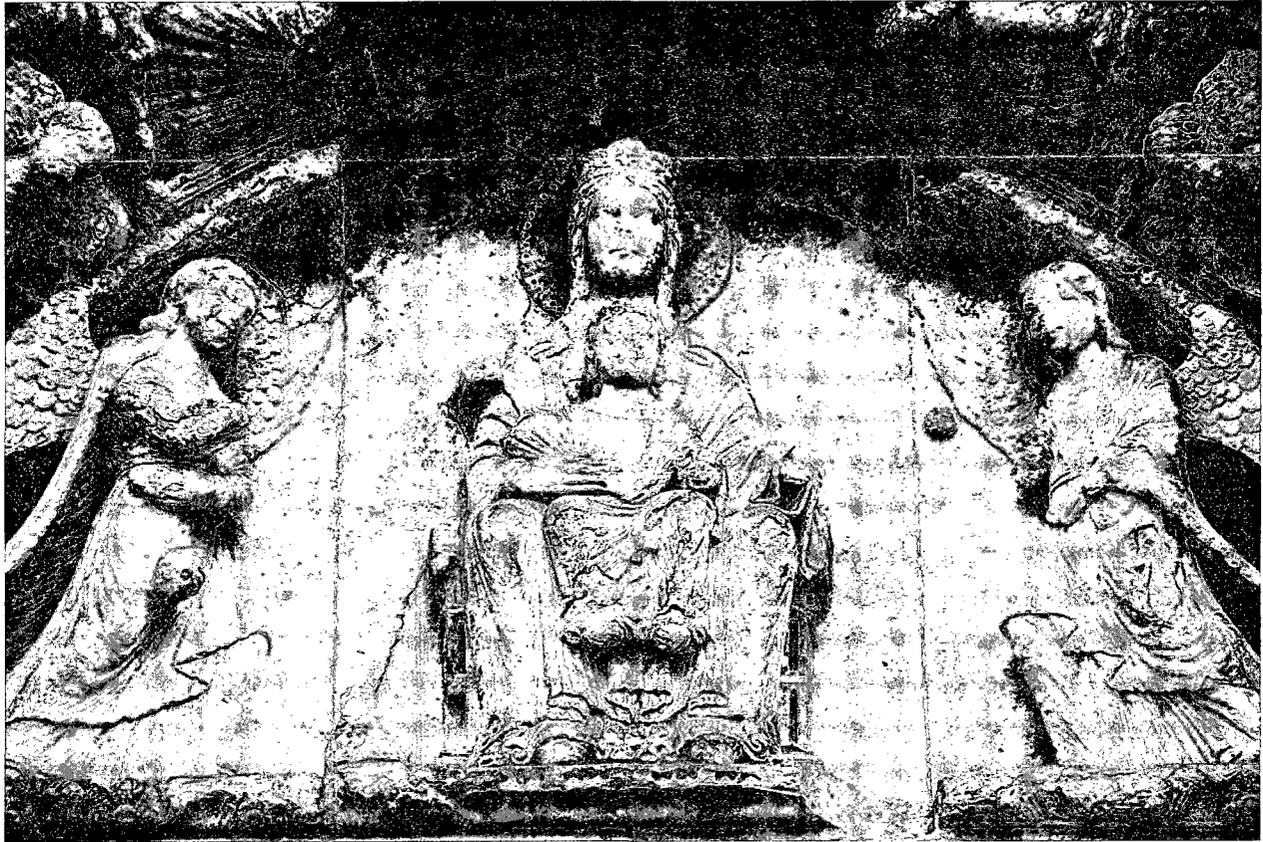


Figure 2.8 - Cathedral of Notre Dame, Chartres, France: *Royal Portal, Virgin and Child*, west façade, right portal, 1145-1155. Source: Hartill Art Associates Inc.

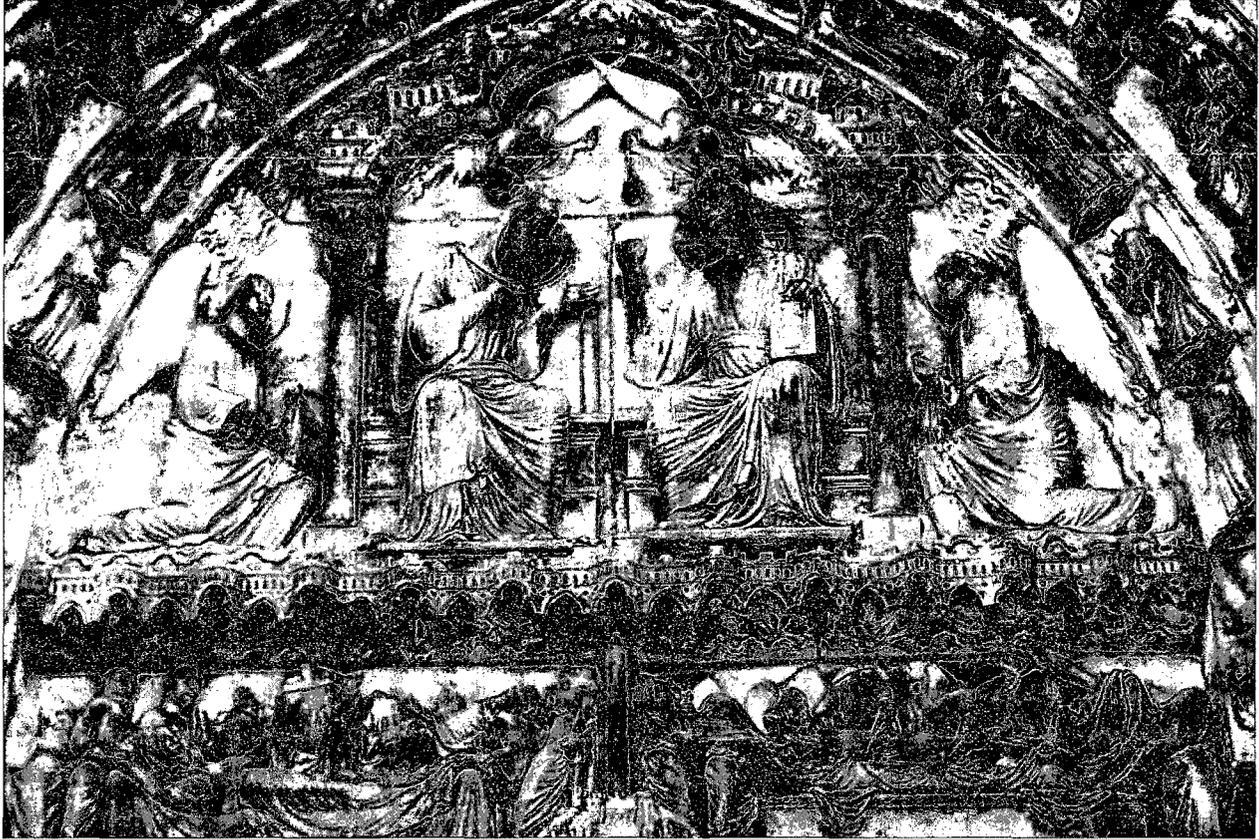


Figure 2.9 - Cathedral of Notre Dame, Chartres, France: *The Coronation of the Virgin*, north facade; central portal, c. 1215. Source: Hartill Art Associates Inc.

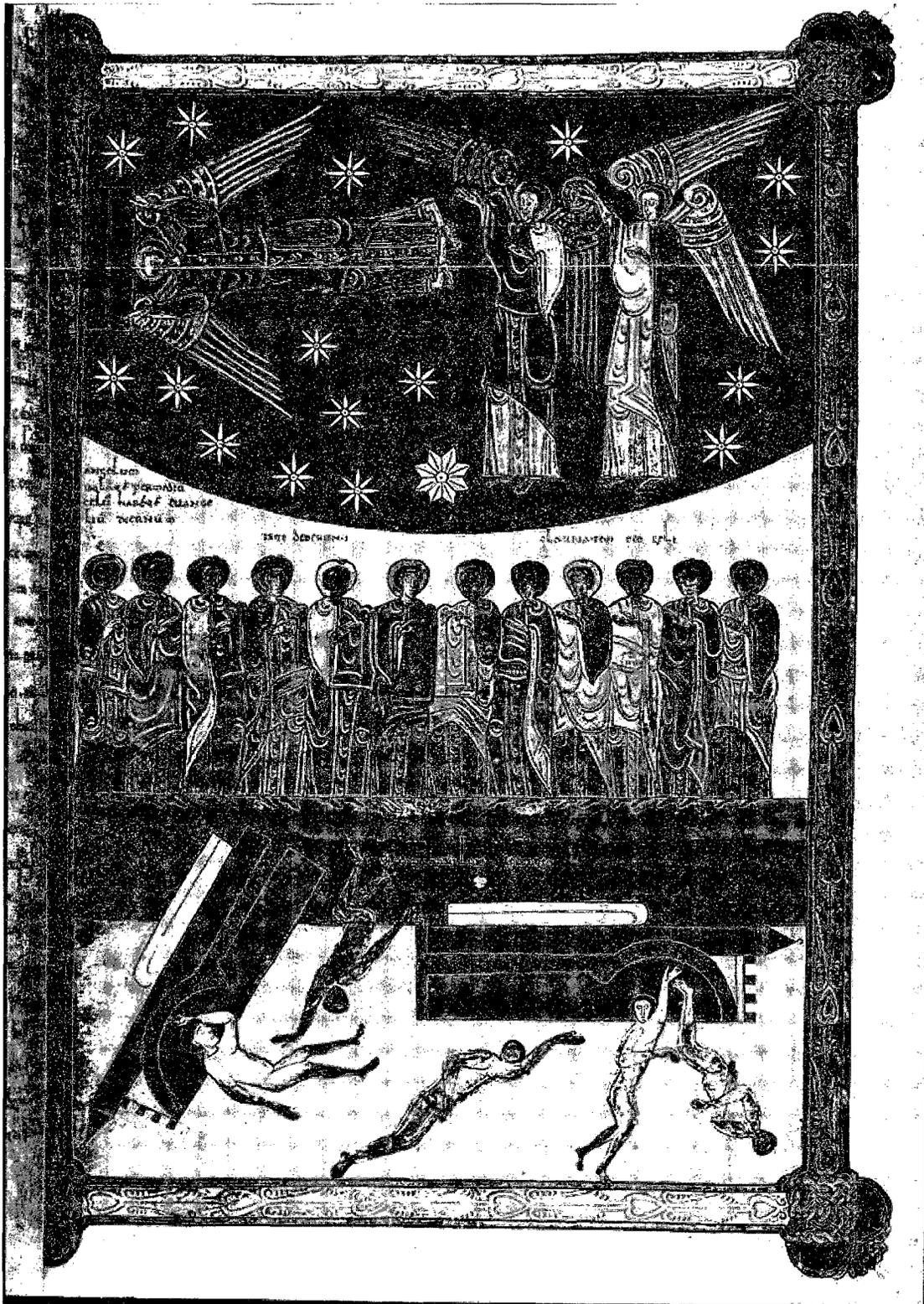


Figure 2.10 - The Beatus of Liebana, *Warring Angels and the Fall of Babylon*, c. 1047. Biblioteca Nacional, ms. Vit. 14-2, fol. 207. Source: ARTstor Slide Gallery, University of California, San Diego.

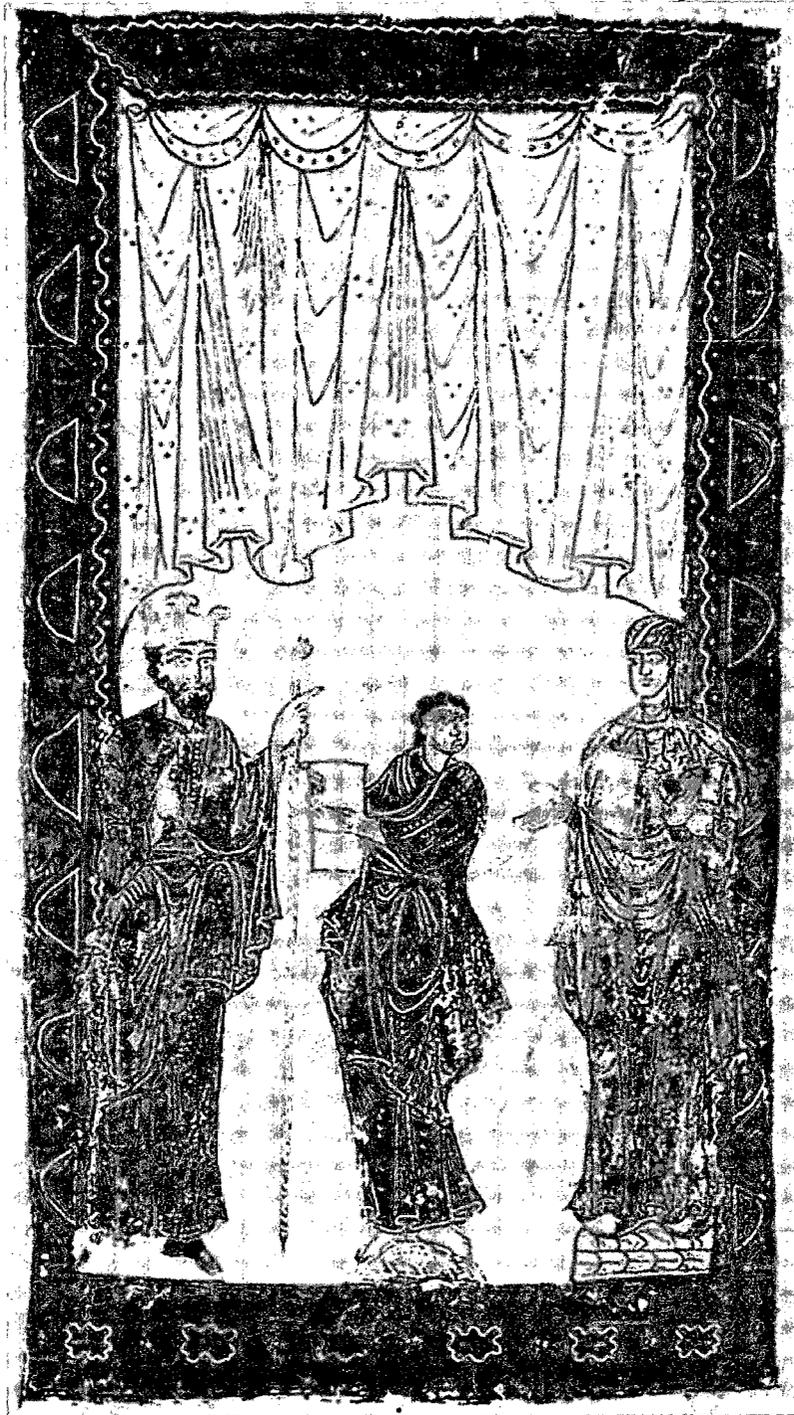


Figure 2.11 - The Prayer book of Ferdinand and Sancha, *Ferdinand, Sancha and the Scribe*, 1055. Source: Wixom, William D. and Lawson, Margaret. "Picturing the Apocalypse: Illustrated Leaves from a Medieval Spanish Manuscript." *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*. vol. 59, no. 3 (Winter, 2002): 1-56.

