Spanish Royal Patronage 1412-1804

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Portraits as Propaganda

Edited by
Ilenia Colón Mendoza
and Margaret Ann Zaho

Cambridge
Scholars
Publishing

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This book first published 2018

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN (10): 1-5275-0402-6
ISBN (13): 978-1-5275-0402-8

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This volume originated with papers presented at the Sixteenth Century Society and Conference held in San Juan, Puerto Rico on October 24-27 in 2013. The panel entitled "Spanish Royal Patronage: Portraits as Propaganda" was chaired by Ilenia Colón Mendoza and included Margaret Ann Zaho's essay on Alfonso V. Other contributors graciously accepted our call for papers and this volume is the result of those efforts. We are grateful to the University of Central Florida for providing us the necessary impetus and support for our research as well as our families for their patience and championing. We owe our greatest debt to our contributors for sharing their knowledge and insights on portraiture and for making this edited anthology a possibility.

INTRODUCTION

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Portraits have a long history in royal courts as a way of communicating the monarch's status, rulership, and even piety. This anthology seeks to place the art works studied in the context of their commission, production, and display. Artists use different representational strategies to convey important information about the sitter. These aspects combined with patronage, location, and use of the work form a departure point from which to address portraits comprehensively. The intersection between artist, the portrayed, and audience with the additional layer of formed identity allows the portrait to hold a special place as popular genre of Spanish art. The relationship between the use of the work and its context is key to understanding better the cultural and social norms of Spanish aristocracy and what they reveal about Spanish identity in general. Used to solidify governance, lineage, and marriage, portraits played a legitimate role in the negotiation of status, power, and social mobility.

The goal of the book is to contribute to the already important discussions taking place in the study of Spanish portraiture. Some recent publications dealing with portraits include a 2002 essay by Antonio Feros entitled "Sacred and Terrifying Gazes: Languages and Images of Power in Early Modern Spain," included in Suzanne Stratton-Pruitt's *The Cambridge Companion to Velázquez* and Javier Pérez Portús', *The Spanish Portrait: from El Greco to Picasso* (2004) and *Portraits of Spain: Masterpieces from the Prado* (2012), Laura Bass', *The Drama of the Portrait: Theater and Visual Culture in Early Modern Spain* (2009) and Álvaro Soler del Campo's, *The Art of Power: Royal Armor and Portraits from Imperial Spain* (2009).

Feros' essay "Sacred and Terrifying Gazes" proposes that in the Spanish monarchy and its viceroyalties the image of the king was more

than a simple representation of the monarch.[1] His royal image was seen as sacred regardless of the quality or aesthetics of the portrait because it was divinely ordered that he rule. He notes that for almost 300 years the Spanish Habsburg dynasty was "capable of imposing its dominion through images and ideologies that actually persuaded its subjects to obey".[2] By 1580 the physical body of the monarch began to be sacralized along with his image. Contemporaries such as Diego de Guzmán and Lope de Vega expressed this new belief in biographies, plays, and poems that commented on the importance of limiting the exposure of the royal body that had a divine aura.[3] Feros concludes that the Spanish king had divine power as God's representative on earth, and defender of the faith and that his portraits communicated power by focusing on his qualities and virtues rather than its symbols.[4]

Javier Pérez Portús' 2004 book *The Spanish Portrait: from El Greco to Picasso* (Scala Art Publishers) is a follow up to his catalogue from 2001 entitled *El linaje del Emperador* (Sociedad Estatal para la Conmemoración de los Centenarios de Felipe II y Carlos V) where he specifically focuses on the early Hapsburg monarchs with seven essays that discuss the portrait and its relationship to political dynasty, texts, and engravings along with the portrait gallery at Descalzas Reales. His 2004 book, on the other hand, is a thorough look at Spanish portraiture with nine essays and accompanying catalogue that documents the origins of the portrait including the early court portraits of 1530 to the works of modern painters Ignacio Zuloaga and Pablo Picasso. This book serves as the backbone for current scholarship on the subject since it is the first to trace the development of the genre in the art of Spain. Portús' essay begins by noting that given the influence of Spanish portraiture and its place in Spanish art one is surprised by relatively few artists working on portraiture.[5] Portraiture was mainly associated with the monarchy and aristocracy as a marker of social status whose main goal was promote images as a symbol of power while also serving to document lineage and the country's history.[6] In the absence of a true history painting tradition

