REPENSER L'HISTOIRE DE L'ART MÉDIÉVAL EN 2023

RECUEIL D'ÉTUDES OFFERTES À
XAVIER BARRAL I ALTET

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sous la direction de Miljenko Jurković, Elisabetta Scirocco, Arnaud Timbert
avec la collaboration de Damiana Di Bonito et Jelena Behaim

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GOING OUTSIDE THE LINES: CONVENTION AND IMPROVISATION IN THE *CANTIGAS DE SANTA MARÍA*[1]

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This article explores the role of artistic improvisation, as opposed to reliance on preexisting visual or textual exemplars, in the massive task of illustrating two thirteenth-century codices of the Cantigas de Santa María*, Escorial T-I-1 and Florence, Bib. Naz. b.r. 20. It takes as a case study the illustration of Cantiga 161 in the Escorial codex, where the interpolation of a scene of a man buying a pilgrim's badge suggests the artist's creative effort to enhance a scantily detailed narrative with new material that both filled out the six scenes required by the illustration and elucidated and deepened its content. Examining this modest addition and the creative process it implies provides an entry point into larger questions about the processes underlying the illustration of the* Cantigas de Santa María*, as well as about the expanding role of invention in thirteenth-century European narrative illustration more generally.*

Keywords: Cantigas de Santa María*; Medieval manuscripts; Iconography; Pilgrimage*

Behind the iconography of any medieval manuscript lies a moment of artistic choice: whether to rely on existing pictorial conventions or to invent an image afresh. In medieval western Europe the former practice was predominant: artists routinely looked to other works of art as the basis for new imagery, whether by closely copying a single exemplar, as the scribe Eadwine and his colleagues did in producing his eponymous Psalter or by synthesizing a new composition from existing motifs known from model-books or memory, perhaps turning to verbal texts, both written and oral, for details to tailor the imagery to its purpose[2]. For the early Middle Ages, these practices are presumed to derive from the monastic artist's concern for the integrity of the book as model, as well as from a typically monastic respect for authority, while their comparative relaxation from the thirteenth century onward has been ascribed to the rise of secular manuscript workshops and the proliferation of new texts

[1] Inspiration for this essay arose in a recent online exchange with multiple colleagues, including Jacqueline Jung, Julia Holloway, and Lucy Pick, whose generous responses to a query I shared offered a model of pandemic-era academic collegiality. The result seemed a fitting contribution to a volume honoring Xavier Barral i Altet, a notably collaborative scholar himself.

[2] Limited space restricts citations in this article to representative and/or recent scholarship; no offense through omission is intended. The once nearly universal expectation that almost all medieval images were based on a text is exemplified by K. WEITZMANN, *Illustrations in Roll and Codex*, Princeton, 1947, a view later refined by such authors as H. SWARZENSKI, *The Role of Copies in the Formation of the Styles of the Eleventh Century*, in *Romanesque and Gothic Art*, edited by M. Meiss, Princeton, 1963, p. 7-18; L. NEES, *The Originality of Early Medieval Artists*, in *Literacy, Politics, and Artistic Innovation in the Medieval West*, edited by Celia Chazelle, Lanham (MD), 1989, p. 77-109; and J.J.G. ALEXANDER, *Facsimiles, Copies, and Variations: The Relationship to the Model in Medieval and Renaissance European Illuminated Manuscripts,* in *Studies in the History of Art*, 20, 1989, p. 61-72; and ID., *Medieval Illuminators and Their Methods of Work*, New Haven, 1992, p. 72-120.

Fig. 1. Illustration of Cantiga 161, Cantigas de Santa María, Biblioteca Real del Monasterio de El Escorial, MS T-I-1, fol. 217r (photo: Patrimonio Nacional, Biblioteca del Monasterio de San Lorenzo de El Escorial, T-I-1)

for which no prior pictorial tradition existed[3]. The latter phenomenon at times inspired what Aden Kumler has termed an «ambitious form of translation» through which artists transformed new textual content wholesale into new forms of iconography[4].