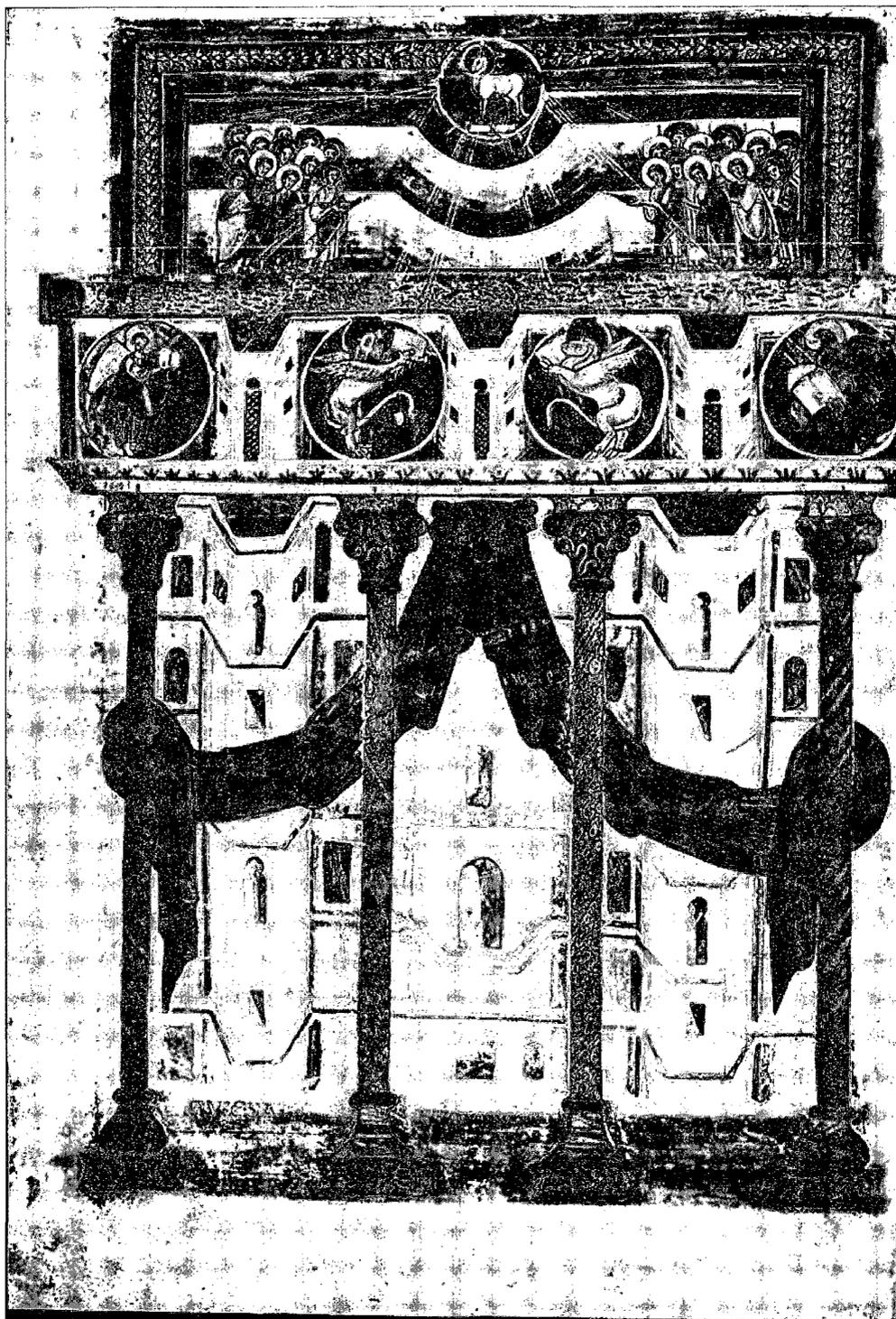


Figure 2.12 - Gospel Book of St. Medard Soissons: Adoration of the Lamb, early 9th century. Bibliothèque nationale de France, ms. lat. 8850 fol. 1v. Source: ARTstor Slide Gallery, University of California, San Diego.

CHAPTER THREE – The Cantigas de Santa Maria

“[Tradition] involves, in the first place, the historical sense, which we may call nearly indispensable to anyone who would continue to be a poet beyond his twenty-fifth year; and the historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence; the historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order. This historical sense, which is a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal and of the timeless and of the temporal together, what makes a writer traditional. And it is at the same time what makes a writer most acutely conscious of his place in time, of his own contemporaneity.”¹

This statement written almost seven hundred years after Alfonso’s reign by T.S. Eliot, speaks to the unique nature of the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*. There is a self-conscious awareness of the present in the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* through such strategies as the telling of indigenous and personal stories, through the use of a contemporary visual vocabulary of an accessible, compassionate Virgin and through the strategic use of Galician-Portuguese as opposed to Latin to appeal to a wide audience. At the same time the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*’s inclusion of Byzantine miracles instills the manuscript with the “timeless” -- a sense of history and of the past. This chapter aims to demonstrate that the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* employs historical references strategically in order to instill a sense of legitimacy to Alfonso’s reconquest efforts as well as his very personal and ultimate goal of *Romãos Rey* (King of the Romans).

In the previous chapter, by taking into consideration Alfonso’s upbringing and education, we were able to better understand the environment in which the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* was produced. The cult of Mary was enjoying an increased popularity as a result of the shift from the Apocalyptic imagery of the Romanesque period to focus on the human aspect of Christ (and

¹T.S. Eliot. *Critical Essays*. London: Faber & Faber, 1932, pp. 14-15.

subsequently the role of the Virgin) as demonstrated by the new Gothic Spirit. As a result, Mary became a figure that appealed to thirteenth-century viewers. Much like her Apocalyptic predecessor, a judging intimidating Christ, Mary began to adorn tympanums of major Cathedrals and appeared in unprecedented frequency in French and Spanish manuscripts. The use of the Marian miracle compilation as a form of public outreach was documented in France with Jean le Marchant's *Miracles de Notre Dame de Chartres* and it has been suggested by scholars that the efficacy of the Virgin and her attributed miracles in order to encourage fundraising efforts was not lost on the Spanish.

Monasteries subsisting under the shadow of Santiago de Compostela, a major cathedral on the Western European pilgrimage trail, resorted to creative means of attracting visitors and soliciting donations. The *Cantigas de Santa Maria* themselves demonstrate the creative measures that others went through to attempt to undermine the more popular pilgrimage attractions through the promotion of various other shrines such as Villa-Sirga (and subsequently promoting the Virgin over St. James).² The goal of promoting Villa-Sirga over Santiago de Compostela was not only for fiduciary gain, but also for political advantage. As Santiago de Compostela became one of the most popular pilgrimage sites in Western Christendom, the monks became more self-sufficient and less reliant on Rome, subsequently adhering less to their strict clerical regulations.³ For example, the monks at St. James did not, with the same regularity as others, wear their hair in the typical tonsure style, or dress in sober colours, and they did not

²John Esten Keller. "King Alfonso's Virgin of Villa-Sarga, Rival of St. James of Compostela" in Frederic Coenen, ed. *Middle Ages Reformation Volkskunde; Festschrift for John G. Kunstmann*. New York: AMS Press Inc., 1966, p. 77.

³*Ibid.*, p. 76.

abide by other official decrees as strictly as others.⁴ In what has been seen as an act of allegiance to Rome,⁵ Alfonso promoted Villa-Sirga over Santiago; *cantiga* 278 tells the tale “How a good lady of France, who was blind, came to Villa-Sirga and held vigil there and was immediately cured and recovered her sight. On her way back to her land, she encountered a blind man who was going on a pilgrimage to Santiago. She advised him to go to Villa-Sirga, and he would be healed.”⁶

The Virgin’s assertion that Villa-Sirga was more effective than Santiago de Compostela in healing pilgrims is also found in two other *cantigas*: 218 and 253.⁷ Through these poems, Alfonso blatantly promoted Villa-Sirga as the premier pilgrimage stop in Spain, so much so that the shrine’s healing abilities are also praised in fourteen other *cantigas*. Some scholars have suggested that this promotion of Villa-Sirga is motivated by Alfonso’s greater political ambitions: the title of Holy Roman Emperor. James E. Keller suggests that this *cantiga*, along with a few others, was a deliberate slight against Santiago and its subversive monks. The poems, Keller postulates, was intended by Alfonso to communicate a message of allegiance to Rome,⁸ and although St. James was an extremely popular Saint even within his own family,⁹ it has been argued that Alfonso took to belittling the efficacy of Saint James as a way of distancing himself from the French influence of the Benedictine monks at Compostela. The *Cantigas de Santa Maria* are rife with allusions to Alfonso’s imperial aspirations, and the promotion of Villa-Sirga

⁴Ibid., p. 76.

⁵As postulated by John E. Keller in his essay “King Alfonso’s Virgin of Villa-Sirga, Rival of St. James of Compostela” in *Middle Ages Reformation Volkskunde; Festschrift for John G. Kunstmann*.

⁶Alfonso X, King of Castile and Leon. *Songs of Holy Mary of Alfonso X, The Wise; a Translation of the Cantigas de Santa Maria*; translated by Kathleen Kulp-Hill. Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 2000, p. 337.

⁷Coenen, p. 76.

⁸Ibid.

⁹In *Crónica General*, Alfonso tells the tale of St. James aiding his father in his victory of an attempted siege on the city of Coimbra. Ibid., p. 75.

over Santiago de Compostela is just one avenue of self promotion and politics found hidden under the guise of Marian benevolence.

Another monastery that manipulated the cult of Mary in concert with Santiago de Compostela was the monastery of San Millán de la Cogolla. This monastery had a symbiotic relationship with Santiago de Compostela as it had acquired a valuable piece of real estate in the form of the pilgrim hostel Azofra along the pilgrimage road to Santiago.¹⁰ It has been noted that the practice of performing a collection of Marian miracles to the public as a form of fundraising was popular in France (most notably with Jean le Marchant's *Miracles de Notre Dame de Chartres*). Some scholars have postulated that San Millán de la Cogolla would have employed similar tactics to encourage fundraising by increasing the influx of pilgrims staying at the Azofra hostel. Encouraging pilgrims to pay tribute to the Virgin shrine at the monastery before continuing on their journey, it has been suggested that the monks of San Millán de la Cogolla took advantage of a priest whose poetry can be considered one source of inspiration for the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* and many other manuscripts and poets after Alfonso X. The monastery was fortunate to have within its ranks the major thirteenth-century Spanish literary figure; Gonzalo de Berceo (ca. 1190 – before 1264).¹¹ Although we cannot be certain that Alfonso and Berceo met, it has been documented that during the years before Alfonso was crowned king, he visited the monastery of San Millán de la Cogolla and they were almost certain to have been aware of each other's work.¹² And although there is a lack of evidentiary support that clearly proves a meeting between these two major figures, Berceo's decidedly Spanish take on Mary

¹⁰Ibid., p. 8

¹¹Jeannie K. Bartha , Annette Grant Cash, Richard Terry Mount. *The Collected Works of Gonzalo de Berceo in English Translation*. Tempe: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies (ACMRS), 2008, p. 8.

¹²John Esten Keller. *Pious Brief Narrative in Medieval Castilian and Galician Verse: From Berceo to Alfonso X*. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1978, p. 81

likely was a potent model for the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*'s use of a simple and accessible language that speaks to troubadour traditions and the performative nature of both of the miracle collections.

Berceo was a secular priest who served his parish in an administrative capacity.¹³ Having been exposed to many Latin texts, Berceo, a prolific poet, translated those texts into the Castilian vernacular, altering the meter and content of the originals to appeal to a more local, Spanish audience.¹⁴ One of his most influential works, *Milagros de Nuestra Senora*, a collection of miracles of the Virgin similar to Gautier de Coinci's *Miracles de Nostre Dame* and Jean le Marchant's *Miracles de Notre Dame de Chartres*, was effective in garnering a captive audience through its manipulation of the cult of Mary. Written in the vernacular Castilian, and demonstrating a great love and reverence for the Virgin Mary, Berceo's *Milagros* retold, within a regional context, many famous miracles such as the miracle of the pregnant Abbess and the tale of Theophilus.¹⁵

Berceo carefully wove his tales of the Virgin, employing a true poetic tone through the embellishment of the miracles. The poems would have been used to instruct young clerics,¹⁶ as well as being recited and possibly sung in front of an audience (some have even considered suggested that they may have been recited in a theatre-in-the-round setting)¹⁷ in a simple poetic form that scholars have praised for both its practicality and emotion. "Some critics have labelled full rhyme as dull and monotonous. They are mistaken. This metrical form was easy to

¹³It has been suggested his role was either a notary or a parish priest. *Ibid.*, p. xiv.

¹⁴*Ibid.*

¹⁵*Ibid.*, p. xv.

¹⁶David Flory, in his book *Marian Representations on the Miracle Tales of Thirteenth-Century Spain and France* theorizes this possibility. *Ibid.*, p. xv.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, pp. xv.

memorize. Full rhyme has other virtues, but first and foremost it possesses certain powers. It caught its audience in its net and carries it along with force... the effect of Berceo's language is colloquial and loquacious."¹⁸

In his deft use of language and composition, Berceo's *Milagros* created a sense of drama and instilled a level of emotion in his characters that contrasts to the tone of the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*. For example, when comparing the popular tale of the Pregnant Abbess (see Appendix A for Berceo's poem in its entirety and Appendix B for Alfonso's version), one can easily discern the differing styles of Alfonso and Berceo. Berceo's version is a lengthy tale that is defined by the tension created through detailed descriptions of the emotional journey the abbess is enduring. An apt example of the emotion imbued in Berceo's telling of the popular tale is found in the following excerpt:

“She [the abbess] entered in her oratory all alone;
she did not ask for any companion.
Then she stopped helpless in first prayer,
but God and her good fortune opened a way for her.

She threw herself to the floor before the altar,
she looked at the image, she began to cry.

“Help me,” she said, “Glorious One, Star of the Sea,
because I have no other advice that can help me.

Mother, we read it well, the scripture says it,

You are of such grace and such great temperance, that whoever willingly tells You his fear

¹⁸Ibid., pp. xiv.

You immediately help him in all his anxiety.

You helped Theophilus who was desperate,
 who with his blood made a pact with the Devil.
 Through Your good counsel he was reconciled,
 whence all mankind gives thanks to You for it.

