

From Founding Father to Pious Son

Filiation, Language, and Royal Inheritance in Alfonso X, the Learned

Abstract

1. Duchesne continued his criticism by asserting that Alfonso, “Heredó Alfonso X rey de Castilla y de Leon el valor y el celo de su padre por la extirpacion de los infieles; pero no heredó ni su virtud, ni sus talentos políticos: con que le faltó la mejor parte de la imitación para copiarle” (219; “[He] inherited the valor and zeal for wiping out the infidels from his father, but he did not inherit his father’s virtue or his political talents, and thus he lacked the better part of what it took to copy him”). Even José Amador de los Ríos, who sought to defend Alfonso’s legacy from his eighteenth-century critics, nevertheless attributed what he saw as Alfonso’s political successes to his father’s good model. Alfonso introduced “fundamentales innovaciones en la esfera de la política, procurando realizar en ella los grandiosos proyectos de su magnánimo padre” (3:482; “fundamental innovations in the sphere of politics, realizing in it the great projects of his magnanimous father”).

The influence of King Alfonso X of Castile (reg. 1252–84) has been so wide that modern historians have stressed Alfonso’s foundational role as a ‘father’ of many Castilian cultural institutions and areas of writing, including prose literature, science, the legal code, and vernacular historiography. This paper argues that the modern focus on Alfonso’s foundational, ‘fatherly’ role, while logical in the context of modern literary historiography, is at odds with Alfonso’s own medieval view of himself as a ‘son’ and heir, one who inherited rather than founded cultural institutions. It proposes that a reorientation of Alfonsine studies according to this medieval worldview, one focused less on Alfonso’s innovations and foundations and more on his continuity with and dependance on his forebears, will permit a clearer portrayal of Alfonso’s importance in medieval literary history. To this end, it explores Alfonso’s representation of himself as the son of his father, King Fernando III, in the prologues to his scientific translations, in his encomium of his father known as the *Setenario*, and in song 292 of his *Cantigas de Santa María*. A reading of these examples is offered as a first step towards the study of filiation and ‘sonship’ in the vast Alfonsine historiographical and legal corpora.

King Alfonso X of Castile (reg. 1252–84) has long been characterized in binary terms as a successful patron of science and culture and a political failure. In judging Alfonso’s performance as king, his eighteenth- and nineteenth-century critics often compared him negatively to his father, Fernando III, who united the kingdoms of León and Castile and who successfully led the Christians to victory in a number of key thirteenth-century battles against the Muslims of Iberia, culminating in the conquest of Seville in 1248.¹ By contrast, Alfonso’s intellectual pursuits were often judged as a major cause of his perceived political struggles and military failures. The Jesuit historian Juan de Mariana famously remarked in 1592 that

2. With the beginning of this assessment, “Erat Alfonso sublime ingenium, sed incautum, superbae aures, lingua petulans” (2:117; “Alfonso had a sublime but reckless genius, proud hearing and a petulant tongue”), Mariana seems to be alluding to Livy, *History of Rome* 24-5, “... superbae aures, contumeliosa dicta.” This statement by Mariana is discussed by Salvador Martínez (22).

3. In 1742, Father Flórez stated in his *Clave historial con que se abre al puerta a la historia eclesiástica y política* ... that Alfonso, “mirando mucho al Cielo, no miró bastantemente por su tierra; y Político grande en lo especulativo, fue inferior en la práctica” (224; “Looking much at heaven, he did not look enough at the earth, and while he was a great politician in speculative terms, he was an inferior one in practical matters”). Feijóo cited Mariana’s judgment directly in his *Cartas eruditas y curiosas* of 1760 (prologue n.p.). Numerous other writers have repeated this judgment in some form.

4. For example, in 1741, French Jesuit Jean-Baptiste Philippoteau Duchesne reused Mariana’s image in his *Abrégé de l’histoire d’Espagne*, which came to be very widely disseminated in Spain in the 1755 translation of fellow Jesuit José Francisco de Isla. In this translation, de Isla included a similar condemnation of Alfonso’s stargazing, written in the form of rhymed couplets: “Mientras observa el movimiento al Cielo,/ Cada passo un desbarro era en el suelo” (132; “While he was observing the movements of the stars,/ every step was a misstep on the earth”).

5. Although Salvador Martínez has recently affirmed that this contrast between political failure and intellectual success is no longer accepted by any scholars, it continues to appear in histories of literature and science. For example, Pedraza Jiménez and Rodríguez Cáceres stated in 1984 in their *Manual de literatura española*, “Al margen de sus fracasos políticos, la verdadera importancia de Alfonso X hay que buscarla en su papel como impulsor de la cultura y de la lengua castellana que, aunque no menos ambicioso, se vio coronado por el éxito” (369). Similarly, José Chabas stated in 2002 that “Hay acuerdo unánime en que el

litteris potius, quam civilibus artibus instructus: dumque caelum considerat, observatque astra, terram amisit (649; “He was better instructed in the arts of letters than of governing, and while contemplating the heavens and observing the stars, he lost the earth”).²

This rhetorical trope about Alfonso’s failure in politics resulting from distractedly “observing the stars” soon became a topos. Numerous writers repeated Mariana’s judgment, including Spanish Enlightenment intellectuals Enrique Flórez and Benito Feijóo³ as well as contemporary historians outside of Spain⁴ and, on occasion, twentieth- and twenty-first century critics both in Spain and abroad.⁵

As part of a broad attempt to vindicate Spain’s contribution to European cultural history, especially in reaction to the aspersions of writers repeating themes of the anti-Spanish Black Legend, historians since the nineteenth century have reacted against this paradigm and aimed to recuperate Alfonso’s image by stressing his foundational role in many areas of learning, even likening Alfonso’s cultural efforts to a kind of proto-Renaissance. Robert A. Anderson has mused hyperbolically that Alfonso

embodied traits that today we associate primarily with the “Renaissance scholar” [...] he was, in effect, directly responsible for several phases of that great period [...] perhaps eventually we shall come to think of him [...] as a man of vision whose thought and achievements in many respects actually foreshadowed the dawn of modern civilization (448).

Likewise, Américo Castro saw Alfonso as a harbinger of modern thought, for “without this lively humanism of the thirteenth century [in his work], that of the fifteenth would have been impossible” (LXV, my translation).⁶ Such sweeping pronouncements, although now less common, have not disappeared in recent scholarship. In the 1990s, Robert Burns praised Alfonso in exuberant terms, arguing that, “this farsighted, indefatigable king was a one-man renaissance” (*Emperor* 10).

As part of this image as a founder and forerunner of both the Renaissance and Humanism, scholars have also taken to naming him as the ‘father’ of everything from astronomy to Spanish law to the Castilian language itself. References to Alfonso as a ‘father’ became abundant in nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century historiography, and this metaphor similarly persists today.⁷ Within the last few de-

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reinado de Alfonso, el Sabio, fue una sucesión de fracasos en lo político y de éxitos en lo cultural” (70). O’Callaghan stated, “one can only regret that Alfonso X, an admirable scholar, poet, legislator, historian,

scientist, a truly learned man, was not an equally gifted statesman and politician” (*A History* 381).

6. “Sin este humanismo vital del siglo XIII habría sido imposible el del XV.”

7. In 1782, Joseph de Várgas y Ponce

called Alfonso “el padre de la astronomía en nuestro continente” and “el padre de nuestra literatura” (33 and 42). In the nineteenth century, the American essayist Charles Dudley Warner praised Alfonso as “the father of Spanish literature and the reviver of Spanish learning” (1:386). More recently, Lynn Ingamells has said that the claim that Alfonso “is the father of the Spanish language ... is an indisputable statement” (87).

8. Earlier biographers of Alfonso include Ballesteros y Beretta and González Jiménez. For the best overview of Alfonso’s cultural project and his concept of his own role as king, see Márquez Villanueva 25–40.

cedes, Alfonso has been called “father of Castilian prose” (Elena Armijo 216) and even “father of the Spanish university” (Bustos Tovar 113). Historian Peter Linehan has granted Alfonso the title “founding father of Spanish historiography and the real wonder of the thirteenth-century world” (“The Mechanics” 26). Burns too called Alfonso the “father of Spanish prose as a literary tool” (*The Worlds* 14) and praised Alfonso’s “world role as father of Spanish law” (*Emperor* 13). As recently as a decade ago, Salvador Martínez called him the “father of the Castilian language” (16), an honor otherwise only conferred on Cervantes.⁸

I argue that this emphasis on Alfonso’s foundational role, whether meant to defend Spain’s role in intellectual history or to trace the origins of modern Spanish institutions of language and law, has come at a certain cost, that of minimizing Alfonso’s significant continuity with earlier literary models and ignoring his own view of his work as based primarily on reception and continuity rather than foundation and innovation. While it is not my goal to deny Alfonso his important foundational status as a founder of many things or to revive the debates of past centuries, I would like to propose a reconsideration of this modern, forward-looking emphasis on Alfonso’s role as founder by suggesting that we may gain an important new perspective by inverting it – that is, by considering Alfonso according to his own medieval worldview, one in which he depicted himself as a ‘son’ and ‘heir’ rather than a ‘father’ and ‘founder.’ I propose that we may use this new lens (or, given that Alfonso’s view of himself was rather typically medieval, perhaps it is better to say we may ‘reuse’ this ‘old’ lens) to view with fresh eyes what are considered some of Alfonso’s most important successes as a patron of culture, namely, his translation projects and his use of Castilian in his writing. In other words, I would like to consider how we might see the Alfonsine legacy differently if we view it not through a modern, periodized or nationalist paradigm but through a medieval, genealogical one.