[1] Anthony Feros, "Sacred and Terrifying Gazes: Languages and Images of Power in Early Modern Spain," in Suzanne Stratton-Pruitt, *The Cambridge Companion to Velázquez* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 68.
[2] Feros, 70.
[3] Feros, 74.
[4] Feros, 83.
[5] Javier Pérez Portús, *The Spanish Portrait: from El Greco to Picasso* (Madrid: Museo del Prado, 2004), 17.
[6] Portús (2004), 19.

the portrait stepped in as an important genre second only to religious painting. The tradition of portraits in Spain can be seen continuously from the Middle Ages until the twentieth century. Both Francisco Pacheco and Palomino hold portraiture in high regard and note this in their treatises *Arte de la Pintura* and *El Museo Pictórico y La Escala Óptica*, respectively.[7] Edouard Pommier discusses in the book *Théories du portrait. De la Renaissance aux Lumières* that Spain's predilection was different from the rest of Europe.[8] In it Miguel Falomir traces the origins of the portrait from the need of portrait specialists to the establishment of workshops while Leticia Ruiz Gómez summarizes court portraiture from 1530 to 1660.

Portús also wrote in 2012 *Portraits in Spain: Masterpieces from the Prado* (Queensland Art Gallery) with an essay entitled "1550-1770 Painting in an Absolute State." In the subsection "Portraits of Power: Kings and Buffoons" he discusses how having artists on the court dollar "led to the creation of a model for court portraits that proved highly significant because of its persistence as tradition, because of its quality and because it encouraged the development of specific typologies" and the importance of portraits that reference a pictorial tradition.[9] He also notes the distant and cold expressions of the court sitters who in public appeared as living statues, expressions which the nobility and aristocracy sought to imitate. [10]

Laura Bass' book places the portrait within the framework of the theatrical plays of the Golden Age of Spanish literature. She proposes a direct link between the audiences that attended plays and those that sat for their portraits while noting the importance of the stage and the staging of one's likeness.[11] Chapter 4 "The Power and Perils of Doubles" notes that royal portraits were used for marriage negotiations, royal alliances, visual genealogies and portraits of the king substituted him in his absence.[12] The king then had two bodies: the body natural (personal) and the body politic (sovereign); it was this last body that was constructed and preserved in the portrait.

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[7] Portús (2004), 30.
[8] Portús (2004), 30. See Pommier, 1998, 289.
[9] Javier Pérez Portús, *Portraits in Spain: Masterpieces from the Prado* (Brisbane: Queensland Art Gallery, 2012), 76.
[10] Portús (2012), 77.
[11] Laura Bass, *The Drama of the Portrait: Theater and Visual Culture in Early Modern Spain* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State Press, 2008), 3.
[12] Bass, 79.

Del Campo's book offers a look at the purposeful use of the armor in the Royal Armory in Madrid and its representation in portraiture, calling attention to the need for the careful study of the iconography and materiality of armor itself. His essay "The Royal Armory in the Context of Spanish History from the Fifteenth to the Seventeenth Century" is accompanied by a catalogue of seventy-three objects. He emphasizes the importance of portraits in the negotiations of dynasty and power and the creation of heroes for the Spanish Crown. He adds that the portrait in armor has a "commemorative and propagandistic role, genealogical significance, and ability to embody a ruler's desire for glory and to transmit an image that goes beyond the physical likeness and personality of the sitter, conveying the concept of royal majesty through allegorical objects or through attitude or pose."[13]

In "Establishing Identity: Portraits of the Spanish King Alfonso V in Naples" Margaret Ann Zaho discusses how Alfonso V of Aragón was one of the first Renaissance rulers to adopt the imagery of the Roman imperial triumph in the creation of his personal identity. He not only enacted a classical Roman triumph when he entered Naples in 1443 but continued to expand his associations with that theme by commissioning the building and decorating of a monumental triumphal arch at the entrance to the Castel Nuovo. Alfonso V, in his role as newly crowned King of Naples, made a concerted effort through his portraits to legitimize, glorify, and promote himself as an exemplar of the pious Christian ruler and the triumphant Roman emperor.