You helped, Lady, the Egyptian,
 who was a great sinner because she was a loose woman.
 Blessed Lady from whom all good flows,
 give me some advice before morning.

Blessed Lady, I failed to serve You,
 but I always loved to praise and bless You;
 Lady, I tell the truth, I do not intend to lie,
 I would like to be dead, if I could die.”¹⁹

In contrast, *cantiga 7* is to the point and basic by comparison. The plot gives the reader/listener the basic details without delving into the psychology of the nun. Instead of relying on the poem itself as the impetus for audience response, the *cantiga* relies on the visual impact of the miniature to elicit the desired reaction. Although influences of Berceo and his *Milagros* can be discerned in the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*, the visual images that accompany the familiar stories make this manuscript different from all the previously mentioned Marian collections. Relying heavily on the power of images and the inherent power of icons, the

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 93.

Cantigas de Santa Marias' miniatures buttress Alfonso's claims of political and religious legitimacy through the telling and re-telling of popular tales to create a link to the past, as demonstrated with the miracles that specifically reference Constantinople.

As mentioned in the first chapter, the use of images was called upon heavily throughout the middle ages by secular and ecclesiastical leaders alike to help disseminate their ideology. The concept of the Virgin Mary as a symbol of power and legitimacy began with Byzantine rulers and filtered into the West through papal appropriation. The theme of the enduring power of Mary was promoted by rulers such as Alfonso X as demonstrated through the content and more specifically with the miniatures, of the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*. The manipulation of Marian imagery in the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* moves it away from a form of entertainment, like the *Milagros de Nuestra Senora*, to a more complex message, one that serves not just an entertainment function, but a political function as well. Hans Belting addresses the power imbued in images and their role within the middle age society:

“...images were called upon to play an active part where nothing else was available. Images thus filled gaps on a social level. They were given roles that society no longer handled by itself; in this way, extraterrestrial forces were given power and responsibility. It would therefore be a mistake to see images as theologians were later to do in the iconoclastic controversy – only as objects of religious contemplation, since they were constantly used for very tangible purposes, from the repulsion of evil to healing and the defense of the realm. The authority they acquired through such functions enabled them to become the focus of a society's aspirations... and to symbolize the ideal community envisaged by that society. In this way images helped in the creation of a collective identity, what Peter Brown calls “civic patriotism”, when a group or a city was threatened.”²⁰

²⁰ Hans Belting. *Likeness and Presence: a History of the Image Before the Era of Art*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994, p. 44.

The Marian imagery found within the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* varies widely within the manuscript itself. Much like Belting's quote above, the Virgin fulfills a myriad of roles in that she simultaneously repelled evil, healed the sick, defended Spain and symbolized the ideal community as envisaged by Alfonso X. In order to create images that would support and communicate the roles of the Virgin to the viewer, Alfonso employed the new Gothic style to his manuscript, a style that allowed for relatable figures and accessible iconography. Following the trend of French Gothic manuscripts, the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* have many miniatures featuring lifelike figures and a demure Virgin.

Much like the *Shah Abbas Picture Bible* (Pierpont Morgan Library, MS 638), a contemporary manuscript dated to c. 1250, the figures found throughout the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* are more lifelike than previous Spanish tradition as discussed in chapter two. The typical flat, abstract figures that dominated Christian Spanish manuscripts from the tenth century up until the time of the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* (fig. 3.1) gave way to a more French inspired natural rendering of figures, landscapes and architectural framing (fig. 3.2). As seen in the miniature depicting King David committing adultery in the *Shah Abbas Bible* (fig. 3.3), French Gothic miniatures are given a lifelike quality to the very weight of the figures seen under the soft, conforming folds of the drapery, the sense of animation through the natural gestures that illustrate the story, and the earthly and contemporary settings of the miniatures. Here David, an Old Testament King, is shown in his bedchamber. The curtain above him and his lover, Bathsheba, has been opened for the viewer to peer upon the intimate event of their love-making. Although this event occurred in the past, the figures are given a more contemporary feel through their dress and the architectural details framing the miniatures. The depiction of relatable figures

and events, contemporary references as well as architectural framing details is consistent throughout the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*.

Cantiga 42 (fig. 3.4), a tale that recounts a foolish man who pledged his love for both the Virgin Mary and his earthly love, exhibits many artistic similarities to the *Shah Abbas Bible*. The tale's culmination describes the confrontation between the unfaithful man and the Virgin:

“After the nuptials were over and day was done, the bridegroom lay down and went quickly to sleep. While sleeping, he saw Holy Mary in his dreams and She called to him angrily: ‘Oh, my faithless liar!’

‘Why did you forsake me and take a wife? You forgot the ring you gave me. Therefore, you must leave your wife and go with me wherever I so will. Otherwise, from now on, you will suffer mortal anguish.’”²¹

The stage setting for this dramatic tale of betrayal is similar to David's setting: the bedchamber. Here, much like its French counterpart, a contemporary scene has been depicted for the viewer. A curtain splays open to the intimacy of the bedchamber, a setting that allows for maximum drama as the confrontation between a very lifelike Virgin and accompanying angel serve the foolish man with an ultimatum. An attempt at a lifelike rendering of the figures can be seen in the anatomical details of the man and wife as well as the sense of tension and form in the body underneath the bedding. Much like the French bible, the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* frame the miniatures with architectural details; however, the similarities between the two manuscripts end with the basic use of those framing details.

Architectural details are clearly used in both manuscripts; however, the *Cantigas de*

²¹Alfonso X, p. 56.

Santa Maria's miniatures are much more detailed, contemporary, and regionalized. Perhaps considered more detailed in general, many miniatures exhibit distinctive Spanish architecture, such as the polylobe arch in the aforementioned miniature as well as the Mozarabic horseshoe arch (fig. 3.5). While there are many stylistic similarities between the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* and French Gothic manuscripts, the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* predate many French manuscripts in the content which is presented to the viewer, and this is subsequently what defines the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* as a unique manuscript.

Emile Mâle characterizes French Gothic art within strict parameters of iconography and subject matter. Likening the rigidity of thirteenth-century art to the rules and regulations of mathematics, Mâle states: "The Middle Ages had a passion for order. They organized art as they had organized dogma, secular learning and society. The artistic representation of sacred subjects was a science governed by fixed laws which could not be broken at the dictates of individual imagination."²² Mâle also discusses the typical Virgin within Gothic art and the depiction of Mary as *Maria Regina* – Queen of Heaven is typical of twelfth and thirteenth-century Marian imagery.

"The Virgin of the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries is a queen. She appears in the west porch at Chartres and in the Porte Sainte-Anne at Notre Dame at Paris seated on her throne in regal state. She has a crown on her forehead, a flowering sceptre in her hand, and holds the Child on her lap... On the threshold of the fourteenth century men felt that this Virgin, conceived by the theologians with the majesty of an impersonal idea had become too remote from humanity. All the miracles which the thirteenth century had attributed to her, the many occasions on which she had shown herself to the sinner, smiling and compassionate, ended in drawing her nearer to men... By the middle of the fourteenth century the group of

²²Mâle, Emile. *The Gothic Image*, trans. Dora Nussey. New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1958, p. 1.

the mother and child had lost the solemnity of earlier art, and had become merely human and intimate.”²³

While this statement may hold true of French art, one cannot say that Mâle was correct in the context of the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*. As many scholars have noted subsequently, Alfonso X's *Cantigas de Santa Maria* antedate related French Gothic styles by almost a half-century.²⁴ The use of a more human Virgin is found throughout the manuscript as many of the miracles depict a compassionate, sympathetic and sometimes humorous figure of Mary. Although Mâle specifically addresses the popular trend of the Marian miracle, he is quick to note that texts such as Gautier de Coinci's *Miracles de Nostre Dame* had little to no effect on French art: “These books had not the influence on art which we might expect. Neither in sculpture or glass is there any trace at Chartres, Laon or Soissons of the miracles of the famous images of the Virgin...”²⁵ Although we cannot fault Mâle for the exclusion of the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* and its contribution of the Marian miracle collection to Gothic art as he clearly frames his discussion within the context of French art, we can postulate that the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* was a unique compilation, that forged a new artistic path for the cult of Mary.

While previous and contemporary miracle collections such as Gautier de Coinci's collection and Spanish collections such as Berceo's *Milagros de Nuestra Senora* did not have accompanying miniatures and relied more on the drama created by the composition and poetry of each miracle, the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* was able to employ the powerful force of Marian

²³Ibid., pp. 235-236.

²⁴Specific reference to Mâle's oversight of Spanish art predating French Gothic art in their use of a more humanized Virgin is noted in Connie L. Scarborough's doctoral dissertation entitled: “Visualization and Verbalization in MS. T.J.I. of the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*.”

²⁵Mâle, p. 259.

imagery to convey its message. Similar to Gautier de Coinci and Berceo, the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* recounted new and familiar stories that captivated audiences through their universal message of intercession and salvation. Like the *Shah Abbas Bible*, it was able to evoke the power of the image to illustrate the message and evoke history, comfort and a sense of legitimacy through its iconography. It is through the communicative ability of imagery and the careful and deliberate iconography that the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* were able to convey multiple messages and even imbue some of the miracles with political undertones, communicating Alfonso's vision of an ideal religious and civic community to his courtly audience.

The representations of the Virgin vary throughout the four hundred poems, and various modes of Marian imagery are called upon in this one artistic manifestation. She is depicted, for the most part, as the compassionate, accessible and demure figure that will be popular in Gothic art, offering salvation and hope to the protagonist. Alfonso's love for the Virgin as a figure of purity is also communicated in some of the poems. For example, in *cantiga* 10, Alfonso assumes the role of a troubadour and professes his love of the Virgin over any other woman:

“This is in praise of Holy Mary, how She is beautiful, good, and powerful.

Roses of roses, Flower of flowers, Dame of dames, Lady of Ladies.

Rose of beauty and demeanour, Flower of joy and pleasure, Dame in being merciful, Lady in relieving pain and suffering.

One should greatly love such a Lady who can protect him from all harm and pardon him his sins which he so basely commits in the world.

We should devoutly love and serve Her, for She strives to keep us from transgression and makes us repent of our errors which we commit as sinners.

This Dame I have as my Lady, and Her troubadour I would be. If I can somehow win Her love, I consign to the devil all other loves.”²⁶

²⁶Alfonso X, p. 17.

This *cantiga* and its accompanying miniature is just one example of the many poems that describe and illustrate Alfonso's love for the Virgin. Stripping all of the "other-worldly" power from the Virgin and lauding her for more earthly ideals, *cantiga* 10's miniatures depict the Virgin amongst a bed of roses (fig. 3.6). She retains some regal accoutrements such as her crown and her ermine collar, her divinity is clearly demarcated by her halo. Her head is slightly tilted off to the side and her gaze is in what could be considered a bashful and proper manner. She does not challenge the viewer and does not exude any of the power with which other miracles imbue her. As the poem progresses, Mary is shown healing the sick and instructing noble women wearing similar crowns (fig. 3.7). Mary is the most prominent figure amongst this royal gathering, her esteemed station made evident by the use of gold in the depiction of her crown. The illustrator is also careful to clearly separate the Virgin from the other noble women through the use of space and architecture; the Virgin's space is clearly detached from the other women by two large columns and a curtain. Proportionately she is the largest of all the figures as she sits upon her throne (where, incidentally, she sits upon a lion – the symbol for León) and instructs the ladies on proper decorum. Although she clearly dominates the women in the illustrations, the last miniature is of interest as it shifts the balance of power to the King (fig. 3.8). This image could possibly be seen as the movement from prayer and veneration into reality as it places the position of power upon Alfonso as he sends all other women back to hell along with a grotesque devil. Mary looks passively upon the scene from her altar that is adorned with the heraldic symbols of Alfonso's reign – the castle and lion.

Cantiga 10 is classified as a *loor*, a song of praise and not a miracle, and contains troubadour themes favoured by Alfonso as stated in Prologue B:

“...And that which I seek is to praise the Virgin, Mother of Our Lord, Holy Mary, the most wondrous of His creations. Therefore, I wish from this day forth to be Her troubadour, and I pray that She will have me

for Her troubadour and accept my songs, for through them I seek to reveal the miracles She performed. Hence from now on I choose to sing for no other lady, and I think thereby to recover all that I have wasted on the others...

Therefore, I pray, if it be Her will, that what I shall say of Her in my songs be pleasing to Her, and if it please Her, that She give me the reward which She gives to those She loves. He who has this assurance will gladly sing for Her.”²⁷

This prologue hints at the complex function of the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* for Alfonso and subsequently to the varying depictions of the Virgin within it. Alfonso wished for the Virgin to be pleased, and demonstrates his love for her through the popular troubadour style, but there is an undertone of desperation in the prologue. It does not employ the same boastful language as Prologue A (as discussed in the previous chapter) where Alfonso communicates to the readers the successful conquests of his reign and the newly gained Muslim territories. Instead, Prologue B is almost a plea to the Virgin to protect his tenuous reign as she has done with past Christian rulers. It is this sense of past and present co-existing in the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* that can be viewed as a contributing factor in Alfonso's use of older stories and iconography in the few tales referencing Byzantium.

The main focus of the *Cantigas de Santa Maria's* over four hundred poems seems to be on the more banal everyday events of the lay person, so much so that some scholars have warned the researcher not to view the complete manuscript as a politically charged piece of propaganda:

²⁷Ibid., p. 2.

“When examining the part played by Marian images in medieval society, however, I believe that it would be a mistake to overemphasize the greed of ecclesiastical authorities or the political ambitions of secular ones. Generally, in the CSM we encounter lay people whose interaction with statues of the Virgin enhances their personal agency and even enables them to bypass the clergy. In the CSM, individuals voluntarily approach the Heavenly Queen, seated on her throne, as if soliciting the favours of a benign monarch. Significantly, in the CSM, lay people play an active and participatory role in religious life largely through their involvement with images of the Virgin.”²⁸

There exists within the manuscript however, a handful of poems that scholars have noted for their apparently direct address to the contemporary viewer. Given the quasi-biographical nature of the manuscript, in that it illustrates major events in Alfonso’s life (such as the depiction of the King’s near death experiences, contemporary issues surrounding treacherous nobles, past events of his family, etc...), the positioning of messages about the patron and his values becomes obvious and the seemingly “benign” monarch’s solicitation of favours begins to communicate an underlying political message.