Although I can here only begin to sketch out in concise terms what this conceptual reorientation in Alfonsine studies might entail, I will use this essay to explore one aspect of Alfonsine cultural production that might support this reorientation, the frequent conjunction of images of filiation, or what I will call ‘sonship,’ with those of language and translation. For reasons of space, I will focus on a few examples from Alfonso’s non-historiographical texts – the *Setenario*, one of the *Cantigas de Santa María*, and the prologues to a number of his scientific translations – offering a reading of these as a prelim-

inary exploration of the image of filial piety and a propaedeutic to its further elaboration in the study of Alfonso's vast historiographical and legal corpora. These examples will allow me to highlight the importance of the image of sonship and filial loyalty in Alfonso's conceptualization and promotion of his cultural projects, forming the basis of a rhetoric of reception that was an essential and foundational aspect of his work as king. Even more importantly, Alfonso's self-presentation in his works as the son of his parents, Fernando III and Beatrice of Swabia, served his propagandistic attempts to promote himself as the rightful Holy Roman Emperor, a post to which he was elected but never confirmed. This reorientation of the view on Alfonso's cultural achievements – seeing his role in intellectual history more in the way he saw it rather than as we have since the nineteenth century – can serve in future studies as a jumping-off point for a wider reconsideration of the role of reception and inheritance in Medieval Castilian literary history.

King Alfonso, Son of King Fernando

The view of Alfonso as a son rather than a father is a natural one, for Alfonso regularly represented himself in this way in his own writing. The image of himself as a son is so recurrent that it is legitimate to see it as a defining feature of Alfonsine cultural production. In the prologues to many of his works, especially his translations, he repeatedly names himself in genealogical terms as “King Alfonso, son of King Fernando,” (“rey don Alfonso, fijo del rey don Fernando”), an expression appearing in many of the texts written or ordered to be written by Alfonso. This identification appears in most of the surviving translations from Arabic commissioned by Alfonso, in which the nature of the translation and the filial relation of Alfonso, its patron, are expressed together, often in the same sentence.

The collection of texts in the *Libros del saber de astronomía* (“Books of Astronomical Knowledge”) contains numerous examples of this formula. The *Libro de la açafeha* (“Book of the Saphea/Universal Astrolabe”), part of the *Libros*, begins,

Et este libro sobredicho traslado de arabigo en romanço
maestre Fernando de Toledo por mandado del muy noble
Rey don Alfonso fijo del muy noble Rey don Fernando et
dela Reyna donna Beatriz (Madrid, Universidad Com-

9. Citations from Alfonso's relevant prose works are based on the online edition of Alfonso X, *The Electronic Texts of the Prose Works of Alfonso X, el Sabio*. Editions of texts are cited accordingly where available.

plutense BH MSS 156, 106v; "This above-mentioned book was translated from Arabic to Romance by Ferdinand of Toledo by order of the very noble King Alfonso, son of the very noble King Fernando and of the Queen Beatrice").⁹

In the *Libro dela esfera* ("Book of the Sphere," a Castilian translation of a tenth-century Arabic work by Qusṭā ibn Lūqā), another part of the *Libros*, the prologue tells us that

Este libro es el dell alcora ... que compuso un sabio de oriente que ouo nombre Cozta ... fizo este libro en arabigo. Et despues mandolo trasladar de arabigo en language castellano el Rey don Alfonso fijo del muy noble Rey don ffernando et dela Reyna donna Beatriz et sennor de Castiella (U. Complutense BH MSS 156, 24r; "This book is of al-kurah [ar. 'sphere'] ... that a sage from the East named Qusṭā composed ... he made this book in Arabic. And later King Alfonso, son of the very noble King Fernando and of the Queen Beatrice, ordered it to be translated from Arabic into the Castilian language").

A similar formula can be found in a number of Alfonso's other translations.

This conjunction is not limited to Alfonso's scientific texts, however, but can also be seen in his translation of wisdom literature, the frame-tale collection known as *Kalilah and Dimna*. The translation into Castilian of this mirror for princes, which was transmitted from India to Iberia via the eighth-century Arabic version of Ibn al-Muqaffa', was Alfonso's very first literary project, begun even before his father's death and his own accession to the throne. The Castilian version ends with a colophon very similar to the introductory words found in later scientific translations, offering a comment on translation and sonship that constitutes a simultaneous declaration of personal and literary pedigree.

Aquí se acaba el libro de Calina et Digna. Et fue sacado de arávigo en latín, et romançado por mandado del infante don Alfonso, fijo del muy noble rey don Fernando (Alfonso X, Calila 355; "Here ends the book Kalilah and Dimna. It was taken from Arabic [and translated] into Latin, and translated into Romance by Prince Alfonso, son of the very noble King Fernando").

To be sure, such expressions are largely formulaic, giving voice to a typical, medieval view of both authorship and kingship. The use of standard phrases to insert oneself into a chain of accepted tradition was commonplace for medieval writers, for whom, as Alastair Minnis explains, “to be ‘authentic,’ a saying or a piece of writing had to be the genuine production of a named *auctor*,” and, indeed, “no ‘modern’ writer could decently be called an *auctor* in a period in which men saw themselves as dwarfs standing on the shoulders of giants, i.e. the ‘ancients’” (11–12). In twelfth- and thirteenth-century literature, moreover, such a view was expressed most concisely and repeatedly in the prologues to works, the so-called *accessus ad auctores*, in which writers commonly expressed, in rather predictable order, the title, author, intention, subject matter, mode of writing, order, usefulness, and branch of learning to which a work pertained (Minnis 4). Alfonso’s prologues, in establishing himself as a modern author, similarly link him both intellectually to past *auctores* of venerable reputation and genealogically to a more venerable and past political model, his father. They combine an appeal to intellectual authorities – those Arabic authors who were recognized leaders in science – with the invocation of an unbroken heredity, portraying his father Fernando III as a kind of ‘giant’ on whose shoulders, both political and intellectual, he stood in his own reign.

Despite its formulaic nature, Alfonso’s evocation of his father stands out next to the prefatory language found in similar medieval texts, such as those produced by Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II of Hohenstaufen (1194–1250), who was first cousin to Alfonso’s mother Beatrice, or those of Louis IX of France (1214–70), who was first cousin to Alfonso’s father Fernando III (making both figures Alfonso’s first cousins once removed). The prologue to Frederick’s work, *De arte venandi cum avibus* (“Art of Falconry”), written in the first person, directs the text to “vir clarissime M.E.” (*De arte* 1:1; *The Art* 3; “most illustrious of men, M.E”), a name usually understood to be his own illegitimate son Manfred, who later expanded the text and prepared a luxurious manuscript copy. It further states, “Auctor est vir inquisitor et sapientie amator Divus Augustus Fredericus secundus Romanorum imperator, Ierusalem et Sicilie rex” (*De arte* 1:2; *The Art* 4; “The author of this treatise, the divine [“of blessed memory”] and august Frederick II, Emperor of the Romans, King of Jerusalem and of Sicily, is a lover of wisdom with a philosophic and speculative mind”). Nowhere in this very personal text does Frederick present himself as a son or emphasize his own past genealogy. Similarly, Mi-

10. In the incipit of Michael's *Liber introductorius* (best preserved in Munich CLM 10268), he calls himself "astrologus Frederici imperatoris Romanorum semper augusti" (Edwards, "The Liber" 1; "The astrologer of Frederick, the ever illustrious emperor of the Romans"). Michael's translation of *Abbreviatio Avicenne* on Aristotle's *De Animalibus*, dedicated to Frederick and probably finished at his court, praises his patron as "Frederice domine mundi Romanorum imperator" (*Aristoteles Latinus* 4:942 [#1370]; "Frederick, lord of the world, emperor of the Romans").

11. For the instructions to Louis's son Philippe, see O'Connell, *The Teachings*. For his instructions to his daughter Isabelle, see O'Connell, *The Instructions*.