Alfonso looked to Spanish, deified, Roman emperors such as Trajan and Hadrian as models for his own portraits; portraits that can be found on his triumphal arch as well as on commemorative medals. Alfonso commissioned several of Italy's most renowned medalists to create portrait medals of him that express his imperial, Christian, and heroic nature. By incorporating imperial imagery, titles, and devices in his portraits Alfonso V proves himself to be one of the earliest Renaissance rulers to successfully exploit classical models and imagery in the service of his own personal and political persona.

American royal portraits visually confront the physical absence of centralized authority in the management of American social relations throughout the vice-regal period. The images are integral components in processes that exert control over subject bodies in colonial context. In this essay, Engel looks at American royal portraiture arguing that the ability of

[13] Álvaro Soler del Campo, *The Art of Power: Royal Armor and Portraits from Imperial Spain* (Madrid: T.F Editores, 2009) 14.

imagined official portraits to represent monarchial authority made it possible for the genre to validate emerging social and political identities.

In the "Portraits of Philip III" William Ambler explains how portraiture played an essential rôle in the propagandistic enterprises devised for Philip III of Spain. With limited means to disseminate likenesses of the monarch, portraits helped define the image of the ruler, and thereby bolstered the legitimacy of his reign. But crafting portraits of Philip III required an exceptionally nuanced approach, because the message the regime wished to convey was unusually self-contradictory.

Philip III succeeded to the largest empire in human history as a timid twenty-year-old whose subjects and courtiers required reassurance that their new king was a capable and legitimate ruler. His father, Philip II, had left the monarchy indebted and enmeshed in conflict, instilling in many a yearning for profound changes in government policies. Philip III therefore had to project simultaneously a message of stable continuity that would assert his legitimacy and also a will to enact dramatic reform. The long career of Juan Pantoja de la Cruz as Philip II's portraitist prepared him uniquely to arrive at a suitable visual formula to resolve this seeming contradiction. Having copied the most celebrated portraits in the Spanish Habsburg collections, he drew from Iberian portraits of Ferdinand and Isabella, from the Holy Roman Imperial and Burgundian traditions of Maximilian I, from the portraits of Charles V which fused these disparate strains into a powerful new idiom, and from representations of Philip II who had refined Charles V's imagery. Pantoja's portraits of Philip III, depicting the young armored king in the full gilded glory of youth, depart sharply from those he made of Philip II representing an aged, widowed king dressed in somber black. However, Pantoja's portraits of Philip III deliberately recall similar likenesses of the young Philip II, thereby casting Philip III as a reassuringly recognizable continuation of the Spanish Habsburg line, even as he distances himself from the immediate precedents of his father.

Pantoja's task was complicated by the highly circumscribed symbolism available to him. Charles V had constructed an immensely rich personal imagery around his semi-inherited title of Holy Roman Emperor. As the nominal heir to Caesar Augustus, the deep well of ancient Roman symbolism was his to draw upon. However, Charles V's plan for the imperial title to pass to his son, Philip II, came to naught, so that, for Philip II, allusions to imperial Rome were inapplicable. Most Christian monarchs could turn instead to medieval imagery derived from coronation ceremonies. But the kings of Castile had dispensed with coronation ceremonies so had no crown, scepter or official throne. And, in any case,

Philip ruled over a composite monarchy so that he was separately king of Castile, Leon, Navarre, Aragon, Naples, etc. If, in a particular portrait, he appeared as the king of one, then, in that portrait, he was not the king of the others. Lacking the imperial dignity to bind together all these subordinate titles, the only thing uniting his disparate kingdoms was the king himself, whose body became the locus for expressions of monarchy's unity and legitimacy.