In her doctoral dissertation entitled “The Role of the Female Guide in Medieval Portraits of Monarchy”, Nhora Lucia Serrano proposed that the miniatures in the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* contain messages of political legitimacy, in the context of Alfonso X’s very ambitious goal of becoming Holy Roman Emperor. She singles out strategies found in a few illuminations in the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* that communicate a political message of appropriation and re-writing of the past. Serrano specifically analyses *cantiga* 95 and 96, discussing how Alfonso inserts himself as Gabriel in the Annunciation and, by doing so, essentially re-writes the past and inserts

²⁸Jackson, Deirdre. *Saint and Simulacra: Images of the Virgin in the Cantigas de Santa Maria of Alfonso X*. London: University of London, 2002, p. 28.

himself as the herald of the king of kings.²⁹ Serrano suggests that a few of the illuminations in the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* serve Alfonso's, grander political agenda: "...what is innovative for the Alfonsine scriptorium is that within its historical discourses is an interpretation of Alfonso as the just and rightful heir to the Holy Roman Empire. By having the past set the stage and argue the case for Alfonso's legitimacy, the historical portraits of Alfonso reveal the Learned King's insatiable appetite for recognition not only for himself but also for his kingdoms."³⁰

Alfonso's ambition to become Holy Roman Emperor is well documented throughout the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*. Several of the illuminations and miracles are dedicated to the monarch's efforts and adventures in obtaining his ultimate goal. Alfonso began his campaign to become Emperor after the death of William of Holland in 1256.³¹ Claiming legitimacy through his mother's Swabian bloodlines,³² Alfonso underwent years of papal campaigning to bolster his claims.³³ Overlooked twice, for Richard of Cornwall in 1257 and Rudolf of Hapsburg in 1275 (after Richard's death),³⁴ Alfonso's dream of becoming Holy Roman Emperor was achieved only through the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*. Joseph O'Callaghan states: "...Alfonso intended to broadcast his message – that is, his ideology – insofar as possible, and to attempt to reach the entire social structure of his realm. And what better way than the use of drama, the most apt tool

²⁹Serrano, Nhora Lucia. *The Role of the Female Guide in Medieval Portraits of Monarchy: A Study of Medieval Historiography, Translatio Studii et Imperii and Illuminations in Alfonso X, El Sabio's Cantigas de Santa Maria and Christine de Pizan's Epistre D'Othea*. Madison: University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2006, p. 9.

³⁰Ibid., p. 7.

³¹Robert I. Burns, ed. *Emperor of Culture: Alfonso X the Learned of Castile and His Thirteenth-Century Renaissance*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990, p. 25.

³²Serrano, p. 20.

³³Alfonso had the support of the Pisano nobility as well as support from Marseilles. Ibid., p. 20.

³⁴Burns, p. 25.

for indoctrination, aided by the pleasure obtained through the threefold impact of presentation – visual, verbal, and musical?”³⁵

It is precisely this personal and ideological messages that Serrano sees in Alfonso’s re-writing the past to communicate his ideology. History thus serves as a tool for Alfonso to legitimize his possible future through the Virgin. She claims that through the process of ekphrasis (the speaking out through a created image),³⁶ Alfonso was able to assert his messages through the illuminations: “...because and in spite of Alfonso’s desire, ekphrasis provokes an editorial and creative process that attempts to inscribe a false memory through a novel interpretation and assemblage of the past.”³⁷ It is this notion of ekphrasis and the re-writing and framing of history through the vivid storytelling that is of particular interest when examining some of the miracles written from a Byzantine context, or taken completely from a Byzantine source.

Cantiga 264 (Appendix C) is one such example of a Byzantine miracle that seems to communicate a message that corresponds to Alfonso’s political agenda. The miracle specifically references the Avar attack of 626 on Constantinople; the very attack that the *Akathistos* hymn had so successfully recounted and captivated audiences over six centuries earlier. Without employing the imperial language of the original hymn, *cantiga* 264 relays the miracle of the icon of the Virgin defending the great city. The *cantiga* emphasizes the importance of history and the power imbued in the icon through its verisimilitude³⁸ by stating:

³⁵Ibid., p. 26.

³⁶Serrano, p. 33.

³⁷Ibid.

³⁸Deirdre Jackson. “Sheids of Faith: Apotropaic Images of the Virgin in Alfonso X’s *Cantigas de Santa Maria*,” *RACAR*, vol. 24, no. 2 (1997), p. 39.

“Therefore, the Christians, in their great plight, went to the image which Saint Luke had painted of the Glorious Virgin, who had already performed great miracles and continued to perform them.

This portrait was skilfully painted on wood and depicted Her as a woman of great beauty. It looked exactly like the Virgin.

Before the Virgin died, it was painted in Her likeness in order to destroy the sect of the Jews and of the devil, who always lies in wait for us so that we may fall in error and folly.”³⁹

This sense of historical legitimacy through the image of the Virgin is extended to the sense of historical legitimacy of the story itself. Much like Serrano’s argument that Alfonso, through the use of images, reinterprets the past in order to lend his reign and ideology legitimacy, *cantiga* 264 (and as we will see eventually, *cantiga* 99) demonstrates a similar tactic.

The Virgin’s ability to conquer Muslims was clearly a power that Alfonso would have invoked in his efforts to reconquer Spain. As a symbol, she would have stirred Christian Spain’s spirit of reconquest through her perceived ability to triumph over heretics and to physically protect and defend the faithful against attacks. As previously mentioned, the majority of the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* seems to focus on everyday activities of lay people in the depiction of relationships and familiar activities such as farming or beekeeping, alongside the personal and factual events in the life of the King; however, a larger political statement is made in a few of the *cantigas*, such as *cantiga* 264. Deirdre Jackson states:

“Accounts describing the Virgin’s defence of Christendom against the Muslim foe evidently struck a chord throughout Western Europe since they are among the most often repeated miracles of the Virgin. Nevertheless, given the proximity of Muslims to Christians in the Spanish Kingdoms, and Alfonso X’s attempts to consolidate the Muslim territories gained by his father, Fernando III, it is likely that such stories had a particular appeal within his court circle. Moreover, the

³⁹ Alfonso X, p. 320.

message that the Virgin was more than able to defend the Christians of the Spanish Kingdoms against their Muslim foes suited Alfonso X's political agenda."⁴⁰

Cantiga 264 is one an example of a handful of *cantigas* that demonstrate Alfonso's reframing and interpretation of the past through the appropriation of Byzantine miracles. Although this specific miracle was popular across most of Europe at this time, the idea of a protective figure offering salvation to righteous Christians against the Muslims would have resonated amongst the Spanish nobility. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Alfonso undertook a major campaign to repopulate the recently reconquered territories of Salé, Niebla, El Puerto, Granada, Jerez and Arcos.⁴¹ Alfonso made great strides in "Christianizing" Spain through many colonizing measures such as converting many of the existing mosques into churches dedicated to Mary,⁴² repopulating the territory with Christians and replacing Muslim vassal kings with Christian governors.⁴³ For Alfonso, Mary as a symbol was much more than a figure to recite love poems to and praise for her womanly ideals. As a symbol, she served as a comforting reminder to Alfonso and his court of their religious right over the Muslims. "Installed as the saintly patron of converted space, Mary symbolically defined and fixed the frontier in defiance of the realities of the all-too-fluid nature of boundaries between Muslim and Christian territory..."⁴⁴

By propagating the idea of a protective Virgin through architecture and illuminations, Alfonso instilled a sense of legitimacy to the reconquest as well as quelling the fears of the

⁴⁰Jackson, p. 90.

⁴¹Lomax, p. 161.

⁴²Berkhofer, p. 266.

⁴³Lomax, p. 161.

⁴⁴Farmer and Rosenwein, pp. 206-207.

families living on the frontier between Christian and Muslim Spain. Peter Linehan opines that the *Cantigas* “present Alfonso X praising Marian miracles and thereby promoting the places in which such wonders had been wrought. An effect of such promotion could be to attract settlers into the vast undermanned areas which had been reconquered – but only in a formal sense reconquered – during recent decades. *Romeros* [pilgrims] were *pobladores* [settlers] by another name, and *pobladores* were urgently needed to achieve the permanent reconquest.”⁴⁵ As such, *Cantiga 264* and its accompanying imagery of a protective and powerful Virgin would have reassured and motivated new *pobladores*. The story of the Virgin Mary defending a city in the midst of Muslim invaders would have reminded the contemporary viewer of the past destruction wrought upon non-believers and, as a figure of veneration, the protection she offered. Constantinople served as an excellent example for Alfonso to demonstrate that, when faced with a powerful enemy, a righteous Christian ruler can triumph over his enemy, no matter the circumstances.

The use of the image of the Virgin triumphing over heretics further established a link between imperial Byzantium’s use of the image of the Virgin and Alfonso’s imperialistic rhetorical claims. To return to Photios’ Easter sermon heralding the return of the Virgin in the apse of Hagia Sophia, the image of the Virgin was a powerful tool for conveying a message of a Christian victory over heretical image destroyers:

“Look at the beauty and brightness of which the church had been deprived. That was the action of an insolent Jewish hand, an act of hatred; this representation is a gift of divine love, as is the veneration of the holy icons. The destruction of icons comes from uncontrolled and foul hatred. Those people stripped the church, the

⁴⁵Deirdre Jackson. “Sheids of Faith: Apotropaic Images of the Virgin in Alfonso X’s *Cantigas de Santa Maria*,” *RACAR*, vol. 24, no. 2 (1997), p. 40.

bride of Christ, of her ornaments, and wounded and scarred her, and wanted to leave her naked, unsightly and wounded – imitating Jewish madness... No one can disapprove of teaching through icons – unless he has rejected the message of the Gospels. Just as speech is transmitted through hearing, so a form is imprinted on the tablets of the soul through the sight and it conveys to those whose understanding is not perverted by heresy a representation of knowledge.... in the case of the Virgin and Child, seeing rather than hearing will allow anyone better to understand the great mystery of the incarnation. The memory is most effective when acting through the sight.”⁴⁶

Here Photios is clearly emphasizing the efficacy of images, specifically the image of the Virgin, to convey an ideological message. In this context, the Virgin represented imperial power and legitimization. As a symbol she signified the end of Iconoclasm and marked the victory of pious emperors over heretical emperors.⁴⁷ For Alfonso, these ideas of imperial legitimization and victory would have served as a two-fold, effective communicative device. The image of a victorious Virgin fulfilled the need for a symbol of Christian victory over Muslims. The image of the Virgin also enforced a sense of imperial endorsement. For Byzantine emperors the image of the Virgin was linked with imperial rule. She was also the symbol of triumph over the heretical Iconoclasts as her image adorned monuments closely linked to the emperor (e.g. Hagia Sophia). These concepts would have served to enforce Alfonso’s reconquest program as well convey a sense of the heavenly endorsement enjoyed by previous imperial rulers, thereby enhancing his claims to the title to Holy Roman Emperor.

As Alfonso established a historical precedence of a protective Virgin in Constantinople (*cantiga* 264), he further propagates the idea of the Virgin protecting against Muslim attack by appropriating this story from the past and re-telling it in a more contemporary context. As

⁴⁶ Cormack, pp. 149-150.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 151.

mentioned before, the practice of copying Latin originals and altering the tale to appeal to a local audience was employed throughout medieval Europe, and the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* can be seen as a product of such a practice. In *cantiga* 264, Alfonso seems to have promoted the idea of a protective Virgin justified by historians, while *cantiga* 99 was updated to a more Spanish setting.

Cantiga 99 recounts a similar attack by Muslims on a Spanish Christian town. Here the Spanish Christian town in question is being attacked by an invading Muslim force complete with horses, tents and weapons (fig. 3.9). The accompanying poem, relatively short, describes how a statue of Mary defended the town:

“How Holy Mary thwarted a great band of Moors who entered a city of Christians and tried to destroy their holy statues.

Those who attempt to do harm to the One of whom God was born must be considered very imprudent folk.

On this theme I wish to describe and relate for you a miracle which will give you much pleasure when you have heard it and for which you should be grateful to the Virgin.

A great army of moors went to capture a city of Christians and break down the holy place and destroy the altar where God was worshipped.

and take the statues from the walls and demolish all they could reach in their wicked fury. They hastily set about their destruction.

They saw a statue there which appeared more beautiful than the others. The angry mob immediately tried to destroy it,

but their attempt was in vain. The Mother of Him Who died on the cross would not suffer them to do it. Because of this, that cursed people were defeated.

They tried to climb up to break the statue and get it down, but failed. This was proven because the statue bore no mark of having been touched or damaged.

They all thought they were going to die there and realized that God was angered that they should try to desecrate that most holy place.’’⁴⁸

Although there is no specific reference to the Constantinople miracle, the plot is the same. Under pressure of a destructive Muslim force, a beautiful statue of the Virgin was able to defend herself against the attackers and subsequently instil a fear of a vengeful God upon the image destroyers. What is emphasized in *cantiga* 99 and *cantiga* 264 is the beauty of the Virgin and how the image itself lends a certain sanctity to the city.

In the illuminations of this *cantiga*, the statue of Mary is depicted as *Maria Regina*, a Byzantine Queen (fig. 3.10). Her beautiful icon refers to Byzantine images of Mary, in contrast to other illuminations where she is depicted as a lifelike Gothic full figure participating first hand in the unfolding scene. There is no interaction between Mother and Son as Mary sits stoically upon her throne inspiring awe in her would-be destroyers. She is treated with royal colours such as blue in her halo, red in her dress and pearl-like dot contour ornaments surrounding her and her child. The illuminations evoke a sense of tradition through iconography and through her role of protector. Through the apparent appropriation of the iconography and story of the Avar attack of 626 and regionalizing it into a context that would appeal to his audience, Alfonso sent a message of historical precedence and legitimacy to the very real and contemporary issues faced by both the nobility and the families who were dealing with the prospect of such an invasion and endorsed Mary as an effective defender. Alfonso carefully re-tells the past and interprets it in a

⁴⁸Alfonso, p. 125.

new way to help indoctrinate the viewer of the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* of his aggressive reconquest program of colonization. Deirdre Jackson states:

“By parading with the Virgin’s image through the streets of Seville and presenting the wonderworking object to his Christian subjects, Alfonso X could hope to win their approbation and loyalty, both of which were wanting in the latter years of his reign when his kingdoms were torn apart by the conflict over the succession to the throne instigated by his rebellious son, Sancho. In addition, Alfonso X’s engagement in the cult of images may have served to define him as a Christian King par excellence, fighting to uphold the true faith in face of opposition from the Muslim ‘infidel’.”⁴⁹

Although there is no specific reference to the city in which this miracle takes place, when one observes the accompanying miniatures to the text, one perceives a distinct Spanish flavour to the setting. If you compare *cantiga* 99 to *cantiga* 34 (another poem in the context of Byzantium) certain geographical references can be discerned.

Cantiga 34 tells the tale of the image of Mary being stolen by a Jew and discarded in a latrine. The end result is an obvious victory for Mary as her image remains unscathed and, through a miracle, emerges from the latrine smelling of balsam and “spices from the East”.⁵⁰ The ill-fated and ugly Jew is depicted parading the beautiful icon around the city of Constantinople (fig. 3.11). Although much can be discussed about the way that Jews are portrayed throughout the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* (this topic has been a fruitful subject of research for many scholars and is too rich to delve into here), once again the beauty of the Byzantine icon is stressed: “There was in the street a well-made image of Holy Mary, painted on wood. It was so beautiful that even if one examined more than a hundred, not another to equal it

⁴⁹Jackson, *Saint and Simulacra*, p. 199.