12. Cited in Rodríguez, "La preciosa transmisión" 308. An almost identical formula can be found in other privileges of the period, such as that to Uceda on 18 November 1250, Guadalajara on 13 April 1251, Castilian Extremadura on 09 July 1251, and Cuenca and Segovia on 22 November 1250. See also González, *Reinado y diplomas* III, docs 809 and 821, and others of this period.

13. Alfonso's lack of mention of his other family seems to stand out in a document in which Alfonso reaffirms an earlier privilege made by Fernando, first quoting his Father and then adding his own text: "Connoscida cosa sea a quantos esta carta uieren como yo don Alfonso, por la gracia de Dios Rey de Castilla, de Toledo, de León, de Gallizia, de Seuilla, de Córdoba, de Murcia et de Jahén, ui carta del rey don Fernando, mió padre, fecha en tal manera: Connoscida cosa sea a quantos esta carta uieren como yo don Fernando por la gracia de Dios rey de Castilla, de Toledo, de León, de Gallizia, de Seuilla, de Córdoba, de Murcia, et de jahén, en uno con la reyna donna Johanna, mi mugier, et con mios fijos, don Alfonso, don Frederic et don Enrric..." ("May it be known to all who see this letter that I, Don Alfonso, by the Grace of God King of Castile, Toledo, León, Galicia, Seville, Córdoba, Murcia, and Jaén, saw a letter of King Don Fernando, my father, made thus: May it be known to all who see this letter that

chael Scot, translator of Arabic texts at Frederick's court from 1227–35, calls his patron *Romanorum imperator* ("Emperor of the Romans") but makes no mention of his father or his role as son.¹⁰ Likewise, neither the father of Louis IX nor Louis's identity as a legitimate son and heir is ever mentioned in the writing ascribed to his name, even though his texts of "instructions" to his own children would have been a logical place to reiterate such filial genealogies.¹¹ In comparison to the royal rhetoric used by his close contemporaries, Alfonso's self-descriptive formulas in his prologues, albeit employing the repetition of stock phrases, stand out for their particular emphasis on Alfonso's filial relation to his parents.

One might also put these formulas in the context of the rhetoric of royal documents in Castile before and after Alfonso's reign. In a study of crown rhetoric in the first half of the thirteenth century, in the years preceding Alfonso's reign, Ana Rodríguez has shown that there is a notable increase in the emphasis on lineage and the transmission of royal power ("La preciosa transmisión" 308). This shift is palpable in the documents of Fernando III, who often emphasizes that his rulings were undertaken in the presence of or in consultation with his family members, including his sons, brother, and/or wife, and his counselors at the court. For example, in a privilege from April 1251, Fernando claims,

Oue mio conseio con Alfonso, mio fijo, et con Alfonso, mio hermano, et con don Diego López et con Don Nunno Gonzalez, et con don Rodrigo Alfonso, et con el obispo de Palençia, et con el obispo de Segouia et con el maestro de Calatraua et con el maestre de Uclés et el maestre del Temple et con el gran comendador del Hospital et con otros ricos omnes et caberos et omnes buenos de Castiella et de Leon. ("I took counsel with Alfonso, my son, and with Alfonso, my brother, and with don Diego López and with don Nuño González and with don Rodrigo Alfonso and with the Bishop of Palencia, and with the bishop of Segovia and with the Master of Calatrava and with the Master of Uclés and with other rich men and knights and good men of Castile and León." González, *Reinado y diplomas* III, doc 819).¹²

The list of names is interesting here in its variety as well as its lack of singular focus on Fernando's own parents. Alfonso, by contrast, rarely if ever mentions his children or other family members in his opening formulas, highlighting only his parents and especially his father.¹³

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I, Don Fernando, by the grace of God King of Castile, Toledo, León, Galicia, Seville, Córdoba, Murcia, and Jaén, together with Queen Doña Juana my wife, and with my sons, Alfonso, Fadrique, and Enrique...) Card dated 5 August 1252, Sevilla. (ACS, sec. IX, c. 4, doc 36/1. Printed in Ostos Salcedo and Sanz Fuentes, "Corona de Castilla" 249).

14. Similarly, in the prologue to the Castilian translation of the *Tesoro* of Brunetto Latini commissioned by Sancho, we read, “el muy noble don Sancho fijo del muy noble rey don Alfonso e nieto del santo rey don Ferrando el Vij rey de los que regnaron en Castilla e en León que ovieron assí nombre don Sancho, mandó trasladar...” (MS 13-3-8 of the Real Academia Sevillana de Buenas Letras; “The very noble Sancho, son of the very noble King Don Alfonso and grandson of the holy King Don Fernando, the seventh king of those ruling in Castile and León, who had the name Sancho, ordered to be translated...”). See also López Estrada 152. In the prologue to Sancho’s *Castigos y documentos para bien vivir*, we also read, “Este rrey don Sancho fue fijo del rrey don Alfonso que fizo las Siete Partidas, y njeto del rrey don Fernando que ganó la muy noble çibdat de Seuilla” (MS BNE 6603, fol. 1; “This king Don Sancho was son of King Don Fernando who made the *Siete Partidas*, and grandson of King Don Fernando who won the noble city of Seville”).

15. The study of Alfonso’s many parallels and similarities to a particularly Almohad cultural model has been made by Fierro.

16. It is telling that Alfonso’s brother Fadrique, younger by three years, undertook the translation of a similar oriental frame-tale collection, *Sendebâr* (*Syntipas*, or *The Seven Sages of Rome*), in 1253. It begins with similar language conflating sonship and translation: “El infante don Fadrique, fijo del muy noble aventurado e muy noble rey don Fernando, [e] de la muy santa reina conplida de todo bien, doña Beatriz... plogo e tovo por bien que aqueste libro [fuese trasladado] de arávido en castellano...” (63; “The Prince Fadrique, son of the very fortunate and very noble King Fernando and of the very holy Queen Beatrice, paragon of all good qualities... was pleased and took as good that this book [be translated] from Arabic to Castilian”). For a study of the link between translation and royal power in Castile in this period, see Foz.

If Alfonso’s focus on his father stands out next to earlier royal prologue formulas, it sets a precedent for later documents, and thus we can see the subsequent repetition of this Alfonsine formula focused on the father in the documents of Castilian kings in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century. The late thirteenth-century *Lucidario*, compiled at the order of Alfonso’s son Sancho (who ruled after Alfonso as Sancho IV) begins,

Este libro es llamado *Luçidario* e fiçolo componer a muchos savios el noble e catholico rey don Sancho el seteno rey de los que fueron en Castilla e en León, fijo del muy noble rey don Alfonso e de la muy noble reyna Violante (Salamanca BS, MS 1958 fol. 1; “This book is called the *Lucidario* and the noble and Catholic King Don Sancho, the seventh king of those of Castile and León, son of the very noble King Alfonso and the very noble Queen Violante, ordered many wise men to put it together”).¹⁴

A similar formula appears in works by subsequent Castilian rulers including Fernando IV, Alfonso XI, Pedro I, and even Enrique II, despite his illegitimacy. Thus, in comparison with his immediate contemporaries ruling in France and Sicily, as well as with his own Castilian predecessors and successors, Alfonso’s focus on his father in his formulaic openings seems to constitute an important turning point in royal rhetoric. Viewed in this way, Alfonso’s formulaic prologues are significant as an index of his particular ideological focus – one that revolved unswervingly around the lodestar of his father, Fernando III.

Equally unique about Alfonso’s opening formulas is how they bring into close proximity the discussion of language and translation with his genealogical identity. Such juxtaposition of elements links the identity of the Alfonsine text as a new Castilian translation of an old original Arabic version with Alfonso’s identity as a ‘new’ heir of an ‘old’ lineage.¹⁵ Alfonso’s translations, undertaken within the first decade of his reign, show the significant symbolic overlapping between translation and filiation, and point to the way that Alfonso conflated his intellectual projects with his own status, asserted against his younger siblings, as Fernando’s son and heir.¹⁶ The mere name of his father is the foundation of the coherence of Alfonso’s identity, the means by which he inserts himself into his role as king. This entrance into the symbolic order of kingship is also tied directly to an assertion of the symbolic order of language – literally, the lan-

guage of the father, Castilian – and both kingship and sonship can be taken as twin elements of the symbolic order inscribed by Fernando's name and its memorialization.

Sonship, Language, and Translation

This formulaic self-identification as “son of the noble King Fernando” also appears in the first surviving chapter of the *Setenario* (“Septenary”), an original (non-translated) work of uncertain dating that seems closely tied to Fernando's own literary endeavors. The work, a sort of mirror for princes like *Kalila* but with a more legalistic focus, was – Alfonso claims – begun by Fernando who then asked Alfonso on his deathbed to finish it. Whether or not this claim is true – and some scholars have called it into question and preferred to see it as a literary embellishment rather than a verifiable fact – does not diminish its importance as a frame in which Alfonso wishes the work to be interpreted.¹⁷ As Joseph O'Callaghan has argued, “nowhere is the Learned King's [Alfonso's] admiration for his father stated more extensively than in the *Setenario*” (*Alfonso X* 42).