Yet precisely how medieval artists generated these new representations is not always clear. Many seem to have repurposed existing models in a piecemeal manner, isolating and recombining familiar pictorial motifs and compositions from other contexts into the new one, while others turned to the text itself, perhaps with the aid of a more literate advisor, to extrapolate new imagery[5]. The imagination and agency inherent in this process was addressed influentially in the 1990s by such authors as Michael Camille, J.J.G. Alexander, and Madeline Caviness, and it has since been further explored by a number of other scholars[6]. All make clear that the factors that spurred iconographic improvisation, like the sources and experiences that fueled it, could include everything from the intended purpose of a given image and to the habits and ideology of its creator to the work's anticipated viewership and reception. They also demonstrate that such factors generally are best understood through micro-studies that first examine specific moments of invention within their immediate context before testing the results more broadly.

The present essay undertakes such a micro-study, exploring an intriguing case of artistic invention in the earlier of the two illustrated codices of the *Cantigas de Santa María* (fig. 1). Compiled at the

[3] J.J.G. ALEXANDER, *Medieval Illuminators, op. cit.* (n. 2), p. 72-82, 107-120; R. ROUSE and M. ROUSE, *Manuscripts and Their Makers: Commercial Book Producers in Medieval Paris, 1200-1500*, Turnhout, 2000, p. 99-126.

[4] A. KUMLER, *Translating Truth: Ambitious Images and Religious Knowledge in Late Medieval France and England*, New Haven (CT), 2011, p. 5-6.

[5] Examples of the former practice are described by C.G. MANN, *Picturing the Bible in the Thirteenth Century,* in *The Book of Kings: Art, War, and the Morgan Library's Medieval Picture Bible*, edited by W. Noel and D. Weiss, Baltimore, 2002, p. 38-59; the latter is discussed generally in ROUSE and ROUSE, *op. cit.* (n. 3), p. 99-126.

[6] M. CAMILLE, *Image on the Edge: The Margins of Medieval Art*, London, 1992, and ID., *Mirror in Parchment: The Luttrell Psalter and the Making of Medieval England*, London, 1998, among others; J.J.G. ALEXANDER, *Medieval Illuminators, op. cit.* (n. 2), p. 107-120; M. CAVINESS, *Patron or Matron? A Capetian Bride and a Vade Mecum for Her Marriage Bed*, in *Speculum*, 68, 1993, p. 333-362. More recent approaches are exemplified by A. KUMLER, *op. cit.* (n. 4); numerous essays in J. LOWDEN and A. BOVEY, *Under the Influence: The Concept of Influence and the Study of Illuminated Manuscripts*, Turnhout, 2007; and L. GEYMONAT, *Drawing, Memory and Imagination in the Wolfenbüttel Musterbuch*, in *Medieval Encounters*, 18, 2012, p. 518-583.

behest of King Alfonso X of Castile (r. 1252-1284), the *Cantigas* eventually came to comprise over 400 songs praising the Virgin Mary, the compilation of which had been going on at least from the 1260s before the decision was made to set the songs down in a pair of lavishly illustrated codices begun in the late 1270s[7]. The volume in question, now in the Biblioteca Real del Monasterio de El Escorial (MS T-I-1), was completed by the early 1280s and preserves 192 of a probable 200 illustrated *cantigas*; a second volume, its presumed companion, remained unfinished at Alfonso's death in 1284 and now rests, badly disordered and rebound, in the Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale di Firenze (MS b.r. 20)[8].

The organizational scheme of both codices, largely preserved in the Escorial volume but disrupted in the Florence one, presented the text and musical notation of each song followed by either one or two full-page illustrations with six (excepting the eight-scene Cantiga 1) framed and captioned scenes per page. While every tenth *cantiga* is a simple praise song, or *loor*, the majority represent the Virgin Mary's miracles on behalf of the faithful, many based on narratives drawn from European Latin and vernacular miracle collections, others presumed to have been gleaned from local Iberian *repertorios,* and some apparently purpose-designed for Alfonso's enterprise[9].

As many scholars have observed, the task of illustrating this vast collection of tales must have posed a significant challenge for Alfonso's artists[10]. Only a few of the more widely circulated narratives, such as those of Theophilus or the Jewish Boy of Bourges[11], had engendered a substantial visual tradition in stained glass, in sculpture, and – most significant because of their portability – in such manuscripts as the illustrated copies of Gautier de Coinci's *Miracles de Nostre Dame*, which apparently served as at least a textual source for Alfonso's compilers[12]. While surviving pictorial exemplars offer little absolute evidence of having served as models for the *Cantigas* artists, they do attest to the existence of an illustrative tradition that was likely known to these artists and thus might have served as a visual source for their work on the best-known narratives.