⁵⁰Alfonso X, p. 45.

could be found.”⁵¹ Similar to *cantiga* 99, Mary and Son are depicted as a typical Byzantine icon, static in their regal pose and painted in rich colours. However, the architecture that serves as a backdrop to this miracle is distinctive in the illuminator’s efforts to demonstrate a foreign setting.

The illumination displays architecture that is more reminiscent of the *Shah Abbas Bible* than of other architecture found throughout the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*. The tops of many of the buildings of Constantinople in the image are adorned with decorative spheres (as seen in the *Shah Abbas Bible* architectural details) and the famous crenellated walls of Constantinople are clearly articulated at the bottom of the miniature. The depiction of Constantinople as a large, walled city is in stark contrast to the Spanish town in *cantiga* 99. In the latter the Spanish locality of the city illustrated is suggested by one of the most distinctive Spanish architectural features, the prominent Mozarabic horseshoe arch (fig. 3.12). Even when compared to a miniature that showcases Constantinople in the same scale as *cantiga* 99, regional differences can be seen easily in the architecture.

Cantiga 28 (fig. 3.13) recounts the tale of St. Germanos fighting the Moors in Constantinople in the eighth century. Following the popular tale that Chartres adopts to promote their most prized relic, the Virgin’s mantle descends from heaven and protects the city. The city is depicted with sharp and angular features such as the pinnacles of the towers, small windows and tiled roofs. Unlike *cantiga* 99’s horseshoe arches, smooth domes and quatrefoil windows, the illustrators have defined a separation of space and time by carefully staging the miracles in

⁵¹Ibid., p. 45.

cities with iconographical cues that would aid the viewer in understanding the context of the miracle.

The existence of a more regionalized version of the seventh-century attack against Constantinople suggests a purpose behind the inclusion of the more direct telling of the popular tale. Both *cantiga* 99 and *cantiga* 264 seem to demonstrate a sense of legitimization of Alfonso's rule through the comparison to Byzantium, the message being that the Virgin will protect Spanish Christians just as she had the Christians of Constantinople as their cause is just and noble. Alfonso speaks through the image of the Virgin as the Byzantine *Maria Regina*. By proliferating the image of the Virgin as a powerful protector of cities through the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* Alfonso seems to suggest that not only will Mary protect the newly re-colonized Christian territories, but Alfonso, like the Virgin, will also protect his kingdom. Alfonso retells and reinvents past events in a more contemporary setting, one that would have resonated throughout his courtly audience. Although the Alfonsine illuminators depict more up-to-date Western images of a lifelike and demure Virgin, the specific poems that create a connection between past and present seem to deliberately employ a more traditional, Eastern Virgin – a powerful Virgin known not for her compassion, but for her military might, protectiveness and fortitude. Deirdre Jackson observes: “Although the miraculous events reported in the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* are said to have taken place in widely different settings, separated by centuries, the gap between them is bridged by the Virgin whose intervention is ongoing throughout history. The juxtaposition of standard and Iberian legends within the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* impressed

upon members of Alfonso X's circle that the Virgin who had defended Christians in the distant past was just as vital a force in thirteenth-century Castile-León."⁵²

Alfonso X's politically savvy as a ruler has been noted by many scholars. Frequently overlooked in the past as an unsuccessful ruler because his final goal of being crowned Holy Roman Emperor was never realized,⁵³ his significant contribution to the arts, science, music, literature and law are now studied extensively by scholars from a wide range of fields. Following many artistic and literary trends of his day, Alfonso compiled a Marian miracle collection unlike any before (and likely any after). The *Cantigas de Santa Maria* and its over four hundred poems serve as a time capsule of thirteenth-century common day practices, artistic and musical trends, as well as societal and political issues. Being a secular ruler and an avid historian, Alfonso would have no doubt been aware of the powerful nature of the Virgin Mary as a symbol of power. Although primarily a religious figure, Mary served as a symbol for secular victory and power beginning in Byzantium and it is that power that is called upon by Alfonso in the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*. The majority of the *cantigas*, while still sending a message of Mary's power and intercessory abilities, would have served a more entertaining, humorous and mundane purpose. However, the inclusion of a handful of Byzantine miracles, such as *cantiga* 264, sent a politically charged message and the accompanying iconography would not have been lost on the contemporary viewer. Through these miracles, Alfonso communicated the idea of historical legitimacy to his most costly and controversial efforts to repopulate the frontier between Christian and Muslim Spain. In an effort to quell the fears of his court and to reinforce

⁵²Jackson, *Shields of Faith*, p. 45.

⁵³Burns, p. 4.

his political legitimacy to rebellious nobles, Alfonso called upon the Byzantine *Maria Regina* to propagate his ideas of righteousness, protectiveness and victory over the scourge of Spain, Constantinople and Christianity: the Muslim.

The cult of Mary was a powerful propagandistic tool for secular leaders such as Alfonso X to proliferate ideas of religious and political legitimacy in a historically turbulent time for Spain. The *Cantigas de Santa Maria* is one brilliant example of the many manifestations of this enduring cult that communicates Christian ideals that still resonate with Christians to this day.

FIGURES



Figure 3.1 - Beatus of Liebana: Scriptorium in the Tower of Monastery of Tavera, 1220. Pierpont Morgan Library, ms. 429, fol. 183. Source: ARTstor Slide Gallery, University of California, San Diego.

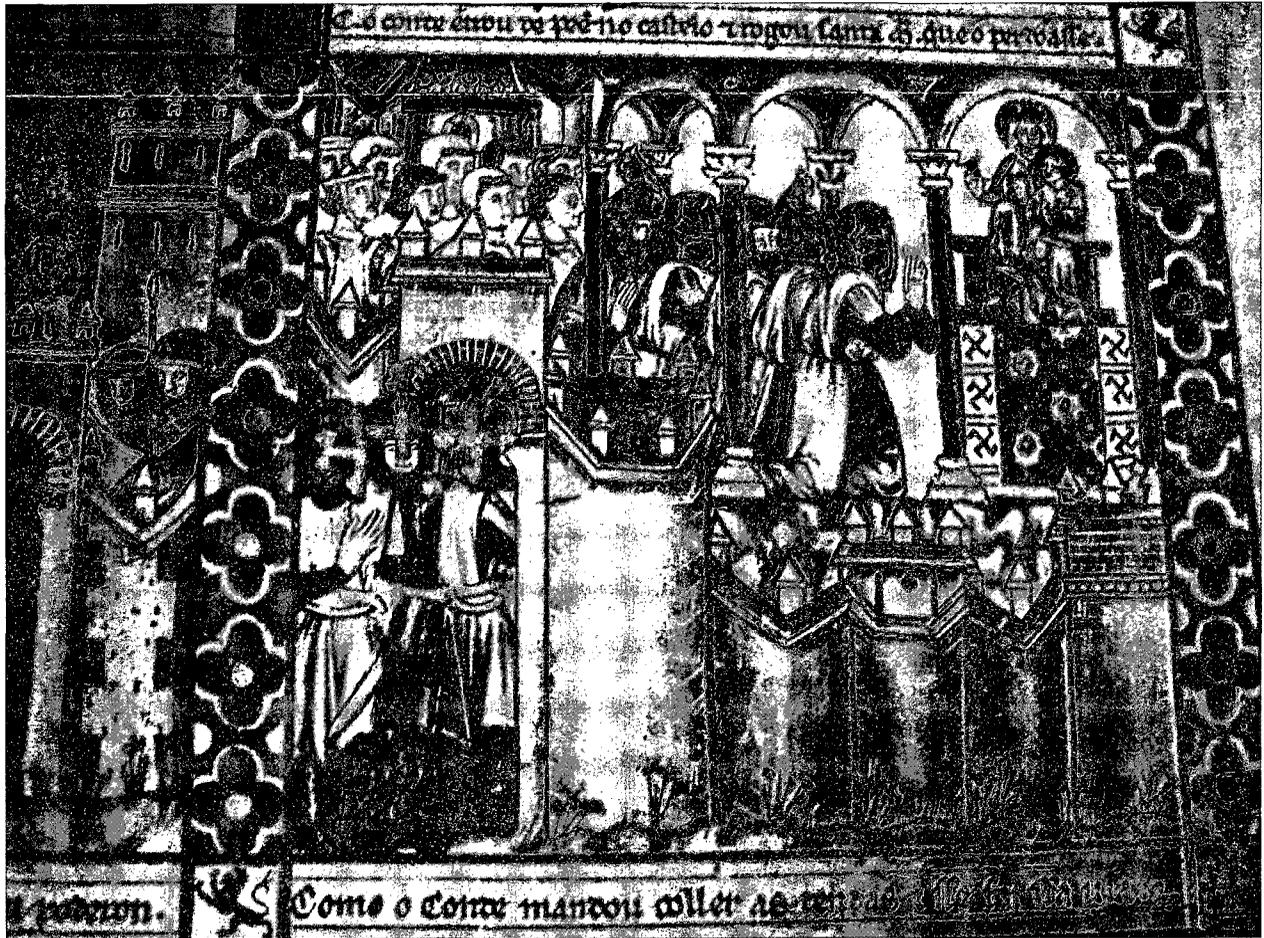


Figure 3.2 – Cantigas de Santa Maria: det., Cantiga 51, *Arrow Intercepted*, panel 4. Escorial, Biblioteca Real MS T.I.1.

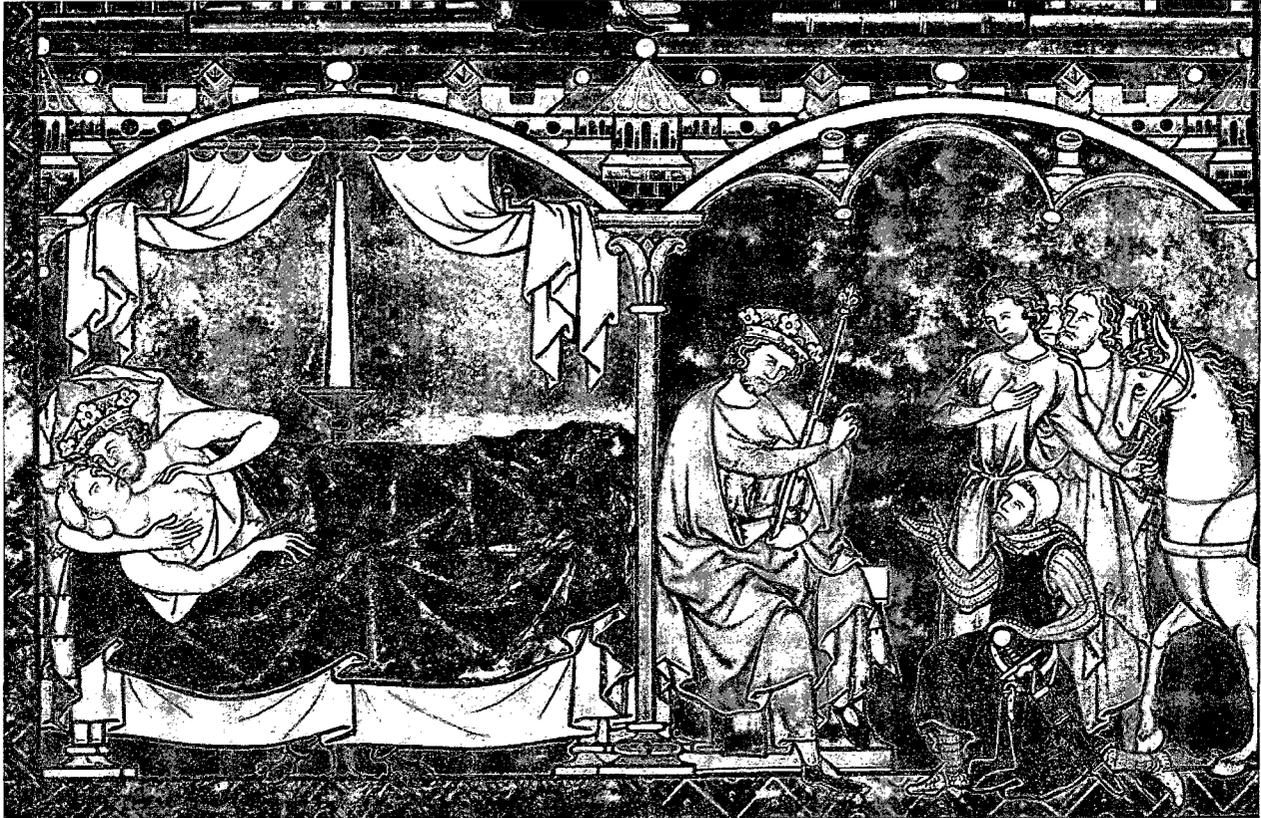


Figure 3.3 – Shah Abbas Picture Bible: det., [L] *David commits adultery with Bathsheba*; [R] *David sends for Bathsheba's husband, Uriah the Hittite*, fol. 41v, c. 1250. Pierpont Morgan Library, MS 638. Source: Art Images for College Teaching.



Figure 3.4 – Cantigas de Santa Maria: det., Cantiga 42, *Ring on the Finger of the Mary-Image*, panel 5. Escorial, Biblioteca Real MS T.I.1.



Figure 3.5 – Cantigas de Santa Maria: det., Cantiga 99, *Saracens Cannot Deface Mary-Image*, panel 3. Escorial, Biblioteca Real MS T.I.1.