Shorn of other traditional attributes of kingship, Philip II and Philip III came to emphasize their genealogical descent from their illustrious forebears in order to defend the legitimacy of their reigns. They also asserted, to a degree previously unknown in Europe, their position as God's chosen instrument to enact His will. The resulting sacralization of the king's body evinces itself in Pantoja's portraits for Philip II and Philip III which become increasingly abstracted. Far from the naturalistic likenesses provided early in Philip II's reign by Antonis Mor, Pantoja's portraits present a regal icon transcending traditional categories of religious and secular imagery.

Niria E. Leyva-Gutiérrez explains in her contribution "Post Portrait of Power: Rubens's Image of *Isabella, Infanta of Spain, in the Habit of a Poor Clare*" that few political challenges were as pressing to the Spanish crown in the first quarter of the seventeenth century than the resolution of the Dutch question. Preservation of the Spanish Empire depended in large measure on control over the Netherlands. One of the chief protagonists of Spanish imperial policy in *los paises bajos* was Isabella Clara Eugenia, wife of the Archduke Albert of Austria and eldest daughter of King Philip II. Together, Albert and Isabella had served as governors of Flanders until the archduke's death in 1621. Her consort's death occasioned in Isabella a deep crisis. Like many Habsburg women before her (Empress Maria of Austria, Sor Margarita de la Cruz, for example), Isabella had planned to live out her widowhood in quiet contemplation within the confines of her family's convent of the Descalzas Reales in Madrid. But the crown was on the brink of war with the Dutch and the young King Philip IV refused to release his aunt, intimately connected with Flanders and beloved by its citizens, from her political duties. Thus, Isabella would stay in Flanders serving the Spanish Crown as sole regent until her death in 1633. And although her dream of retreating to Madrid was not to be, Isabella nonetheless became an official member of the Franciscan Third Order, accepting the habit in Brussels from Andrés de Soto, her father's confessor.

Isabella's competing desires—service to the crown and service to the soul—were captured by her long-time confidant, Peter Paul Rubens, in the

portrait *Isabella, Infanta of Spain, in the Habit of a Poor Clare* (ca. 1625) (Plate 5) . This sober image of the ruler is a categorical departure from the lavish archetypal imperial portraits of the seventeenth century. The portrait dramatically contrasts the artist's earlier representations of the sitter, in which Isabella is depicted in sumptuous attire with brocaded fabrics, and jewelry, typically accompanied by her consort, Archduke Albert. In this unique portrait, Isabella is depicted as ruler-nun; and yet, there is neither reference to her role as Habsburg leader nor are there the customary emblems of prayer and contemplative worship characteristic of portraits of the religious. Looking outward, Isabella appears grand and imposing, recalling instead images Rubens painted of male religious such as his portrait of Dominc Ruzzola (1620) and Michael Ophovius (c. 1618). Pious and powerful, Isabella seems to possess "un espiritu varonil."[14] Transformed from icon of beauty and elegant nobility to symbol of chaste fortitude, Isabella's image signified a fundamental break in the way images of royal power, and, in particular female royal power, were constructed.

Rubens's unusually grave image, which after 1625 became the official representation of the princess, visually marks a critical and dramatic convergence of widowhood, political turbulence, and spiritual covenant. This essay, based on both an examination of the painting and primary documents, discusses the image of the infanta -- a symbol of the sitter's reconciliation between imposed obligations to the Habsburg crown and personal religious orthodoxy --and its unique place within the history of Habsburg imperial portraiture.

Jennifer Olson-Rudenko presents in "Francisco de Zurbarán's *The Surrender of Seville to King Ferdinand III of Castile and Leon with Saint Peter Nolasco*, 1248 for the Calced Mercedarians of Seville," how the royal foundation of the Order of Our Lady of Mercy commissioned Francisco de Zurbarán's *The Surrender of Seville to King Ferdinand III of Castile and Leon with Saint Peter Nolasco* as propaganda to show their support of the court. The Mercedarians reformed their order, claimed to have participated in the Reconquest of the city in 1248, and showed their support for expulsion of the Moriscos from 1608 through 1614. She interprets the painting using the contextual method as the royal portraits and anachronistic details in the work expressed the goals of both the court and the Order of Mercy at the time.