Although the opening folios have been lost, the text's filial rhetoric is very much in line with a son-centered view of Alfonso's writing, as he calls himself, “ffijo del muy noble e bienauenturado rrey don Ffernando e de la muy noble rreyna donna Beatrís” (7; “son of the very noble and fortunate King Don Fernando and of the very noble Queen Doña Beatrice”). Alfonso moreover repeatedly describes the text as a fulfillment of his father's wishes and an expression of his obedience to his memory:

Onde nos, queriendo conplir el ssu mandamiento como de padre a obedecerle en todas las cosas, metiémosnos a ffazer esta obra mayormiente por dos rrazones: la una, porque entendimos que auya ende grant ssabor; la otra, porque nos lo mandó a ssu ffinamiento quando estaua de carrera para yr a paraíso (9; “Thus we, wanting to fulfill his commandment as a father and to obey him in all things, set ourselves the task of making this work, principally for two reasons: the first, because we knew there was great knowledge in it; and the second, because he ordered us to finish it when he was on the path toward paradise.”)

17. As he tells it, “onde, por todas estas e por todas otras muchas bondades que en él auya e por todos estos bienes que no ffizo, quisiemos conplir después de ssu fin esta obra que él auya començado en su vida e mandó a nos que la cunpliésemos” (10; “Thus for all these and many other good qualities that he had and for all of the good things he did for us, we set out after his death to finish this work, which he had begun and which he ordered us to finish”). Based on this passage, scholars have long assumed that the work came from early in Alfonso's reign. However, this assumption has been called into question by Jerry Craddock, who demonstrated that portions of the work overlap with the late recension of parts of the *Siete Partidas*, concluding that the text was more likely produced in the last decade of Alfonso's reign rather than the first. George Martin (“Alphonse X” and “De nuevo”), accepting Craddock's theory, has read the text in light of dynastic politics late in Alfonso's reign, taking the deathbed scene cited above as a legitimizing construction embellished by Alfonso. Gómez Redondo (1:304–30), on the other hand, supports the traditional thesis of the work's early date, and his reading has been supported by Salvador Martínez (300).

While the second portion of the text describes some basic themes of canon law including the nature of faith and heresy and a description of the first four of the seven sacraments of the Church (baptism, confirmation, penance, and communion), Alfonso devotes much of the early part of the work to an *encomium* of the deceased Fernando III. This identification of his authorship exemplifies the structuring of the self's identity according to the father's law, symbolized after his death by his name. By saying that the work is meant "to fulfill [Fernando's] commandment as a father and to obey him in all things," Alfonso logically combines his role as author and patron with his identity as Fernando's son.

Both parts of the work organize all information into groups of seven, which is taken as a mystical organizing principle of the universe itself. The universal septenary logic that underlies all things is similarly manifest in Fernando's life and reign, and thus just as there are seven virtues, seven sacraments, seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, seven deadly sins, and, we are told, seven names of God in Hebrew, so there the seven letters used to write Fernando's name ("law 2"), seven virtues to Fernando's character ("law 5"), seven habits that he regularly followed ("law 7"), and seven ways that God favored Fernando's reign ("law 9"). This seven-part logic also explains the nature of Fernando's and Alfonso's relationship as father and son, and Alfonso names seven "bienes que ffizo el rrey don Fernando al rrey don Alffonso su ffijo" ("law 4," p. 10; "good things that King Fernando did to his son King Alfonso"). Such paternal kindness includes actions such as "en faziéndonos omne" ("making us as a man"), "amándonos" ("loving us"), "ffaziéndonos mucho bien" ("doing much good to us"), and "que nos fizo en noble logar e en mugier de grant lineaie" (10; "that he made us in a noble state and through a woman of great lineage").¹⁸ By counting both Fernando's virtues as a king and as a father among his abundant lists of seven, Alfonso presents his own identity as a son as part of the perpetual and universal structure of the universe, a natural state in which his own kingship and identity as author and patron of translation continue even after Fernando's death.

Alfonso's praise of Fernando in the *Setenario* is well known in Alfonsine scholarship, but less attention has been paid by scholars to the role of language in the text. Although the *Setenario* is not a translation but an original work, it does repeatedly discuss the questions of language and translation and, more importantly, links such topics to Alfonso's identity as 'Fernando's son' in a way comparable to that

18. Such language sounds strikingly familiar to his description of the areas of the *Trivium* – grammar, logic, and rhetoric – according to the structure of the Trinity. On this language, see the discussion below.

already noted in Alfonso's early scientific and didactic works. The beginning of the work in the surviving manuscripts takes up in mid-stream a discussion of the meaning of the letters of the name *AL-FA-ET-O*, a Castilian rendering of the Greek letters *Alpha* and *Omega*, taken in Christianity (following *Revelation* 22:13) as an expression of the divine name of Jesus. The text explains the important linguistic correspondence between the letters of the name and the virtues they express, all organized in groups of seven. All of the letters of *AL-FA-ET-O* are taken to express names or aspects of God in Hebrew or Latin (A and L are missing, but the remaining letters symbolize: *Factor*, "maker," *Agnus*, "lamb," *El*, "God," *Theos*, "God," *Omnipotens*, "Omnipotent," etc.) (4-6). Alfonso then applies this methodology of reading the meaning of mystical letters to the letters of his and his father's names, reiterating his status as Fernando's son and specifying that he is also the legitimate heir.

Et por ende nos don Alffonso, ffijo del muy noble e bienauenturado rrey don Ffernando e de la muy noble rreyna donna Beatrís; e ssennor heredero, primeramente por la merçed de Dios, e después por derecho linaie, de que heredamos los rregnos de Castiella... (7; "son of the very noble and fortunate King Don Fernando and of the very noble Queen Doña Beatrice, and noble heir, primarily by the mercy of God and further by direct lineage from which we inherited the kingdoms of Castile...").

His identity as Fernando's son is also the basis of his genealogical legitimacy and the justification of his inheritance of the crown. Here, identity as son, heir, and king are conflated, stressing that Alfonso sees his kingdom, along with his book, not as the work of his foundation but as the fruit of his status as son and heir.

Such a conjunction is divinely ordained, and Alfonso notes about his own name that

Dios por la ssu merçet quiso que sse començasse en A e sse ffeneçiesse en O, en que ouyesse ssiete letras, ssegunt el lenguaie de Espanna, a ssemiança del ssu nonbre. Por estas ssiete letras enbió ssobre nos los ssiete dones del Spíritu Ssanto (7; "God in his mercy wanted that it begin in A and end in O, that it have in it seven letters according to the language of Spain, like His name. By these seven letters He sent the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit onto us").

Not only is divine favor of Alfonso and his reign built into the letters of his name, but also this mystical meaning is particularly embodied in his name as it is written “according to the language of Spain.” This detail seems all the more significant in light of Alfonso’s cultural projects, making translation to Castilian and not Arabic, Latin, or Hebrew a key to his identity as God’s chosen vicar, the rightful heir of Fernando’s legacy.

It is thus not surprising that Alfonso links the reading of the letters of his own name with those of his father. Alfonso reiterates his filial identity by stressing that

este libro ... nos començamos por mandado del rrey don Ffer-
nando, que ffué nuestro padre naturalmiente e nuestro
sennor, en cuyo nonbre, ssegunt el lenguaie de Espanna, ha
ssiete letras(8; “We began this book by order of King Fernan-
do, our Lord and biological father, in whose name, according
to the language of Spain, there are seven letters”).

Alfonso links his own claim to the throne as legitimate (“naturalmiente”) son of Fernando, and presents the elaboration of the text as a fulfillment of his father’s wishes. Most importantly, he grounds his identity as dutiful son and legitimate heir in the divine symbolism of his name in Castilian. The seven letters (not counting the repeated “n”) used to write Fernando’s name each stand for a divine or political virtue or characteristic (*Fe*, “faith,” *Entendimiento para conocer Dios*, “understanding in order to know God,” *Recio* [...] *para quebrantar los enemigos de la Ffe*, “fierce [...] in destroying enemies of the faith,” *Nobleza*, “nobility,” *Amigo de Dios*, “friend of God,” *Derechurero*, “upright,” *Onrrado de Dios*, “honored by God”).¹⁹ In explicating his father’s name, Alfonso also declares his intention to “obey him in all things,” including his pursuit of “great learning” (“grant sabor”), thus making sonship, authorship, and translation into Romance three aspects of his divine mandate as king.

The language of filial piety is used later in the work in exploring the conjunction of intellectual and spiritual pursuits. In naming the seven liberal arts of the *Trivium* and *Quadrivium* – standard branches of learning in medieval education – Alfonso shows how the *Trivium* mirrors the structure of the divine Trinity, which is itself based on a divine father-son relationship of sorts.