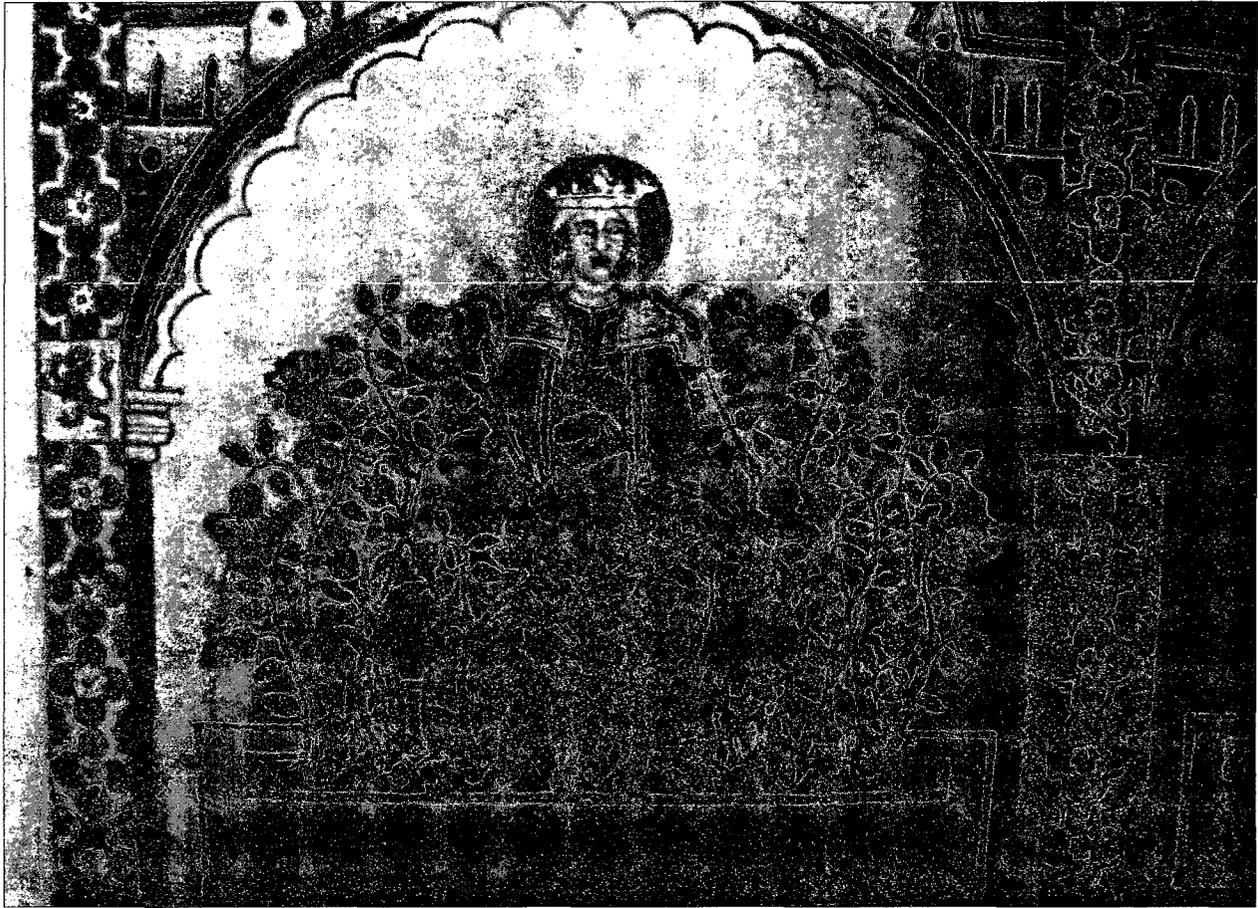


Figure 3.6: Cantigas de Santa Maria: det., Cantiga 10, *Rosa das Rosas*, panel 1. Escorial, Biblioteca Real MS T.I.1.

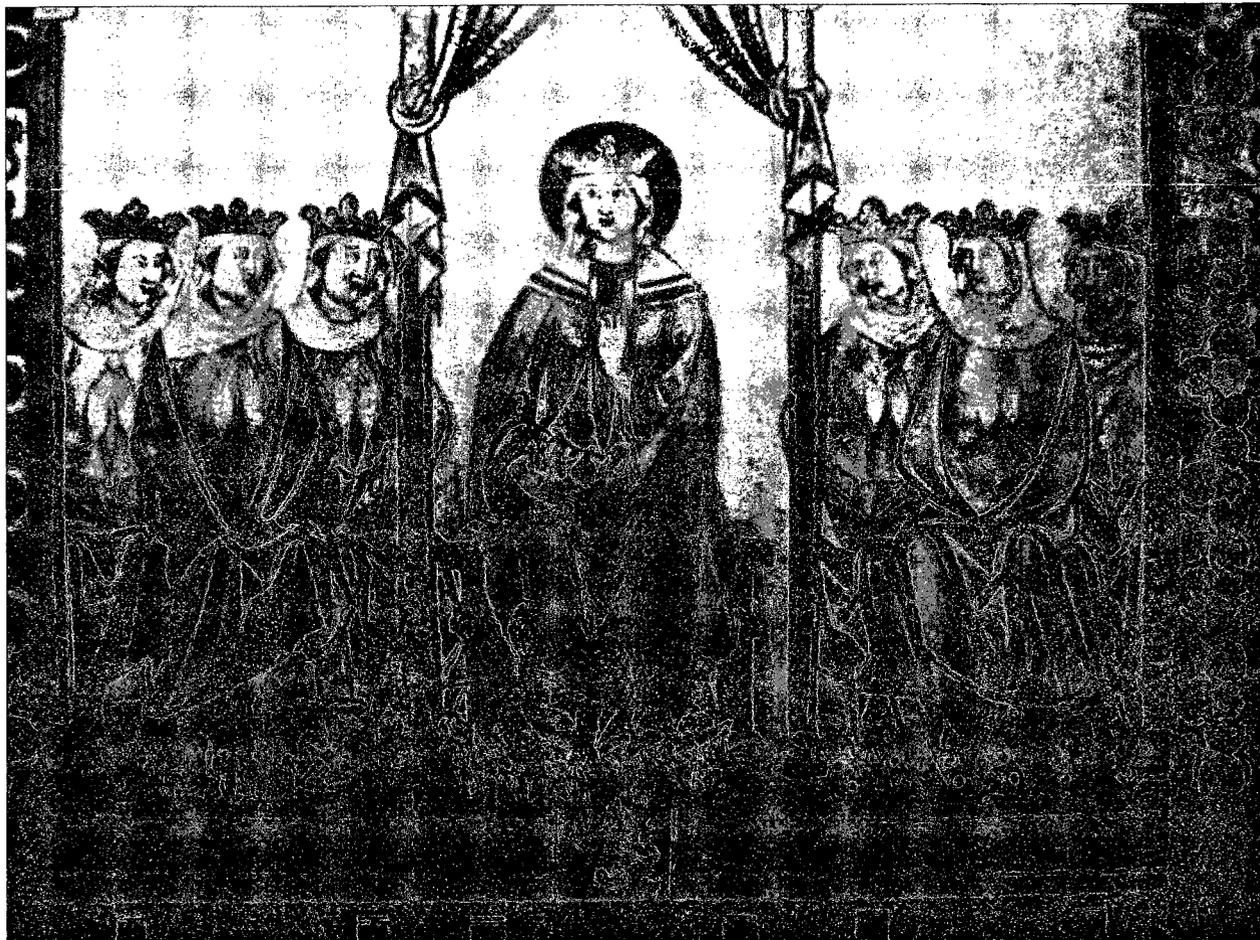


Figure 3.7: Cantigas de Santa Maria: det., Cantiga 10, *Rosa das Rosas*, panel 3. Escorial, Biblioteca Real MS T.I.1.

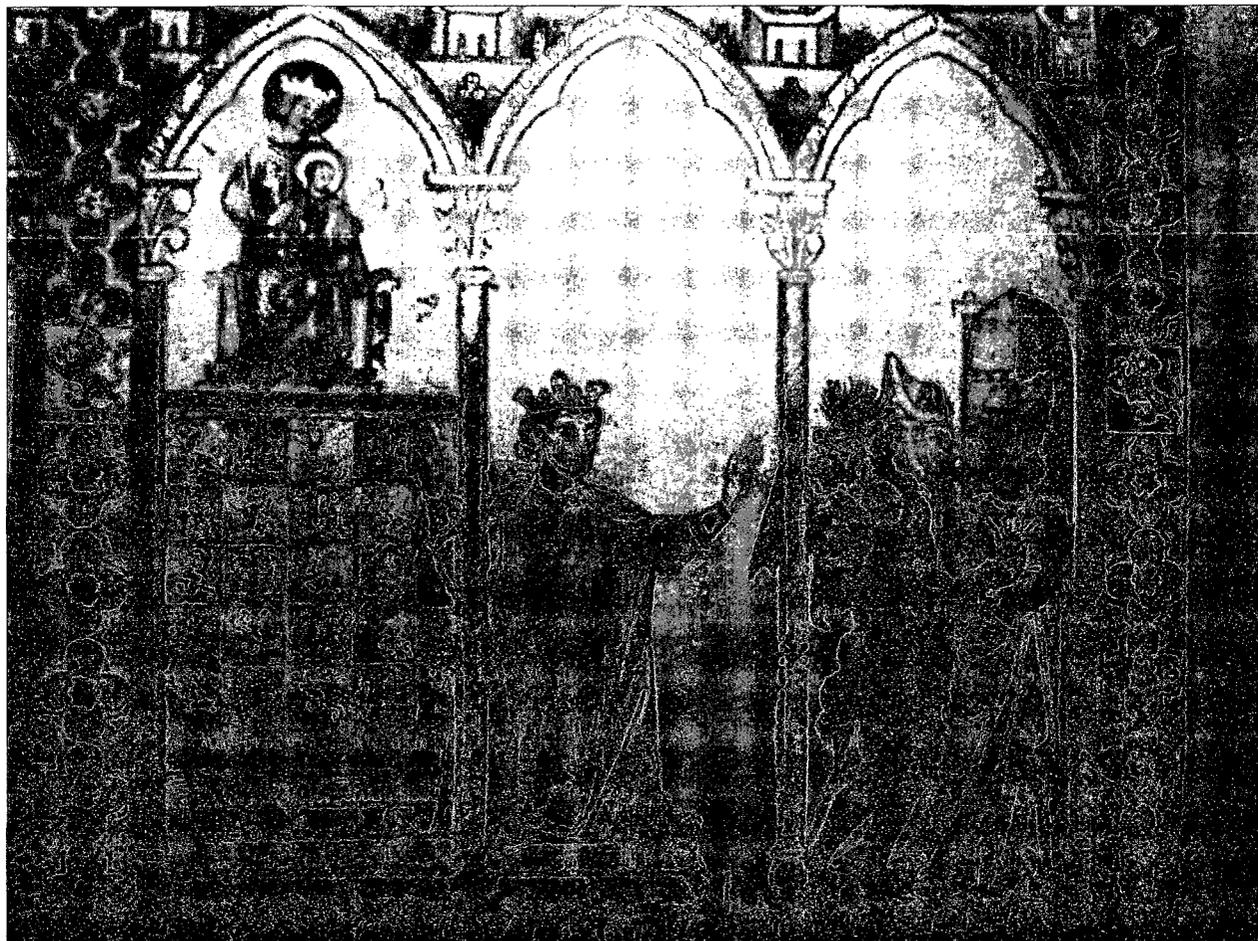


Figure 3.8 – *Cantigas de Santa Maria*: det., Cantiga 10, *Rosa das Rosas*, panel 6. Escorial, Biblioteca Real MS T.I.1.

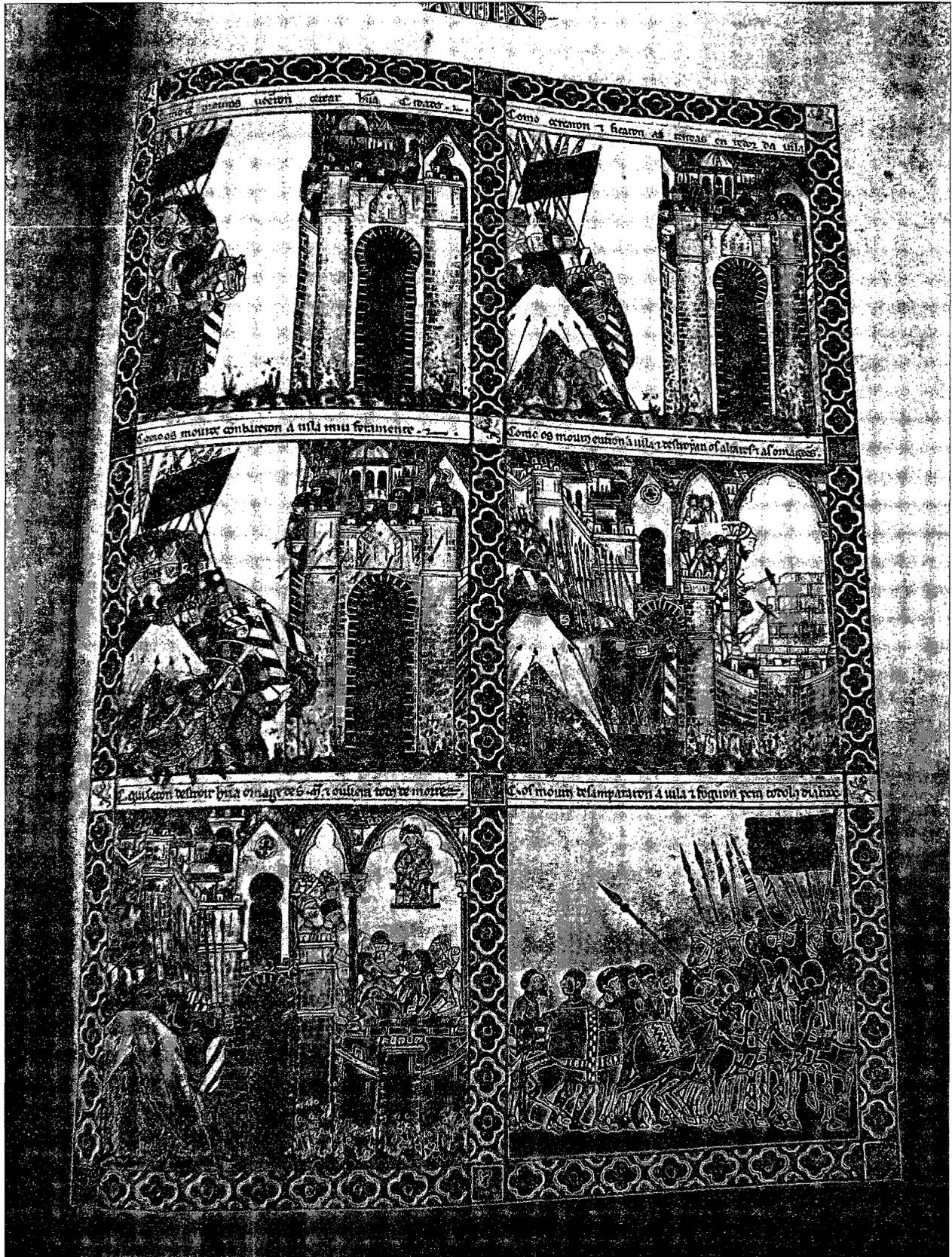


Figure 3.9 –Cantigas de Santa María: Cantiga 99, *Saracens cannot Deface Mary-Image*. Escorial, Biblioteca Real MS T.I.1.



Figure 3.10 – Cantigas de Santa Maria: det., Cantiga 99, *Saracens cannot Deface Mary-Image*, panel 3. Escorial, Biblioteca Real MS T.I.1).



Figure 3.11 – Cantigas de Santa Maria: det., Cantiga 34, *The Virgin's Image Insulted (latrine)*, panel 3. Escorial, Biblioteca Real MS T.I.1.