The *Cantigas* manuscripts themselves offer only limited evidence of the ways in which their pictorial narratives might have been conceived and crafted. While the varying states of unfinished illustrations on the Florence codex suggest collaborative execution, neither manuscript preserves traces of

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[7] Scholarship on the *Cantigas de Santa María* is very extensive and cannot be represented in full here. For an accessible introduction to the texts and their manuscripts, see S. PARKINSON, *Alfonso X, the Learned. Cantigas de Santa María: An Anthology*, London, 2015, p. 1-18; for a recent assessment of Alfonso's involvement, see K. KENNEDY, *Alfonso X of Castile-León: Royal Patronage, Self-Promotion and Manuscripts in Thirteenth-Century Spain*, Amsterdam, 2019. A substantial bibliography on the manuscripts, not entirely up to date, appears in the *Oxford Cantigas de Santa María Database* https://csm.mml.ox.ac.uk/index.php?p=poem_list. Further sources are cited below as relevant.

[8] Both manuscripts can be viewed online. Escorial MS T-I-1: https://rbdigital.realbiblioteca.es/s/rbme/item/11337; Florence MS b.r. 20: https://archive.org/details/b.-r.-20.

[9] On the sources see S. PARKINSON, *Alfonso X, Miracle Collector*, in *Las Cantigas De Santa María: Códice Rico, Ms. T-1-1, Real Biblioteca Del Monasterio De San Lorenzo De El Escorial*, edited by L. Fernández Fernández, J.C. Ruiz Souza, and E. Fidalgo, Madrid, 2011, p. 81-100: 87-99. On the presumed Iberian collections: E. FIDALGO, *As Cantigas de Santa María*, Salamanca, 2002, p. 43-45.

[10] See, e.g., M.V. CHICO PICAZA, *Composición, estilo y texto en la miniatura del Códice Rico de las CSM*, in *Alcanate*, 8, 2012, p. 161-189.

[11] On potential sources for the Theophilus tale: D. JACKSON, *The Influence of the Theophilus Legend: An Overlooked Miniature in Alfonso X's Cantigas de Santa Maria and its Wider Context*, in *Under the Influence: The Concept of Influence and the Study of Illuminated Manuscripts*, edited by J. Lowden and A. Bovey, Turnhout, 2007, p. 75-87; and P. PATTON, *Constructing the Inimical Jew in the Cantigas de Santa María: Theophilus' Magician in Text and Image*, in *Beyond the Yellow Badge: Anti-Judaism, Anti-Semitism and European Art Before 1800*, edited by M. Merback, Leiden, 2008, p. 233-256. On sources for the Jewish Boy: P. PATTON, *The Little Jewish Boy: Afterlife of a Byzantine Legend in Thirteenth-Century Spain*, in *Byzantine Images and Their Afterlives: Essays in Honor of Annemarie Weyl Carr*, edited by L. Jones, Aldershot, 2014, p. 61-80.

[12] W. METTMANN, *Os Miracles de Gautier de Coinci como fonte das Cantigas de Santa María*, in *Estudos Portugueses: Homenagem a Luciana Stegagno Picchio*, editado por E. Asensio, Lisbon, 1991, p. 79-84; and S. PARKINSON, *op. cit.* (n. 9), p. 90-92.

Fig. 2. Detail of animals bowing to Mary, illustration of Cantiga 29, Cantigas de Santa María, Biblioteca Real del Monasterio de El Escorial, MS T-I-1, fol. 44r (photo: Patrimonio Nacional, Biblioteca del Monasterio de San Lorenzo de El Escorial, T-I-1)

the kinds of written instructions that guided artists in other centers of book production, such as Paris[13]. On the other hand, the frequent repetition of certain widely used visual conventions and compositional formulas, such as those depicting suppliants before the Virgin's altar or the occasional Biblical scene, shows that the scriptorium did rely on well-known or successful compositions when they could[14]. Still, many other details of the *cantiga* illustrations – often entire *cantiga* narratives – have no discernible pictorial antecedents.

Facing both a dearth of obvious visual models and the problem of setting out, in a tidy series of six- and twelve-scene compositions, the hundreds of narratives and praise songs of the collection, Alfonso's artists had little choice but to turn to pictorial improvisation. In some cases, to be sure, this was inspired by the textual narratives themselves, whether the Galician Portuguese texts of the *Cantigas* or the Latin and Castilian miracle collections then circulating in Castile, such as those of Gautier de Coinci and Gonzalo de Berceo[15]. However, in other instances the artists clearly brought together a mélange of familiar, extrapolative, and invented visual details to create pictorial narratives that would be at once expansive enough to suit the layout of the manuscripts and capable of conveying those tales recognizably, legibly, and pleasingly for their royal patron.