Et la gramática, que es de palabra, sse entiende por el Padre;
porque por el poder del su vierbo tan solamiente ffueron

19. Taking the father as a symbol of the law itself, exegesis of the father’s name might be understood both as a kind of legislative action and an act of obeisance to his intellectual and political authority.

ffechas todas las cosas. La lógica departe la mentira de la verdat, et entiéndesse por el Ffijo; que él nos mostró el Padre uerdaderamente e por él lo connosçiemos, e sacónos de yerro e de mentira (31; “Grammar, which is language, is understood to be the Father, because through His words alone all things were made. Logic separates lies from truth, and it is understood to be the Son, for He showed us the Father truly, whom we know through Him, and He took us from error and lies”).

On the surface, this seems like standard Trinitarian theology built on *John* 1:1 (“The Word was with God and the Word was God”), associating God the Father with the creating Word and the Son with the means to understand that Word. This Trinitarian reading of the trivium, moreover, follows Trinitarian theories of the Liberal Arts already elaborated in the twelfth century, such as that of Rupert of Deutz and others.²⁰ In Alfonso’s view, God the father shows Himself to us in the Son, “mostrándonos ciertamente en cuál manera nos ssaluásemos, e ganando ssu amor” (31; “showing us truly how we are to be saved and earning his [the Father’s] love”). This Trinitarian language takes on another significance when read in the light of Alfonso’s earlier statements about father-son relations and language.

Such a reading is justified, not only because the discussion of the Trinity repeats language from Alfonso’s discussion of Fernando, but also because we have already been told about the divine significance of both Fernando’s and Alfonso’s names. Just as Fernando’s Castilian name embodies a divine sevenfold identity including religious characteristics such as faith and friendship with God and fierceness in opposing God’s enemies, so God the father embodies language itself, creating all things by his Word. The comparison between God and Fernando is direct when Alfonso lists, as the first of the seven gifts that he received from his father, that “nos fizo omne, ca quiso Dios que él fuese nuestro padre e por él viniésemos al mundo” (10; “He made us man, for God wanted that he [Fernando] be our father and that we come into the world through him”). Similarly Alfonso received the gifts of the Holy Spirit through his Castilian name, which is a parallel to Jesus’s name as *Alfa et o*. Alfonso’s use of Castilian as the language of his translation and writing projects is similarly parallel to the way Jesus the Son reflects and broadcasts the will of God the Father. Alfonso connects will, understanding, and language through the image of the voice. “Ca la uoluntad embía la boz; e la boz enbía la letra; la letra, la ssíllaba; et la ssíllaba, la parte; e la parte, el

20. On Rupert’s Trinitarian view of the Liberal Arts in his *De Sancta Trinitate et operibus eius* (ca. 1112–16), see Copeland and Sluiter 40 and 309–405.

21. In *Estoria de España*, Alfonso begins by discussing the origins of language and writing. He notes that the origins of writing lie in the desire to pass on the wisdom of the voice from one generation to the next. In seeking out a way to avoid oblivion, “fallaron las figuras de las letras et ayuntando las fizieron dellas sillabas et de sillabas ayuntadas fizieron dellas partes. E ayuntando otrosi las partes fizieron razon et por la razon que uiniessen a entender los saberes [...] et saber tan bien contar lo que fuera en los tiempos dantes” (Alfonso X, *Primera crónica general* 1:3a; “They discovered the shapes of letters and, joining them, they made syllables and with syllables joined they made parts of speech. And joining the parts of speech they made arguments and with arguments they came to understand knowledge [...] and know also how to tell what happened in past times”).

22. On Alfonso’s imperial ambitions, the so-called *fecho del imperio*, see Valdeón Baroque; Rodríguez López, “Rico fincas”; and González-Casanovas 23–63. On Alfonso’s understanding and portrayal of Fernando III as part of his imperial ambitions, see especially 59–63. For the wider context of Alfonso’s ambitions, see Linehan, *History and Historians*, 413–506; and Fraker 155–76.

dicho; e el dicho, la rrazón” (30; “For the will sends forth the voice; and the voice sends forth the letter; and the letter [sends] the syllable; and the syllable, the part of speech; and the part of speech, the statement; and the statement [sends forth] reason”).

These elements of language, which Alfonso lists in his historiographical writing as the origins of writing and written memory, are parallel in Alfonso’s description of the Trinity, making explicit the comparison between Alfonso’s relation with Fernando and Jesus’s relation with God the Father.²¹ Alfonso claims that Jesus is the “voice” by which his Father’s will can be heard: “la boz del Padre [...] era ssu fijo mucho amado” (35; “the voice of the father [...] was his much beloved son”). Just as the voice of the Father, in this Trinitarian model, is taken literally as a manifestation of the Son and as an expression of the Father’s divine will, Alfonso implies he himself constitutes a fulfillment and embodiment of Fernando’s will as expressed on his deathbed. It is thus not surprising that when Alfonso claims that Fernando ordered him to finish the *Setenario*, he also affirms that “entendimos conplidamiente cuál era ssu uoluntad” (9; “We understood completely what his will was”).

Translation and *Translatio*: Memorializing Fernando in Word and Image

The link between translation and sonship is not limited to Alfonso’s translation projects, but is also part of his larger project of self-representation as king of Castile and its newly conquered kingdoms, as well as legitimate heir to the title of Holy Roman Emperor by virtue of being the son of Beatrice of Swabia, who was granddaughter of Emperor Frederick I Barbarossa (and, as noted, first cousin to Emperor Frederick II of Sicily). After Holy Roman Emperor William of Holland died in 1256, Alfonso and Richard of Cornwall were both elected a few months apart in 1257, and both failed to gain papal approval from subsequent popes (Alexander IV, Urban IV, Clement IV, Gregory X) over the subsequent two decades (O’Callaghan, *The Learned King* 201).²² Anthony Cárdenas has argued that Alfonso’s intellectual projects during this period functioned as a logical attempt to connect an image of *translatio studii* with an imperial *translatio imperii* in an effort to gain support for his imperial ambitions: “For Alfonso not to have connected a *translatio studii* to a *translatio potestatis* – learning and power yoked both from his ancestors to him and

especially a *translatio* from him to his progeny – would have been impractical if not foolhardy” (106). Alfonso used his texts to present himself as a legitimate heir of the estates of both his father and mother – making him, through his father, the legitimate ruler of the unified Castile and León as well as the newly conquered lands of al-Andalus and, through his mother, the heir to the title of Holy Roman Emperor. In making this connection, *translatio imperii* – the transfer of power to Alfonso’s empire by virtue of its inheritance of past imperial power (Roman and Islamic) – was justified through translation, understood simultaneously as a linguistic act and a transfer of cultural capital and goods.

One striking example of the conjunction of filial piety, linguistic translation, cultural inheritance, and political *translatio* is found in canticle 292 of Alfonso’s extensive corpus of Galician-Portuguese Marian devotional songs, the *Cantigas de Santa María* (CSM), one of a few items written or commissioned by Alfonso (along with CSM 122 and 221) describing a miracle that involves his father Fernando.²³ CSM 292 tells of a miracle that happened when Alfonso constructed a new tomb for his parents in the cathedral of Seville, which had been converted from a mosque after the conquest of the city by Fernando in 1248. The lyrics of this song, as well as the visual representation of its plot in the Florentine manuscript (Firenze, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Banco Rari 20, 10va-11vb; see Plate 1), represent Alfonso in the role of a pious and dutiful son, glorifying his father’s memory. This self-representation as a son stands out because in the *Cantigas* Alfonso never represents himself in any similar way as a father or uses any of his songs to present his relationship with his eleven legitimate and three illegitimate children.²⁴ By contrast, Alfonso focuses on his decision to honor his parents by constructing their tomb.

Ond’ avêo que séu fillo Rei Don Alfonsso, fazer
 fez mui rica sepultura que costou muy grand’ aver,
 feita en fegura dele, polo óssos i meter
 se o achassen desfeito; mas tornou-xo-lle en al ...
 Ca o achou tod’ inteiro e a ssa madre
 Esto [foi] quando o corpo da sa madre fez viir
 de Burgos pera Sevilla, que jaz cabo d’Alquivir,
 e en ricos mōimentos os fez ambos sepelir,
 obrados muy ricamente cada un a séu sinal.
 (Alfonso X, *Cantigas* 3:79; “Wherefore it happened that his
 son, King Don Alfonso, had a very rich sepulchre construct-

23. These and related songs have been considered by Joseph O’Callaghan in his study of the *Cantigas* in a chapter on “filial piety and dynastic history” (*Alfonso X* 36–58). The most extensive consideration of Alfonso’s construction of his father’s image in writing and memorialization is Fernández Fernández, “Muy noble,” which also considers CSM 292 (151–61). See also Linehan, *History and Historians*, 449–52.