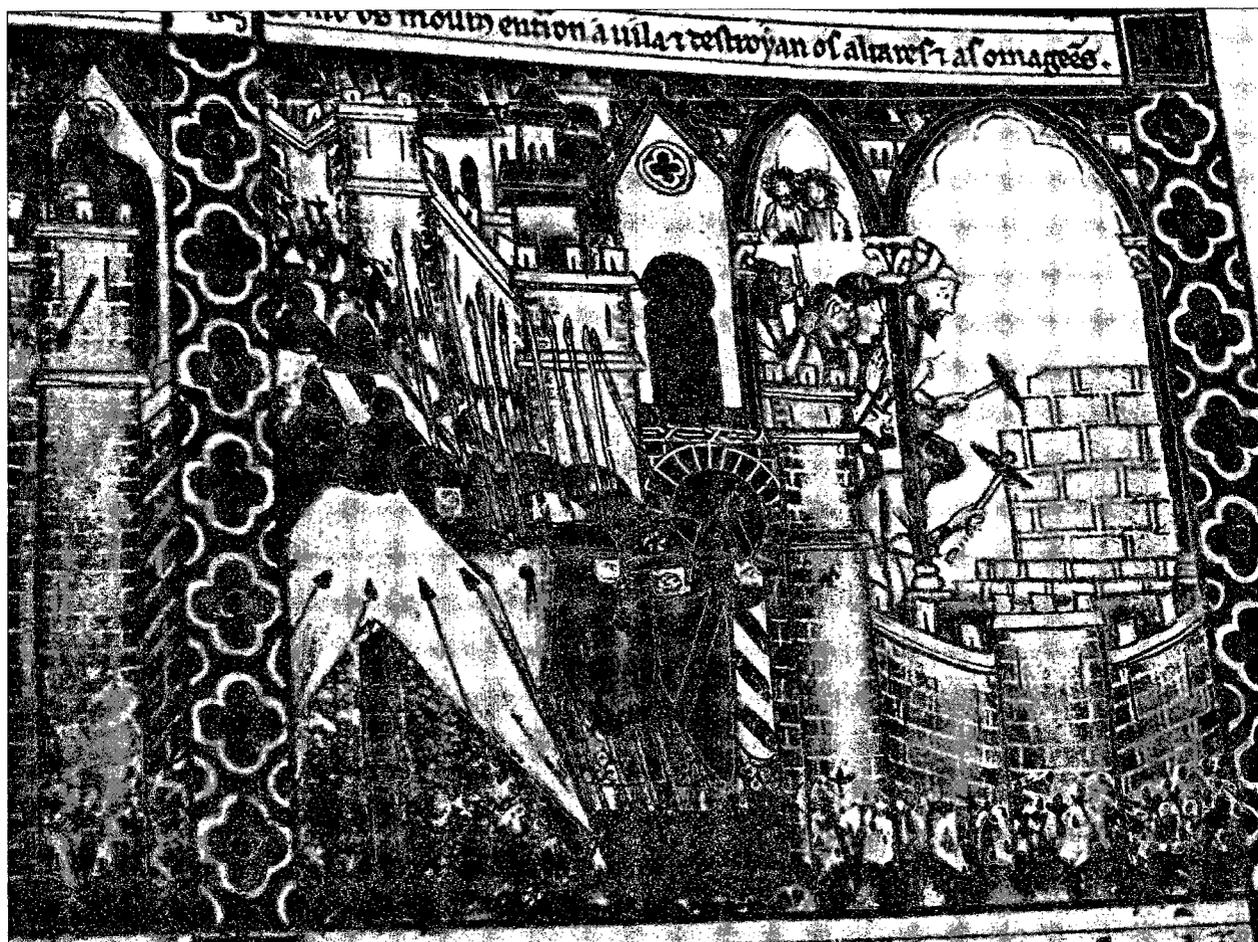


Figure 3.12 – Cantigas de Santa Maria: det., Cantiga 99, *Saracens cannot Deface Mary-Image*, panel 4. Escorial, Biblioteca Real MS T.I.I.

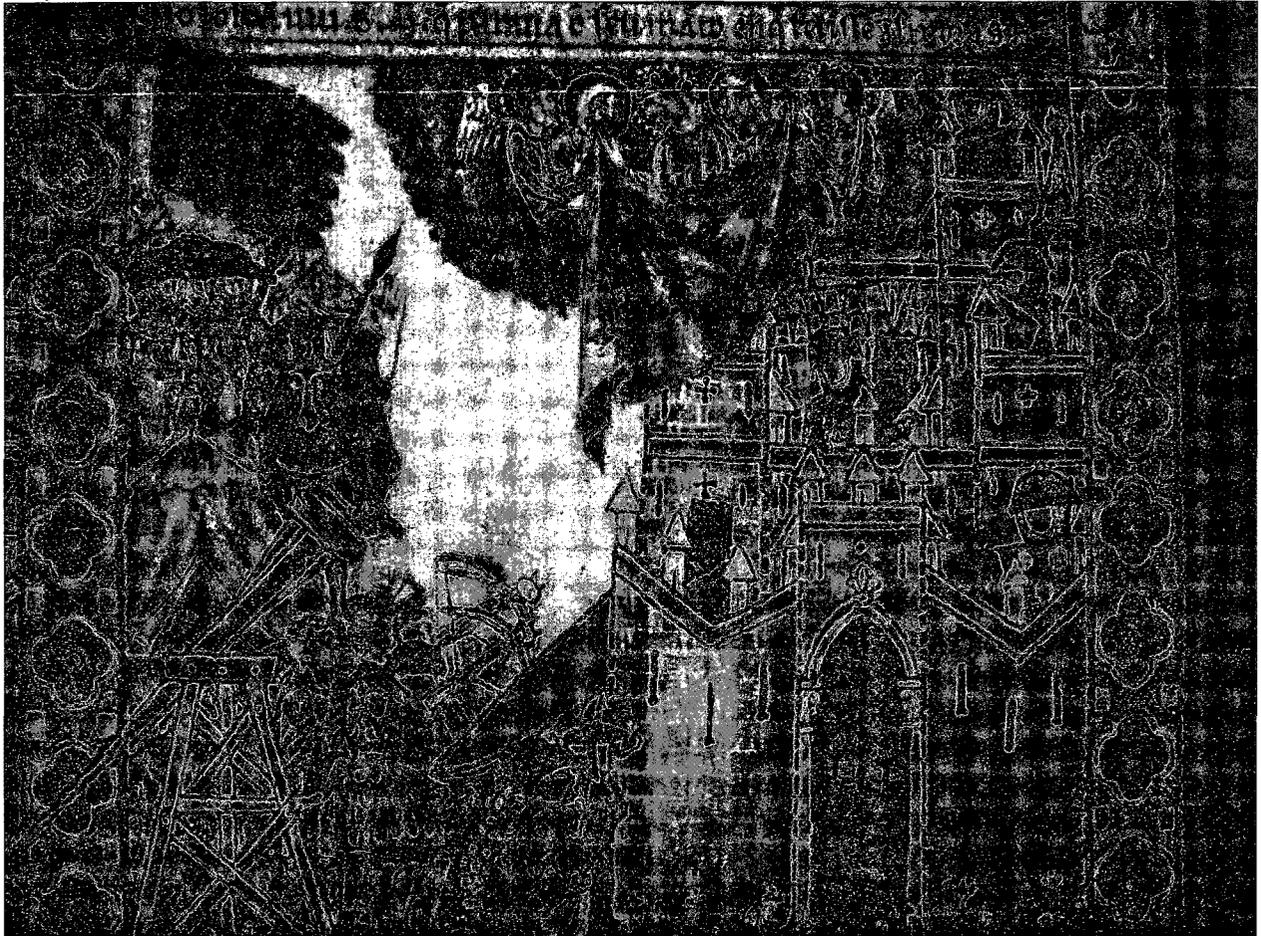


Figure 3.13 – Cantigas de Santa Maria: det., Cantiga 28, *Siege of Constantinople (Mantle as Shield)*, panel 4. Escorial, Biblioteca Real MS T.I.1.

CONCLUSION

The evolution of Marian iconography has been an ongoing and extensive process since the advent of the cult in the first few centuries of Christianity. Through Mary, many leaders, religious and secular alike, have asserted their legitimacy through the dynamic and diverse visual vocabulary associated with the Virgin. Although not always the favoured iconography, the cult of Mary stood the test of time, adapting and evolving into a myriad of roles to address the fears, desires and hopes of Christendom.

As a symbol, the Virgin Mary had universal appeal. In the tradition of many earlier female goddesses, she was the vessel that would signal the redemption of mankind. Relegated to the margins in both early Christian theology and art, Mary's subordinate role allowed for her Son to take centre stage in the proliferation of the Christian ideology of salvation. Through the endorsement of the Council of Ephesus in the fifth century, Marian iconography evolved, communicating her new found power as *Theotokos*. Now considered to be the bearer of a God, the power of Mary's image did not go unnoticed by secular leaders. Not only was she a symbol of love, purity and beauty, her new status was also effective in invoking a sense of power and righteous victory. Dressed in the guise of a contemporary Byzantine empress, depictions of Mary became lavish and royal compared to her previously humble representations as a mother. Serving as a bridge between humanity and Christ, yet remaining accessible through her motherly compassion, Mary was a figure that became synonymous with divine endorsement and, therefore, imbued with a sense of legitimacy and power.

Although surviving the iconoclast period of the eighth century, Marian iconography was replaced with a new dialogue that addressed the insecurities and social instability of Christian

Europe. Millennial fever and Apocalyptic imagery of a judging Christ and the ghastly horrors of hell carved in numerous Romanesque church facades were effective in inspiring awe and enforcing the benefits of Christianity. However, as Romanesque ideals gave way for the Gothic spirit of humanity, compassion, and love, Mary once again assumed her role as Queen of Heaven, offering salvation to the devoted.

For the majority of Early Christianity, Spain had remained a marginal Christian community embroiled in the constant threat of the encroaching Muslim faith. However, Spain soon became an integral stronghold of the Christian church as the Crusades became Catholicism's newest platform for expansion. Spain had also previously been relatively autonomous from the rest of Europe, artistically speaking, developing a unique syncretic visual vocabulary that spoke to its multicultural population and influences. As Crusading popes turned their eye to Spain's past successes against Muslim invasion and their strategic geographic situation between western Europe and a Muslim dominated Africa, alliances became advantageous for both continental European leaders and Spanish Christian leaders. Conformity was seen as an assertion of those alliances and, as a result, many traditional Spanish practices gave way to a more homogenous, pan-European culture. The liturgy underwent reform in order to conform to Latin practices, and art began to reflect the transmission of continental European influences.

Previous Spanish artistic modes of representation were unlike anything else produced in Christian Europe. While themes remained somewhat consistent with continental Europe (e.g. Apocalyptic imagery was popular in Spain as well), Spanish artists developed a unique style of abstract figures, "teardrop" eyes, vivid colours and colour blocking, as well as architectural

details that were distinctly Spanish. However, when contact with the rest of Europe became crucial to the permanent success of the reconquest, artistic representations as well as imagery became more homogenous with the rest of Europe.

One such representation that filtered from continental Europe that resonated amongst the Spanish population was the depiction of Mary as *Maria Regina* – the Queen of Heaven. This powerful representation of a beloved maternal Christian figure became a useful symbol for many Crusader Kings, Alfonso X being just one of many. Mary was the ideal paragon for the contemporary thirteenth-century man – she represented the ability to triumph over non-believers and represented the ideal woman, one to whom troubadours could dedicate their love songs, at once quelling the fears of the public and conforming to the literary themes.

The *Cantigas de Santa Maria* is a unique artistic episode of the cult of Mary as it expresses within one manifestation, a multitude of the Virgin's roles. She is the great love of Alfonso's life, as demonstrated by his profession in Prologue B as well as several *cantigas* (e.g. CSM 10) and she is a powerful intercessor capable and compassionate enough to spare the lives of everyone from the King to the layman labouring in the fields. However, it is when she is depicted as the Byzantine *Maria Regina* that she is able to communicate the King's ideology as well as address contemporary fears and societal issues.

By invoking an older iconography and miracles, Alfonso created a parallel between Constantinople (and the Byzantine victory over the Avars in the seventh century) and his contemporary kingdom of Castile and León. Through the *Cantigas de Santa Maria* (specifically *cantiga* 99 and *cantiga* 264), Alfonso simultaneously capitalizes on the popular trend of the Marian miracle compilation: he establishes a historical precedence for Marian protection of

Christians embroiled in the fight against Muslims, asserts the legitimacy of the reconquest, and conveys ideas of his rightful place as a ruler to his vindictive and scheming nobility. The depth of his piety was intended to be demonstrated through the production of the manuscript itself, enforcing the idea that if the Virgin protected past Christian rulers, she will continue to do so if the cause is just, and the leader righteous.

While we cannot possibly know the true intentions or the exact mindset of Alfonso X and his collaborators on the *Cantigas de Santa Maria*, this thesis explores the power that the symbol of the Virgin Mary would have conveyed to a contemporary thirteenth-century audience by understanding the theological and iconographical history of the cult of Mary. By tracing Alfonso's life and the historical context of Castile and León during this time, one can begin to understand the message that would have been conveyed to the viewer/listener of these miracles and the handful of Byzantine poems in a collection of otherwise almost entirely indigenous miracles. In this historically turbulent time for Spain these miracles would have addressed many of the concerns of Alfonso's court, ranging from the instability of his reign to the constant threat of Muslim invasion. This study has raised questions of the influence of a country responding to cross-cultural interactions and the subsequent iconography chosen by leaders to deal with those interactions and to continue to assert their culture in an increasingly homogeneous society. For Alfonso X, the cult of Mary was a dynamic platform in which he was able to follow in the literary and artistic trends of continental Europe (both past and contemporary trends) while maintaining distinctive Spanish characteristics. As she had in the past, Mary would protect those who are devoted to her and, through her love, the pious Christian could be assured of their eternal salvation.

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APPENDIX A

“Gentlefolk and friends, excellent company,
since God wished to bring you to this place,
should you still like to wait on me a little,
I would like to tell you of another miracle.

I would like to tell you of another miracle
that the Glorious One did, Star of the Sea,
if you will hear me, you will indeed swear
that you could not taste a better morsel.

In righteous times when truth was valued,
when no one would tell a lie for anything,
back then they lived happily, reached old age,
and in their last years saw their great-grandchildren.

God did daily miracles for mankind,
since no one would lie to his Christian neighbour,
the weather was fair, both winter and summer,
it seemed all was simple in the world.

If men sinned, they did good penance,
then God pardoned them all ill will,
they placed all their affection in Jesus Christ,

I want to give you a good example of this.