Improvisations of this kind pervade the *Cantigas*, and their apparent inspiration varies considerably. The inclusion of an exotic menagerie, including a giraffe, elephant, zebra, and camel, saluting the Virgin Mary in the illustration of Cantiga 29 (44r; fig. 2) has been attributed by at least one author to a recorded historical event, a gift of African animals sent to Alfonso by the king of Ethiopia, whereas the detail of a woman breastfeeding her child beside a miraculously lactating image of the Virgin in the illustration of Cantiga 46 seems to have been fabricated by the artist as a visual echo of this key moment in the story and the unconventional Edenic serpent with the head of an "Ethiopian" woman in the unfinished illustration for Cantiga 320 suggests a spontaneous effort to activate implicit themes

[13] On the production of the Florence codex, see R. SÁNCHEZ AMEIJEIRAS, *Imaxes e teoría da imaxe nas Cantigas de Santa María,* in *As Cantigas de Santa María*, edited by E. Fidalgo, Salamanca, 2002, p. 246-301: 264-268. On manuscript production in Paris, see ROUSE and ROUSE, *op. cit.* (n. 3), *passim*; and the illuminating case study by M. EASTON, *Artists and Autonomy: Written Instructions and Preliminary Drawings for the Illuminator in the Huntingdon Library Legenda Aurea (HM 3027)*, in *Studies in Iconography*, 42, 2021, p. 21-51.

[14] As shown, e.g., by A. DOMÍNGUEZ RODRÍGUEZ and P. TREVIÑO GAJARDO, *Tradición del texto y tradición de la imagen en las «* Cantigas de Santa María *»*, in *Reales Sitios*, 164, 2005, p. 2-17; and by M.V. CHICO PICAZA, *op. cit.* (n.10), p. 184-188.

[15] W. METTMANN, *op. cit.* (n. 12), p. 79-84; S. PARKINSON, *op. cit.* (n. 9), p. 90-93; and P. PATTON, *Constructing the Inimical Jew*, *op. cit.* (n. 11), p. 251-252.

within the *loor* that it accompanies[16]. Regardless of their source, such moments of improvisation attest not just to their artists' relative freedom to exercise their own creative capacities, but to the multivalency such additions contribute to the illustrations overall.

The illustration of Cantiga 161 (Escorial T-I-1, fol. 217r; fig. 1) is no exception. It accompanies a narrative about a vintner from Morella in Aragón, an avid pilgrim who often visited the shrine of Santa María de Salas, carrying with him for protection a «sign» with a representation of the Virgin («*seu sinal* […] *en que era figurada mui ben a ssa Majestade*»). It recounts that when an approaching hailstorm threatened his vines, he commended them to the Virgin Mary and placed the image in the middle of the field. The storm damaged all the surrounding fields, but his vines remained protected.