24. While the role of Alfonso’s personal hand in the composition of this song is not certain, we may assume that the importance of the theme demanded that Alfonso know of and oversee its content. Writing about the *Cantigas*, Joseph Snow has commented that the varied content of the songs “may prove to contain important keys – even at this remove of time – to the kind of person [Alfonso] was or, better yet, the kind of person he wanted to be” (“Alfonso as Troubadour” 124). Given Fernando’s preponderance in Alfonso’s vision of history, it is fair to say that much of what Alfonso wished to be was an imitation of his father, and it is logical to characterize Alfonsine cultural production – both written and material – as a recurrent encomium of Fernando III. In this reading, CSM must be understood as a personal work of the king, if not in form then undoubtedly in content.

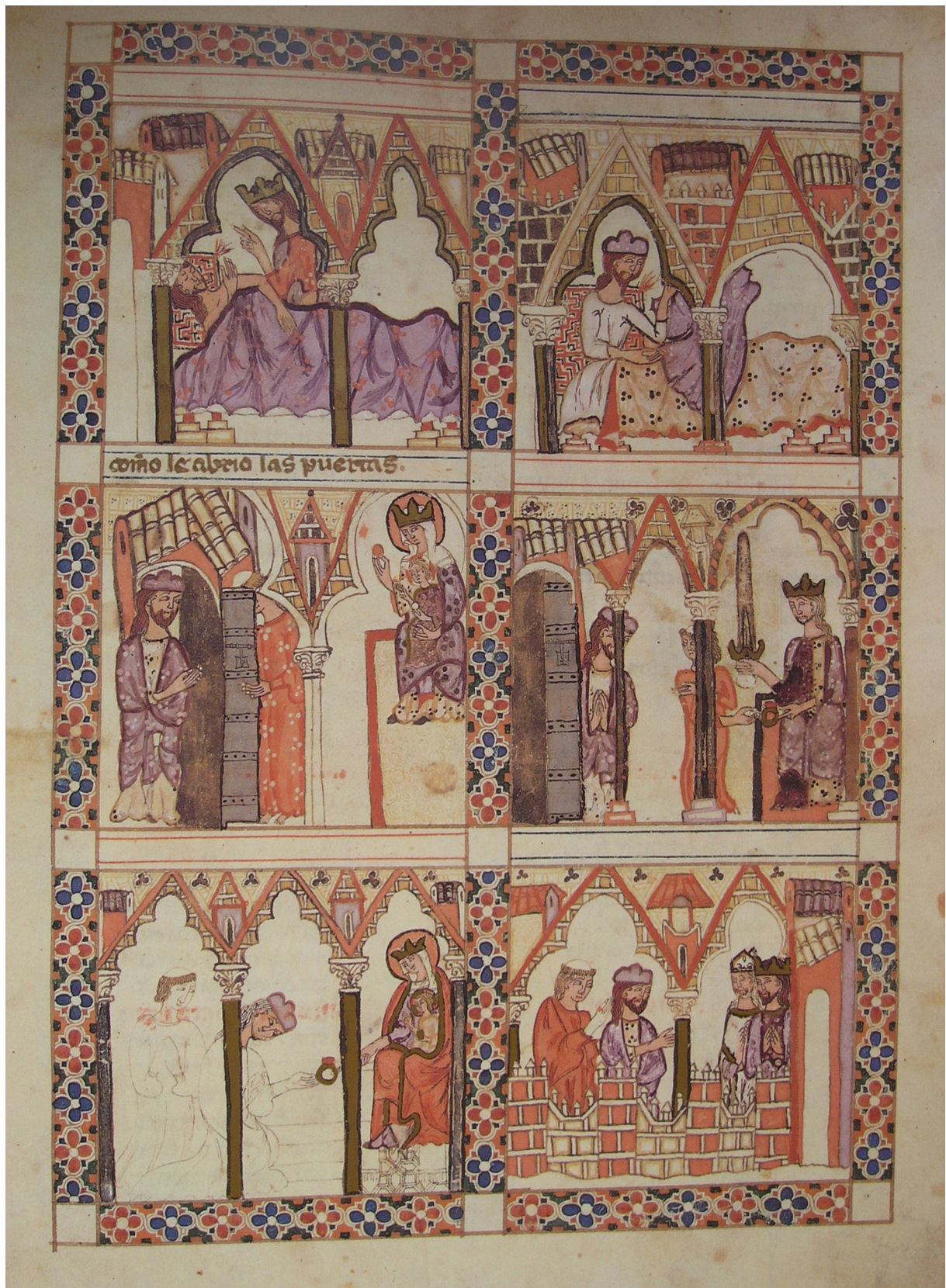


Plate 1: Master Jorge and the King's rin (CSM 292). Firenze, Biblioteca Nazionale Centrale, Banco Rari 20, 12r.

ed which cost great wealth. It was made in his father's likeness to hold his bones, if he should be found decomposed. However it turned out not to be the case, for he found him and his mother completely uncorrupted... This miracle took place when he had the body of his mother brought from Burgos to Seville, which lies near the River Guadalquivir. He had them both entombed in rich sepulchres, beautifully carved, in their respective likenesses." Alfonso X, *Songs* 352–53).

Alfonso decided to honor his father's pious and noble deeds by erecting a statue of him to grace the royal tomb. In one hand, his father held "ssa espada ... con que deu colbe a Mafomete mortal" (*Cantigas* 3:79; *Songs* 353; his sword with which he had dealt a fatal blow to Muḥammad) and on the other hand, his finger bore a "u anel d'ouro con pedra mui fremosa" ("a ring of gold with a very beautiful stone"). A short time after the monument was completed, King Fernando appeared in a dream to the man who fashioned the statue and ring, an artisan named Jorge, and told him to replace his image with a statue of the Virgin, and to put the ring on her finger.²⁵ Jorge hastened to the cathedral of Seville, where he and the sacristan found to their astonishment that the ring he had fashioned was already on a statue of the Virgin instead of the statue of Fernando where it had been. When King Alfonso and the archbishop heard the story, they praised king Fernando's memory together.

The focus of the song is on memorialization – Alfonso's creation of a monument to honor his father's deeds. This memorialization is made possible by putting the material fruits of Fernando's deeds on display, and the location of the miracle of CSM 292 in Seville underscores the importance of conquest and spoliation of conquered cultural capital. The choice of Seville is significant, not only because Fernando died there, but also because it was the last city conquered by Fernando from the Muslims. It was a city "que Mafomete perdeu/ per este Rey Don Ffernando, que é cidade cabdal" (Alfonso X, *Cantigas* 3:78; *Songs* 352; "a capital which Muḥammad lost/ because of this King Don Fernando"). This city "that Muḥammad lost" symbolizes a loss that brought with it riches, both monetary and cultural, such as that represented in the jeweled ring put on Fernando's finger, later transferred to the Virgin. Fernando's piety is represented as a form of loyalty to the Virgin, and thus he is rewarded with victory because, as the refrain of the poem reiterates, "Muto demostra a Virgen, a Sennor esperital,/ sa lealdad' a aquele que acha sempre leal"

25. "Con que vin ben des Toledo; e logo cras manarnan/ di a meu fillo que ponna esta omagen de San/ ta Maria u a ma está [...] e que lle den o anel,/ ca dela tiv' eu o reyno e de seu Fillo mui bel,/ e sōo seu quitamente...." (l. 87–96, Alfonso X, *Cantigas*, ed. Mettmann 3:79–80; Come quickly from Toledo, and tomorrow tell my son to put the image of Holy Mary where mine is [...] and give her the ring, because I held my kingdom from her and from her beautiful son; and I am hers entirely...).

(*Cantigas* 3:79; *Songs* 352; “The Virgin, Spiritual Lady, clearly reveals Her loyalty to the one She finds ever loyal”).

The loyalty and piety for which Fernando is rewarded continue after his death in his appearance in the dream of Jorge in order to request that his statue be moved and modified to pay homage to the Virgin (Fernández Fernández, “Muy noble” 158). The dream of the tomb in CSM 292 thus represents an inversion of the scenario presented in the *Setenario*. In the latter, Alfonso claims to be finishing a project begun by Fernando after his death. In the former, Alfonso claims Fernando has come back to finish the work of his tomb that his son did not complete correctly, and the fact that the work is miraculously already done by the time Jorge arrives at the cathedral implies that the Virgin supports and anticipates Fernando’s own wishes. In both texts, Alfonso presents his works – both literary and monumental – as those of a son fulfilling Fernando’s legacy. To read Alfonso’s works exclusively through a teleological, modern lens as foundational or innovative rather than in terms of Alfonso’s own goals is to risk misconstruing the significance of the Alfonsine legacy in its own local and contemporary context.