I want to tell you a story about an abbess,
who sinned at a propitious time, so it seems to me.
Her nuns tried to slander her,
but they did not harm her worth a bean.

In that abbess lay much goodness,
she was very understanding and very charitable,
she guided her convent willingly,
and they lived according to the rules, in all chastity.

But the abbess fell one time,
she did something crazy that is strictly forbidden.
She stepped, by chance, on a strongly contaminated weed,
when she looked carefully, she found herself pregnant.

Her stomach was growing to her breasts
and freckles were coming out on her cheeks
some were big, others smaller,
as in first pregnancies, these little things happen.

The affair was understood by her companions;
the lit flame could not be hidden.
It grieved some that she had fallen badly,
but it pleased the others very much.

She oppressed them greatly, she held them cloistered,
and she did not consent that they do forbidden things.
They wanted to see her dead, the crazy, unhappy ones;
This happens to superiors sometimes.

They saw that it was not something to be covered up,
if so the Devil could laugh at them.
They sent a letter to the bishop to say
that he had not visited them and ought to without delay.

The bishop understood in the letter
that either there was a dispute or they had committed
some folly.

He came to carry out his duty, to visit the convent;
he had to understand the whole business.

Let us leave the bishop to rest in his house,
let us leave him in peace to sleep with his household.
And let us tell what the pregnant one did,
for she knew she would be harshly accused the next day.

Near her room where she was accustomed to lodge,
she had a retreat, a convenient place.
It was her oratory where she usually prayed;
the altar was dedicated to the Glorious One.

There she had the image of the Holy Queen,

who was health and medicine for all.

She had Her image adorned with a red curtain,
for, in the end, She was Godmother to all.

She knew the next day she would be harshly accused,
she had no excuse, it was proven fact.

The fortunate one took good counsel,
it was a marvel, how prudent she was.

She entered in her oratory all alone;
she did not ask for any companion.

Then she stopped helpless in first prayer,
but God and her good fortune opened a way for her.

She threw herself to the floor before the altar,
she looked at the image, she began to cry.

“Help me,” she said, “Glorious One, Star of the Sea,
because I have no other advice that can help me.

Mother, we read it well, the scripture says it,

You are of such grace and such great temperance, that whoever willingly tells You his fear

You immediately help him in all his anxiety.

You helped Theophilus who was desperate,
who with his blood made a pact with the Devil.

Through Your good counsel he was reconciled,
whence all mankind gives thanks to You for it.

You helped, Lady, the Egyptian,

who was a great sinner because she was a loose woman.

Blessed Lady from whom all good flows,
give me some advice before morning.

Blessed Lady, I failed to serve You,
but I always loved to praise and bless You;
Lady, I tell the truth, I do not intend to lie,
I would like to be dead, if I could die.

Mother of the King of Glory, Queen of the Heavens,
let flow some medicine from Your grace;
free from a harsh accusation a wretched woman,
this, if You wish it, can be quickly done.

Mother, for the love of Your beloved Son,
Son so spotless, so sweet and so perfect,
let not this mercy that I ask of You be denied,
for I see they are pursuing me closely with great shouting.

If You do not help me, Lady, with some advice
I am ill-prepared to come to the council;
I want to die here in this little place,
for if I go there they will do me great harm.

Crowned Queen, Temple of Chastity,
Fountain of Mercy, Tower of Salvation,
take some pity on this afflicted one,

let Your great pity not run out for me.

I want, facing Your Son, to give You as surety,
nevermore will I commit this error.

Mother, if I fail, take such vengeance upon me
that everyone may speak of my disgrace.”

So earnestly did she say her prayer
that the Mother full of blessings heard her.
Like someone asleep, she saw a great vision,
that ought to bring edification to all.

The lady remained asleep from a great weariness,
God worked everything out of His pity.
The Mother of the King of Majesty appeared to her,
two angels of very great brightness with Her.

The lady was frightened and greatly terrified,
for she was not accustomed to such a vision.
She was very disturbed by the great brightness,
but she was much relieved of her burden.

The Glorious One said to her, “Take courage, abbess,
you are safe with Me, do not complain,
know that I bring you good promise.
Your prioress would not wish for better.

Do not be afraid of falling into censure,
God has kept you from falling into that noose.
Go to them without fear, keep the appointment with
 them;
your back will not be broken because of that.”

With the solace of the Precious Virgin,
the mother not feeling any pain,
the baby was born, a very beautiful little thing.
The Glorious One sent two angels to take it.

She said to the two angels, “I charge you both,
take this little boy to this friend of Mine.
Tell him to rear him for Me, so do I command,
for he will indeed believe you, then return to Me.”

The two angels moved with great swiftness
and executed the order without delay.
It pleased the hermit more than great riches
because truly it was a great honour.

The new mother regained consciousness, crossed herself,
and said, “Help me Glorious One, Crowned Queen!
Is this true or am I delivered?
Blessed Lady, help this sinner!”

When she regained consciousness, she touched herself with

her hands,
on her stomach, her sides and along each loin.
She found her belly limp, her waist very thing
as a woman who is freed from such a thing.

In no way could she believe it,
she thought it was a dream, not the real thing.
She felt herself for a third time,
finally assured, she cast doubt away.

When the poor pregnant one felt herself delivered,
the sack emptied of the bad flour,
with great joy she began to sing, "Salve Regina,"
the solace and medicine of the afflicted.

She wept profusely out of great joy,
and she said beautiful lauds to the Virgin Mary.
She did not fear the bishop nor her sisterhood,
because she was rid of the great malady.

She wept profusely, she offered prayers,
she said lauds and blessings to the Glorious One.
She said, "May you be praised, Mother in all seasons
women and men must always praise You.

I was in great care and in great fear,
I fell at Your feet, You gave me courage.

Lady, your good remedy helped me,
You must be praised by all creature.

Mother, I above all ought to bless,
praise, magnify, adore and serve You.
You deigned to save me from such great infamy
for which everyone could always laugh at me.

Had this sin of mine gone to the council,
I would be the great joke of all women.
How great and how good is your counsel, Mother,
no one, neither great nor small, could imagine it.

For the mercy and the grace that You deigned to grant
me,
I would not know, Mother, how to thank You,
nor could I ever deserve it, Mother,
but I will never cease giving You thanks.”

The lady remained in deep contemplation,
praising the Glorious One, saying prayers,
but an order came to her from those convened
that she go to the council to answer the charges.

Since she did not fear to fall in discredit,
she went immediately to kneel at the bishop's feet.
She tried to kiss his hands as she should,

but he refused to offer them to her.

The bishop began to rebuke her right away;
she had done something for which she must pay.
She should not be an abbess by any means,
nor should she live with the other nuns.

“All nuns who commit such great dishonesty,
who do not safeguard their bodies or remain chaste,
ought to be thrown out of the order;
Elsewhere, wherever they wish, let them do such dirty
business.”

“Lord,” she said, “why do you mistreat me?
I am not, thankfully, what you think.”
“Lady,” said the bishop, “why do you deny it?
You will not be believed for you will be proven guilty.”

“Lady,” said the bishop, “go to the common room,
we will take counsel, afterwards we will do something.”

“Lord,” said the lady, “do not say anything bad,
I commend myself to God, Who can and does protect.”

The abbess went out of the assembly,
as the bishop ordered, she went to the living quarters.
Anger and hatred had their meeting,
they kneaded their dough with barley flour.

The bishop said to them, "Friends, we cannot
condemn this lady unless we prove it."

The convent said to him, "Given what we know well,
lord, why shall we enter into another proof?"

The bishop said to them, "When she is convicted,
you will be safer, she more ashamed.

Otherwise, our judgement would be reproached,
after all she cannot be exonerated."

He sent his clerics, in whom he trusted the most,
so that they might prove how it was.

They took off her skirt although it grieved her.

They found her so thin that she looked like a board.

They did no find on her any sign of pregnancy,
neither milk nor trace of any evil-doing.

They said. "This is nothing but a great illusion,
Never was there proffered such an extraordinary lie."

They returned to the bishop, they said to him, "Lord,
know that the sister is blamed in vain,
whoever tells you something else, saving your honour,
tells you so great a lie; there could be none greater."

The bishop though they were deceived,

that the lady had promised them money.

He said, "Evil men, you are not to be believed,
because she is keeping something hidden under wraps."

He said, "I will not believe you so quickly,
either you are embarrassed or you took money.
I want to see this with my own eyes,
if it is not so, those who made the accusation must suffer
for it."

The bishop got up from where he was seated,
went to the abbess, angry and irate,
made her, against her will, take off her habit,
and found they denounced her for a crime falsely proven.

He returned to the convent, angry and very violent.
"Sisters," he said, "you committed a great treachery;
you said such evil about this woman
that your religious order is greatly demeaned.

This cannot pass without justice,
the blame you tried to cast on her,
the *Decretum* orders must fall on you;
you must be thrown out of this place."

The abbess saw the sisters judged badly,
that they were to be expelled from the house.

She took the bishop aside, a good fifteen paces,
“Lord,” she said, “the ladies are not very guilty.”

She told him her business, why it happened,
how she was deceived, of her grave sins,
and how the Crowned Virgin helped her.
Were it not for Her, she would be badly censured.

And now She ordered the child carried off,
how She ordered the hermit to rear him,
“Lord, if you wish you can prove it,
for charity’s sake, let not the sisters lose their place.

I would rather be shamed alone
than see so many good nuns cast out.
Lord, I ask you for mercy, pardon this time,
may the penance for all be given to me.”

The bishop was amazed, he changed colour,
he said, “Lady, if this can be proven,
I will see that Lord Jesus Christ is pleased with you,
as long as I live, I will do your bidding.”

Then he sent two canons to the hermit,
to prove id this was truth or deceit.
They found the good man in a strange habit,
holding the little boy wrapped in a cloth.

He showed them the infant newly born that day,
and said that Holy Mary ordered that he be reared.
Whoever might doubt this, would commit a great folly,
since it was the pure truth and not a barefaced lie.

They returned immediately to the bishop with the
message,
they told him the news of what they had proven.
“Lord,” they said, “be assured of this,
if not, you will commit a great error, you will acquire
great sin.”

The bishop considered himself mistaken regarding the
abbess,
he fell to the floor, prostrate, at her feet. “Lady,” he said, “have mercy for I have greatly sinned,
I pray that my sin may be pardoned by you.”

“Lord,” said she, “for God and the Glorious One,
consider your position, do not do such a thing.
You are a holy man, I, a grievous sinner,
if you do not return to your feet, I will be angry with you.”

The abbess had this argument with the bishop,
but they ended completely in good agreement.
Forever they had both love and good will,
they cloistered their lives with great patience.

The bishop established peace in the convent,
he ended the disagreement and dissension.
When he wanted to take leave, he gave them his
 benediction;
the visit was good for one and all.

He sent his greeting to the holy hermit,
as to a good friend, to a baptismal godfather,
that he rear the child until his seventh year.
Then he would strive to make him a good Christian.

When the term came, seven years had passed,
he sent two of the most honoured clerics
to bring the child from the forest to the town.
They fulfilled the mission as persons well instructed.

They brought the child, reared in the wilderness.
For his age, he was well-taught;
it pleased the bishop, he was very satisfied.
He ordered him to study with a learned teacher.

He turned out a very good man, temperate in
 everything;
it seemed indeed that he was reared by a good master.
The whole town was very pleased with him
and when the bishop died, they gave him the bishopric.

The Glorious One, who had given him to be reared, guided
him.

With God, he knew how to govern his bishopric well;
he guided the souls well, as he should.
In all things he knew how to seek moderation.

The people loved him as did his clergy;
the canons and all the nuns loved him.
Everyone, wherever they were, prayed for his days,
except some crazy ones who loved folly.

When the time came for him to die, his Lady did not let him suffer long.
She carried him to Heaven, to a safe place,
where neither thief nor judge can ever enter.

We all give thanks to the Glorious Virgin,
of Whom we read and prove so many miracles.
May She give us grace so that we may serve Her,
and guide us to do things for which we may be saved.
[Amen].”

APPENDIX B

This is how Holy Mary saved the pregnant abbess who had gone to sleep weeping before Her altar.

We should love Holy Mary and pray that She shed Her grace on us, so that the shameless devil will not cause us to err or sin.

Concerning this, I shall tell you a miracle I found which the Mother of the Great King performed for an abbess who, as I learned, was very devoted to Her. The devil ensnared her, and she became pregnant by a man from Bologna who served her as steward.

The nuns, when they found out about this, were very gleeful. Because the abbess would not allow them to misbehave, they had ill will for her. They accused her to the bishop in charge of the place, and he came from Cologne. He had her called before him, and she came without delay, cheerful and smiling.

The bishop spoke to her thus: “Lady, according to what I have learned, you have managed your affairs very badly. I came here for this reason, that you make amends for your misdeeds before me.” The lady at once prayed to the Mother of God, and as though in a dream, Holy Mary had the child removed and sent it to be reared in Soissons.

When the lady awoke and found herself delivered, she appeared before the bishop. He looked at her carefully and bade her to undress. When he saw her belly, he began to praise God and to berate the nuns of the Order of Oña, saying: “May God save me, I declare this woman innocent, for I know of none who could impugn her.

APPENDIX C

How Holy Mary caused the ships of the Moors who held Constantinople in siege to founder as soon as the Christians placed Her image at the edge of the sea.

Since Holy Mary always defends Her own whom She loves, it is only right that she defend Herself as well.

Concerning this, I wish to tell you now a miracle which Holy Mary performed, She who never hesitates to beseech Her Son and always prays on our behalf that He come to our aid in times of trouble.

She, by the power She receives from Him, defends us and defends Herself when She suffers some wrong. Whereby She performed this miracle I shall relate to you in Constantinople, where She suffered great injury.

The Moors came boldly to besiege the city and approached from the sea with their galleys and a great fleet of ships. So savagely did they harass the inhabitants that by controlling the river, they cut off the people's water supply.

Therefore, the Christians, in their great plight, went to the image which Saint Luke had painted of the Glorious Virgin, who had already performed great miracles and continued to perform them.

This portrait was skilfully painted on wood and depicted Her as a woman of great beauty. It looked exactly like the Virgin.

Before the Virgin died, it was painted in Her likeness in order to destroy the sect of the Jews and of the devil, who always lies in wait for us so that we may fall in error and folly.

A knight who believed fervently in the Glorious Virgin had this image hastily placed on the shore, because he saw that the suffering people and their cause were in great difficulty.

When it had been placed there, they prayed to Her in tears, saying: “Give these Moors who have so crudely besieged us a bad end to the enterprise they have undertaken, for they are doing great wrong to your Son.”

When they had said this, they placed their hands towards heave, and at once the ships of the pagan sank into the sea, because of the plea of the Christians and of the Blessed Mother who had guided us and guides us still.

All in one voice, both great and small gave great praise for this miracle to the Blessed Virgin who constantly succors sinners and those in need.