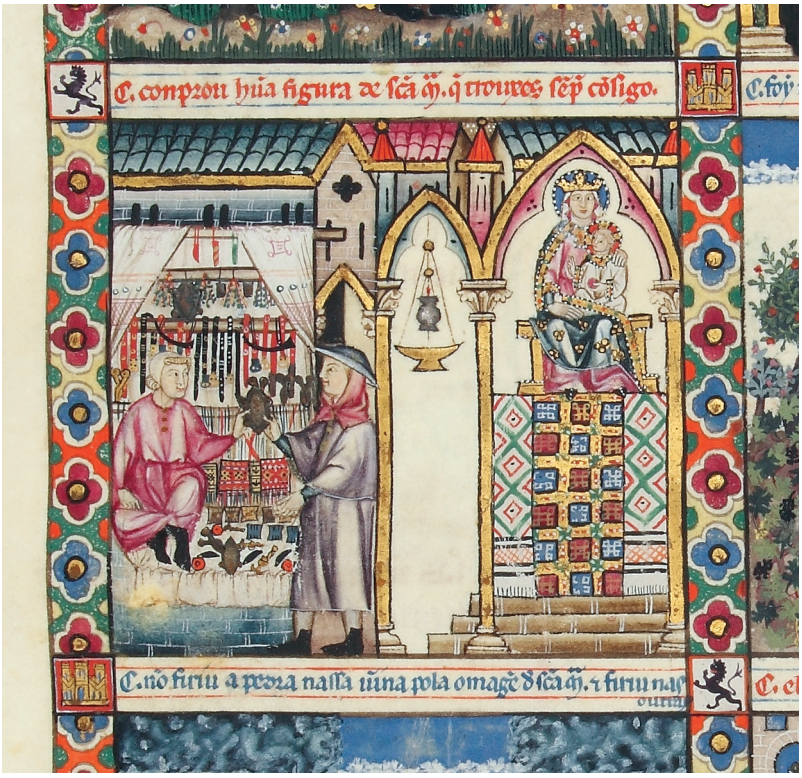

Fig. 3. Detail of vintner buying a badge, illustration of Cantiga 161, Cantigas de Santa María, Biblioteca Real del Monasterio de El Escorial, MS T-I-1, fol. 217r (photo: Patrimonio Nacional, Biblioteca del Monasterio de San Lorenzo de El Escorial, T-I-1)

The eight-stanza verbal text is concise[17]. It introduces the protagonist as a good man, notes his frequent pilgrimages to Salas, and observes that he loved his vineyard and depended on it to support his wife and children. It recounts the miracle in spare terms, describing the dark cloud that preceded the storm, the placement of the Virgin's image in the field, and the preservation of the grapevines, along with the others which they had intertwined, ending with an exhortation to praise the Virgin for her mercy. The artist met the challenge of adapting this laconic account to the expected scenes by expanding the introduction of the vintner to occupy three of them: first he appears in pilgrim's garb, walking in a landscape; next he kneels before the Virgin's altar; and finally, he pauses outside the church at a stall of pilgrim goods, a detail to which we shall return. The next two scenes depict the miracle itself: first, the vintner prays among his vines as a dark cloud hangs in the sky; next, he kneels among his undamaged crops as those around him are broken by falling hailstones. In the final scene, the vintner appears back in Salas, kneeling with others at the Virgin's altar.

The expansion of the vintner's pious behavior to occupy three initial scenes rather than the single one customary in many *cantigas* might seem merely a ploy for filling space. However, one of these scenes also sets the stage for a richer understanding of the miracle to come. This is the third scene (fig. 3), where the vintner stands at a curtained stall that displays an assortment of pilgrimage-related

[16] On Cantiga 29: J. KELLER, and R. KINKADE, *Myth and Reality in the Miracle of Cantiga 29*, *La Corónica*, 28, 1999, p. 35-69; on Cantiga 46: F. PRADO-VILAR, *The Gothic Anamorphic Gaze: Regarding the Worth of Others*, in *Under the Influence: Questioning the Comparative in Medieval Castile*, edited by C. Robinson and L. Rouhi, Leiden, 2005, p. 67-100, at 68-69; on Cantiga 320: P. PATTON, *An Ethiopian-Headed Serpent in the Cantigas de Santa María: Sin, Sex, and Color in Late Medieval Castile*, in *Gesta*, 55, 2016, p. 213-38.

[17] ALFONSO X, *Cantigas De Santa María,* a cargo de W. Mettmann, Coimbra, 1959, 2, p. 158. For an online edition: http://www.cantigasdesantamaria.com/csm/161.

Fig. 4. Paris, Musée de Cluny, pilgrim badge from Rocamadour (photo: © RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource, NY / Art Resource)

items, including knives, scissors, belts, herbs, scrips, and several large metallic plaques, one of which is handed to him from a merchant seated cross-legged before the stall. The transaction is explained by titulus above the scene as the vintner's purchase of an image (*figura*) of the Virgin that he always carried with him («C. CONPROU HŪA FIGURA DE SCA. M̃. Q̃ TROUXES SẽP̃ CÕSIGO»). However, its distinctive shape identifies this *figura* more specifically as a pilgrim's badge.