The story of CSM 292 is also a memorialization of the *spolia* brought by Fernando into the Castilian kingdom, constituting a *translatio* both of political power and also of real wealth, symbolized by the golden ring at the center of the miracle story. As in his prologues and in the *Setenario*, Alfonso expresses his filial piety to his parents through images of translation and *translatio*, underscoring his own legitimacy as heir of that transferred wealth. Yet this trans-

lation is not only figurative or material, but is also linguistic, being literally an act of translation on Alfonso’s part. The story of CSM 292 dramatizes the real history of Alfonso’s construction of his parents’ royal tombs in 1279.²⁶ Originally located within an enclosed chapel in the old Cathedral of Seville, which had been the Almo-had mosque before it was converted after the conquest of 1248, the tomb was dismantled and rebuilt in the sixteenth century upon the construction of the new royal chapel that stands at the northeast end of the new gothic cathedral, near the Giralda bell tower (converted from the mosque’s minaret). The largely rebuilt baroque monument today contains the actual tomb of Fernando (see Plate 2), which includes a front panel that is occasionally lowered to display, within a glass coffin, the mummi-

26. The reference to the building of the tombs can be found in González Jiménez, *Diplomatario* 473–74, no. 450. See the discussion and documentation in O’Callaghan, *Alfonso X*, 5038; and Nickson 172–73.

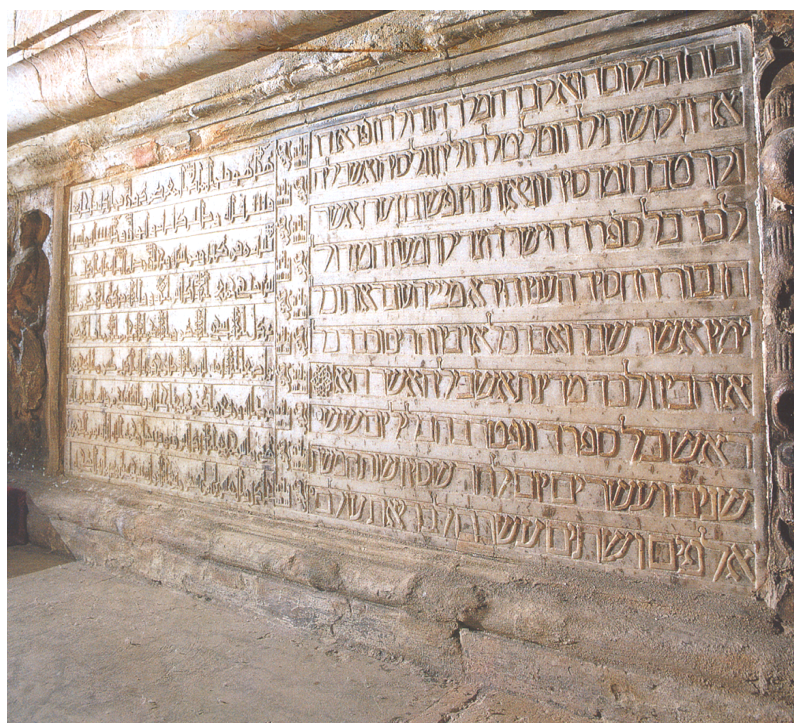
Plate 2: Fernando III’s mummified body on display in the Royal Chapel, Cathedral of Seville.



27. For a recent overview of the inscriptions on the tomb, including photos and translations, as well as current bibliography on the monument, see Nickson; and Dodds et al. 196–202.

fied body of Fernando himself (the incorruptibility of Fernando's and Beatrice's bodies is mentioned in the song as well). This structure stands atop a stone base, into which have been incorporated panels from the original Alfonsine monument, including, between symbols of the crowns of Castile and León, four well-known epitaph inscriptions in Hebrew and Arabic (on the back side) and Castilian and Latin (on the front), respectively. Each epitaph is very similar but not identical in meaning to the others.²⁷ Reading the inscriptions on the base, we can hear echoes of Alfonso's own prologues identifying him as the king "of Toledo, of León, of Galicia, of Sevilla, of Córdoba, of Murcia, and of Jaén," the warrior who "conquered all of España" (or "Hispania" or "al-Andalus" or "Sefarad," as it is written in the various inscriptions) (Nickson 180; See Plate 3). The epitaphs use translation to emphasize the universality of Fernando's kingship, a multilingual legacy that Alfonso lays claim to by building the monument and then including an ekphrastic representation of it as the site of a Marian miracle in CSM 292. As Laura Fernández has argued, Fernando's royal tomb "should not only be understood as a funerary scene that served to commemorate the memory of the deceased king

Plate 3: The multi-lingual inscriptions on the base of Fernando III's tomb. Royal Chapel, Cathedral of Seville.



28. "Dicha capilla no solo debía ser entendida como escenario funerario que sirviera para conmemorar la memoria del rey difunto y su esposa, sino como escenario triunfal de la monarquía castellano-leonesa."

and his wife, but also as a scene of the triumph of the Castilian-Leonese monarchy" ("Muy noble" 143–44; my translation).²⁸

29. “El prestigio de su saber árabe era aceptado como un hecho natural y nada polémico en todas partes [...] los esfuerzos del rey Sabio han de entenderse como un intento de convertir dicho ideal ‘toledano’ [...] en una política cultural para sus reinos.”

This emphasis on translation-as-*translatio* is further hinted at when Fernando, speaking in the dream of the ring maker Jorge, tells him to give the ring “en offreçon/ aa omagen da Virgen que ten vestido cendal,/ con que vin ben des Toledo” (Alfonso X, *Cantigas* 3:79; *Songs* 353; “In offering to the statue of the Virgin which has a silken robe which I brought all the way from Toledo”). This movement of wealth and spiritual patrimony from Toledo to Seville mirrors the historical movement of the Castilian request of Muslim lands, from the taking of Toledo in 1085 by Alfonso VI to the conquest of Seville by Fernando III in 1248. Alfonso’s own translation projects in the thirteenth century were, as Márquez Villanueva has argued, modeled on those of Toledo of the previous century. “The prestige of [Toledo’s] Arabic learning was accepted as a natural fact [...] The Learned King [Alfonso]’s efforts must be understood as an attempt to convert that ‘Toledan’ ideal [...] into a cultural politics for his kingdoms” (77; my translation).²⁹ It is significant in this context that the character of Fernando III in *CSM* 292 orders Jorge to replace his own statue – a monument to his military conquests of Seville – with that of the Virgin “which I brought all the way from Toledo” – a monument to the cultural riches that developed after the conquest of that Muslim city in 1085. The transfer of spiritual goods from Toledo to Seville is likewise a symbolic transfer of cultural riches acquired through translation from Arabic, making the replacement of the statue an act of both real translation as well as cultural and political *translatio*. This transfer of riches, which David Wacks has recently named, in his study of the Castilian chivalric novel *Libro del Caballero Zifar*, as the transfer of “symbolic capital” (119), is as much as movement of things as it is of prestige, and the function of the representation of the father’s tomb in *CSM* 292 is “to bring together under a single rubric the traffic in relics and traffic in Andalusí learning” (136). The narrative unfolding of *CSM* 292 enacts Alfonso’s own symbolic transformation of the political legacy of his father’s military conquests into a cultural legacy of his own design.

As Nicholas Paul has argued about family memory among noble crusading families of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the tomb of the hero was the center of a claim to power and the ongoing rights of inherited legacy, a “site around which rights of lordship and spiritual commitment were ritually renegotiated and the power and identity of a family was restated.” Similarly, the presence of the royal or aristocratic body “was the precious keystone supporting the weight of the noble house” (149). Paul’s observations are appropriate to de-

scribe how Alfonso's construction of his parents' royal tomb not only presented their bodies in a similar way, but also prepared a space in which he too would be inserted as their son. Alfonso's narrativization of this act in CSM 292 memorializes his own act of tomb building as much as it preserves his parents' memory, and the song uses this fictive space to compare Alfonso to his father. Just as his father's military conquests were marked with the placing of a commemorative statue of the Virgin – as the song boasts, “quand' algũa cidade | de mouros ía gãar, sa omagen na mezquita | pôía eno portal” (“When [Fernando] conquered a city from the Moors, he placed Her statue in the portico of the mosque”) – so Alfonso's act of memorializing his parents was marked with the placing of a statue of his own father – “el Rei apóst' e mui ben a omagen de séu padre” (*Cantigas* 3:79; *Songs* 352–53; “The king had erected the dignified statue of his father”). We might read Alfonso's vision of his father returning in Jorge's dream to ‘correct’ his son's gesture – insisting that the Virgin's statue, not his own, be placed – as a way of reaffirming the link between the two memorial gestures in the poem. Such correcting was one of Fernando's “gifts” to Alfonso that were listed in the *Setenario* – not only “creating us” and “loving us” but also “castigándonos” (“teaching/disciplining us”), and “perdonándonos quando algunos yerros ffazíemos contra él o contra otre” (*Setenario* 10; “forgiving us when we committed errors against him or another”).

Fernando's tomb is a site celebrating the victory of the Christian conquest of Islamic civilization, and the representation of the act of memorialization of that victory in CSM 292 is Alfonso's deliberate gesture of inserting himself into that conquest as its son and heir. Alfonso's choice to memorialize his father through an act of translation in a way comparable to his prologues and other writing about his father conflates sonship, translation, and kingship as parts of a single polyvalent performance of his own royal identity as legitimate heir. The representation of this act of memorialization in CSM 292 as a scene of political *translatio* and also as a scene of a Marian miracle signaling divine favor points to the complex nature of this political rhetoric.

Conclusion: From Father to Son

The first of Alfonso's two great works of historiography, the *Estoria de España* (“History of Spain”), survives in a number of versions,

30. For an overview of the *Estoria de España*, see the introduction by Ayerbe-Chaux. The so-called ‘primitive redaction’ (also called ‘versión vulgar’ and ‘versión regia’) was drafted before 1270; a second post-1274 version made some changes to this; the so-called ‘critical version’ was elaborated at the end of Alfonso’s life, between 1282 and Alfonso’s death in 1284; and a fourth version, sometimes called the ‘rhetorically expanded version,’ was developed during the reign of Sancho IV. The versions of the *Estoria* have been studied in depth. For the theories of the different versions, see Catalan; and Fernández-Ordóñez 205–220. On the evolution of Alfonsine rhetoric in the royal chronicles, see Funes, “Dos versiones”; For a brief overview of the state of studies on Castilian historiography, see Ward.

Plate 4: *Estoria de España* (Real Biblioteca del Monasterio de San Lorenzo de El Escorial, Y-I-2, 1v). Alfonso X presents his heir with the royal copy of the *Estoria*.
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31. Some scholars such as Menéndez Pidal have seen the son as Fernando, given the early date of the manuscript (Fernández Fernández, “Transmisión del saber” 200–02). But others, such as Fernández Fernández, have argued that this folio was inserted into the manuscript and better reflects artistic elements of Alfonso’s later manuscripts, thus concluding that it must be Sancho. A summary of this debate can be found in Fernández Fernández, “Transmisión del saber,” 200–02. On the book as a symbol of royal power, see Ruiz García. On the role of the *Estoria* in proffering an imperial ideology for the king, see Funes, “La crónica”; and Fraker 132–69.

some made during the king’s lifetime and an expanded version made by his son King Sancho IV (reg. 1284–95) after his death in 1284.³⁰ In the beginning of the manuscript of the early redaction (Madrid, El



Escorial, MS Y-I-2, also known as “E1,” fol 1v), there appears an image of King Alfonso seated in his court, holding a sword in one hand and handing a book to a kneeling son with the other. See Plate 4. While it is not clear which son this is – his firstborn son, Fernando de la Cerda, who died in battle in 1275, or his second son, Sancho IV – the scene was certainly from Alfonso’s lifetime, and can therefore be taken as a clear representation of Alfonso in the role of father to his children rather than son to Fernando III.³¹ As in his depictions of his own father, the emphasis is on father-son relations as a conduit of the transmission of knowledge and royal power.

Viewing this image of the transfer of power and knowledge from father to son, it is poignant to consider that Alfonso, after losing his first-born son, would end his life betrayed by his second. In 1282, Sancho rallied his mother, his brothers, as well as Alfonso’s own brother, Prince Manuel, all to support him in claiming the crown against Alfonso’s wishes. Two years later, Alfonso, isolated and abandoned in Seville by all of his family except for his illegitimate daughter, Be-

32. Alfonso even specified in his final will that if here were buried in Seville with his parents, as he ended up, “que fagan de tal manera, que la nuestra cabeça tengamos a los pies damos a dos” (González Jiménez, *Diplomatario* 558–59, no. 521; “that they make it in such a way that our head be at the feet of both of them”).

atrice, would die without reconciling with Sancho, whom he would disinherit in his final will. Nevertheless, Sancho was chosen as king and seized the crown and the inheritance left by Alfonso to his younger sons (O’Callaghan, *A History* 380–81). Alfonso would be buried in the cathedral in Seville alongside the tombs of his parents, affirming in death his role more as son than father.³² The old saw of Alfonso being a failure at politics and a success at learning might be modified to call him instead a failure at fatherhood and a success at sonship.

Indeed, Alfonso would fittingly be remembered by his own family more for his legacy as a son than as a father. In the fourteenth-century *Crónica particular de San Fernando*, appended to a later copy of the *Estoria de España* (in the El Escorial manuscript, MS X-I-4), there appears a dramatization of Fernando III’s death, including a curious scene in which Fernando bequeaths to Alfonso his kingdom. Although written well after Alfonso’s own death, the imagined (or embellished) scene offers a representation of the bequest from father to son that so much preoccupied Alfonso during his lifetime. Here a dying Fernando is represented as telling Alfonso:

Fijo rico fincas de tierra et de muchos buenos vasallos mas que Rey que en la cristiandad sea. Punna en fazer bien et ser bueno ca bien as con que. Et dixol mas sennor te dexo de toda la tierra dela mar aca quelos moros del Rey Rodrigo de espanna ganado ouieron. Et en tu sennorio finca toda la una conquerida et la otra tributada. Sy la en este estado en que tela yo dexo la sopieres guardar eres tan buen Rey como yo; et sy ganares por ti mas, eres mejor que yo; et si desto menguas, non eres tan bueno como yo. (fol. 358v, Alfonso, *Primera crónica general*, ch. 1132; 2:772–73; “Son, you have been left rich in lands and many good vassals, more than any king in Christendom; Strive to do well and to be good, for you have what [you need]. And he also said: Sir, I leave you with all the land from the sea up to here that the moors had won from King Rodrigo of Spain. All lies in your command, the one part conquered and other other part, under tribute to you. If you know how to keep what I give you in this state, you will be as good a king as I am; if you win more for yourself, you will be better than I am; and if you lose part of this, you will not be as good as I am.”)

33. Despite this fact, it has been taken by numerous critics as a partly faithful representation of events. Salvador Martínez has argued that these words would haunt Alfonso like a “nightmare” that would “drive” Alfonso to make some of the poor political decisions for which he is so much criticized. “Estas palabras de su padre se grabarán en la conciencia de Alfonso como una pesadilla que lo empujará, en determinados momentos, a aventuras políticas y militares con consecuencias desastrosas” (13; “These words of his father would be burned into Alfonso’s conscience like a nightmare that would push him, in certain moments, to political and military adventures with disastrous consequences”). For an extended reading of this passage as a reflection of Alfonsine royal ideology, see Rodríguez López, “Rico fincas.”

Taking this as a product of the fourteenth century, we might see in this scene a chronicler’s affirmation of Sancho’s claim to inheritance by connecting his reign and legacy with those of his grandfather Fernando III rather than with his father. Or we might instead see a tacit criticism of Alfonso’s failure to live up to Fernando’s military legacy or his inability to “keep what [Fernando] g[a]ve you” in the face of Sancho’s later challenge to his rule. In any case, although this scene is undoubtedly a poetic invention of a royal chronicler,³³ it is not without importance in signaling how Alfonso was remembered and represented by posterity in the decades after his reign: as one who regularly sought to present himself as a son rather than a father.

By picturing himself as one who received land, knowledge, and title from Fernando, Alfonso had repeatedly characterized his role as patron of translation and author of original works in Castilian as intimately dependent on continuing the legacy bequeathed to him through his family. For this reason, as well as because of standard medieval notions of authorship and authority, Alfonso would have shunned any notion of himself as a founder or initiator of his projects – a thoroughly modern concern – instead choosing to see himself as a point of transmission of knowledge and power from past to present. Highlighting such a connection – all-consuming to him, and equally evident to his contemporaries – allows us to appreciate the value of approaching the Alfonsine corpus not, or not primarily, through the metaphor of fatherhood – of foundation, initiation, or innovation – but first and foremost through the metaphor of sonship – of reception, inheritance, and continuity with past traditions of learning and kingship. The modern focus on Alfonso as a founder of all things Castilian and a forerunner of the Renaissance and the arrival of Humanism risks misconstruing the intellectual, religious, and genealogical aspects of Alfonso’s cultural projects in the service of modern political and historiographical narratives. Further work on Alfonso’s self-representation in its own context and on its own terms could illuminate how it resonates not only through Alfonso’s own historiographical and legal works, but also through the writings of his son Sancho, as well as Castilian writing from the fourteenth century such as the *Libro del Caballero Zifar* and the writing of Alfonso’s nephew, Juan Manuel. Examining such continuity reveals the curious irony that in his memorialization of his father and his representation of himself in the terms of sonship, reception, and continuity, Alfonso was the initiator of a mode of the representation of authorship that persisted in later Castilian writing. In this way, he unwittingly

tingly established himself, through the metaphor of sonship, as a founding father to be remembered.

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