The object in question is almond-shaped, with pointed ends and four small rings appended to its contours; its surface is dully metallic, and no image is evident. However, a sharp inked line picks out a narrow border around its perimeter while also defining it clearly against several unrelated objects behind it, including the handles of a pair of scissors that protrude behind its upper point. Although no thirteenth-century badges from Salas appear to have survived, the morphology of this object resembles that of several existing thirteenth- and early fourteenth-century exemplars from Marian shrines in France and Spain, including Rocamadour, Le Puy, and Villalcázar de Sirga[18]. A lead-tin badge from Rocamadour, now in the Musée de Cluny (CL17975; fig. 4), displays these works' characteristic almond shape and preserves vestiges of the rings once used to stitch the badge onto clothing; like others in the genre, it portrays the enthroned Virgin and Child in low relief, surrounded by a narrow border with the inscription «SIGILLUM BEATE MARIE DE ROCAMADOR»[19]. Its resemblance to the representation in the *cantiga* illustration supports the latter's identification as a badge of the same type, as does the object's designation in the text of the *cantiga* not merely as a *figura*, as the scene's titulus describes it, but as a *sinal* – a word meaning «sign» or «token», related to the Latin *signa* often used in reference to pilgrim souvenirs of this kind[20].

In the absence of any material survivals of pilgrim badges from Salas, the representation of a badge in the *cantiga* illustration potentially sheds light on the pilgrimage culture of that site, a topic well worth considering in its own right. However, of particular relevance to the present question is the narrative depth that this detail contributes to the illustration in which it appears. At one level, its interpolation into the narrative clarifies how, in an age where most works of art remained the province of the wealthy, a winemaker of modest means might have come to possess his own «*figura*» of the Virgin. Although occasionally made of silver, brass, or other materials, most pilgrim badges were simply cast from lead-tin alloy, allowing for both mass production and low cost. This helped to place

[18] B. SPENCER, *Pilgrim Souvenirs and Secular Badges*, London, 1998, p. 233-234; D. BRUNA, *Enseignes de plomb et autres menues chosettes du Moyen Âge*, Paris, 2006, p. 46-47, 280, figs. 6-12. See also Anne Marie Rasmussen, *Medieval Badges: Their Wearers and Their Worlds*, Philadelphia, 2021, esp. 126–128. On badges in Iberia: F. MENÉNDEZ PIDAL DE NAVASCUÉS, *Emblemas de peregrinos y de la peregrinación a Santiago*, in *Príncipe de Viana*, 68, 2007, p. 647-654; M.L. BARRERO GONZÁLEZ, *Enseñas y sellos de peregrino en el contexto de la peregrinación medieval*, in *Revista Digital de Iconografía Medieval*, 9, 2017, p. 5-32. See also J. BERGER, *Les enseignes de pèlerinage du Puy*, in *Jubilé et culte marial (Moyen Age - époque contemporaine)*, sous la direction de B. Maes, D. Moulinet and C. Vincent, Saint-Etienne, 2009, p. 87-114, at 91-93; A.TIXADOR, *Enseignes sacrées et profanes médiévales découvertes a Valenciennes: Un peu plus d'un kilogramme d'histoire*, Valenciennes, 2004, 28-30, no. 19 (for Villalcázar de Sirga).

[19] B. SPENCER, *op. cit.* (n.18), p. 234-237; D. BRUNA, *op. cit.* (n.18), p. 46.

[20] Such as those cited by B.M. BEDOS-REZAK, *L'au-delà du soi. Métamorphoses sigillaires en Europe médiévale*, in *Cahiers de civilisation médiévale*, 49, 2006, p. 337-358.

material works of art, however modest, in the hands of a wide range of persons, who sewed the badge onto their garments or hats to identify themselves while on pilgrimage and sometimes preserved it afterward as a memento of their travel[21]. To portray the vintner's image as a pilgrim badge thus contextualized both his possession of the Virgin's image and his habit of carrying it about with him.

However, the presence of the badge also offers a deeper context for the miracle. For their medieval wearers and beholders, pilgrim badges not only were markers of status or mementos of travel, but bore talismanic properties as well. Much like a contact relic, they were thought to bear with them the virtues of the holy person at whose shrine they were acquired, and thus to have potential to rescue, heal, or protect their bearers[22]. These were often healing miracles, such as the *Codex Calixtinus's* account of how an Apulian knight was cured of a throat malady by contact with a shell-badge from Santiago de Compostela or how a priest of Chartres was healed when his mother laid a badge of the Virgin of Rocamadour on his body[23]. Belief in such objects' apotropaic properties also could extend beyond the pilgrim's person to their possessions: pilgrim badges could be affixed to the entrances of farmyards and cowsheds, mounted near beehives and wells, or buried in gardens to protect these important resources from harm[24]. It is this last use that appears to be reflected in Cantiga 161, where after calling upon the Virgin in the fourth scene, the vintner kneels among his crops, proffering with both hands the badge that he customarily had carried to protect himself (*«por ser de mal guardado»*). In this setting, the object's size and centrality emphasizes its instrumentality in the Virgin's miraculous intervention, advertising for its viewers the agency popularly attributed to such humble objects.

The decision to interpolate a scene of the badge's purchase into the illustration of Cantiga 161 therefore concerned far more than the mere filling of space. Employing the familiar morphology of a Marian pilgrim badge, it grounds the *cantiga's* miracle within the material and practical culture of pilgrimage in a way that must have lent both authenticity and credibility to the tale. Whether the idea to include the scene of its purchase arose spontaneously in the Alfonsine workshop or drew on some now unknown version of the narrative cannot be certain: although the tale is thought to have reached Alfonso's court within a collection of miracles related to Salas, no prior versions of it are recorded[25]. Whatever its origin, its artist must be credited for an addition that successfully enlivened a skeletal verbal narrative while also deepening its authenticity and persuasiveness.

The improvisation also has broader implications that can only be touched upon here. First, it suggests the resourcefulness and imagination with which these illustrators met the demands of an ambitious and very likely, at times, exhausting assignment. Resisting the temptation—at least in some cases, although certainly not always—to fall back on formulaic or repetitive scenes, these artists generated new images that both fleshed out and enriched the verbal narratives in ways that brought them new meaning. The frequency with which they did this might also be seen as a sign of the relative independence with which the *Cantigas* artists worked. In contrast to other European manuscript

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[21] B. SPENCER, *op. cit.* (n. 18), p. 7, 13-17; D. BRUNA, *op. cit.* (n.18), p. 53-64, 75-104. It is worth noting that many such badges were not always preserved; many were deliberately and perhaps ritually discarded in rivers upon the pilgrim's return home.

[22] B. SPENCER, *op. cit.* (n.1 8), p. 16-18; D. BRUNA, *op. cit.* (n.18), p. 173-177; B. BEDOS-REZAK, *op. cit.* (n. 20), p. 345-346.

[23] D. BRUNA, *op. cit.* (n. 18), p. 175-176; see also L. VÁZQUEZ DE PARGA, J.M. LACARRA, and J. URÍA RÍU, *Las Peregrinaciones a Santiago De Compostela,* 2 voll., Madrid 1948-1949, 1, p. 130-131; and E. ALBE, *Les Miracles De Notre-Dame De Roc-Amadour Au XIIe Siècle: Texte Et Traduction D'après Les Manuscrits De La Bibliothèque Nationale,* Paris, 1907, p. 135-136.

[24] B. SPENCER, *op. cit.* (n. 18), p. 18; K. KÖSTER, *Pilgerzeichen und Pilgermuscheln*, in *Sankt Elisabeth: Furstin, Dienerin, Heilige,* Sigmaringen, 1981, p. 452-459, at 453.

[25] P. AGUADO BLEYE, *Santa María de Salas en el Siglo XIII. Estudio sobre algunas Cantigas de Alfonso el Sabio*, Bilbao, 1916, p. 6-7; T. KASSIER, *The Salas miracles of the Cantigas de Santa Maria: Folklore and Social Reality*, in *Cantigueiros*, 3, 1990, p. 31-38.

centers, where iconographic decisions often were made in consultation with literate advisers whose guidance survives in annotations and other markings, the Alfonsine artists seem to have enjoyed some freedom to add, omit or alter the details of the assigned verbal narrative, sometimes drawing from alternate versions of the miracles and sometimes apparently inventing them on the spot. Whether this flexibility can be credited to prior knowledge of the tales, to an interest in narrative and pictorial alternatives, or simply to a lack of oversight remains unclear, but it encourages us to reconsider with more nuance the authoritative hierarchies typically envisioned in European scriptoria.

These conclusions should also invite us to reconsider the still wider questions that medievalists pose about illustration as a process—about the authority accorded medieval texts, the respect directed toward visual models, and the degree of improvisation that was permitted or expected in the illustration of a manuscript. Although the present text cannot go far in offering answers to these questions, I hope it will prompt those who pursue them to ponder how the little pilgrim badge in Cantiga 161 might aid in challenging current assumptions about the role of the copy, the text-image relationship, and the importance of observation and improvisation in the production of medieval European manuscripts.

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