On August 29, 1628, the Mercedarians of Seville commissioned Zurbarán to produce twenty-two paintings for the boxwood cloister in their

[14] Cardinal Bentigvoglio, papal nuncio to Flanders in the seventeenth century, described the Infanta in these terms in his *Relaciones*.

monastery from the life of Peter Nolasco (c. 1182/89 - c. 1245-56) to promote his canonization. Since, the Order did not have any of their own saints achieving the canonization of their founder, would give them a more elevated status in relation to both the court and church. One painting in the series, Zurbarán's *Surrender of Seville*, stands out because it was not a subject featured in any of their other canonization materials and moves beyond the representation of thirteenth-century events.

As a royal foundation responsible for ransoming Christian captives from Muslims in North Africa, the Mercedarians had experience negotiating with the Muslim Berbers for the release of captives and, as knights, some must have participated in the war. Zurbarán was more concerned with symbolism than historical accuracy. For example, Zurbarán represented Governor Šaqqāf and his assistant in luxurious attire similar to costumes worn by actors in plays and popular entertainment, King Ferdinand III and others as defenders of the faith in armor, and the Mercedarians as holy men in their habits. He also placed the founder and other members standing behind the king as a way to show their gratitude for the *repartimientos* (land grants) he gave to them to build their monastery.

Some of the most significant iconographic details of Zurbarán's *Surrender of Seville* were his inclusion of royal portraits in the painting as they allow the viewer to draw a parallel between the Reconquest and the expulsion of the Moriscos. On April 4, 1609, King Philip III and the Council of Castile issued the Edict of Expulsion and it was viewed by some as one of the greatest accomplishments of his reign. Zurbarán emphasized the military aspects of this court by representing them in ceremonial armor in the center of the painting. She concludes that the Mercedarians must have believed that they would benefit by illustrating the reform of their order, their claim to have participation in the Reconquest of the city, and their support for the expulsion of the Moriscos. They certainly expected to gain favor with the court and increase donations for their ransoming missions.

In the essay entitled "Images of Authority, Power and Honor in Jusepe de Ribera's Political Imaginary" Lisandra Estevez discusses Jusepe de Ribera (1591-1652), Naples' foremost artist, serving eleven viceroys who governed on behalf of the Spanish crown. His reputation as a painter has primarily rested on his cruel scenes of martyrdom. Generally perceived as an artist whose imagery tends to be apolitical, Ribera's portraits of Spain's viceroys and temporal allegories remain to be contextualized more fully. These images complicate our understanding of Ribera's political opinions, which have been relatively unaddressed in the current literature on the

artist. While Ribera did produce few official portraits, those extant likenesses relate to his partisan ambitions and relationships to the Spanish grandees who ruled Naples. This essay will consider works that directly communicate Ribera's cultivation of political ties to these dignitaries. The recently published *Portrait of the Count of Monterrey in the Costume of a Knight of Santiago* (1636-37, private collection) depicts one of Ribera's major patrons. Among the significant commissions Ribera received from Monterrey are four canvases he painted for the decoration of the Convent of the Discalced Augustinians in Salamanca. The identity of the sitter in his *Portrait of a Knight of Santiago* (mid-1630s, Meadows Museum, Dallas) has been heatedly debated by Ribera specialists. While the personality of the subject precludes a definitive identification, the portrait's power lies in Ribera's striking formulation of state portraiture.

In re-presenting Ribera's relationship to King Philip IV (r. 1621-1665), who was Spain's foremost art patron and one of Europe's great collectors, it is important to note that Ribera never received a direct commission from him. This lacuna in Ribera's career raises some questions about the artist's relationship to the Spanish Crown. Ribera produced an official portrait of Philip IV's illegitimate son, Don Juan José of Austria, who had been sent to Naples to squash the 1647 riots led by the Neapolitan fisherman turned rebel, Tommaso Aniello di Amalfi, better known by the moniker Masaniello. Ribera's official canvas of the *Equestrian Portrait of Don Juan José of Austria* (1648, Palacio Real, Patrimonio Nacional, Madrid) and the reproductive etching after it illustrate his defense of the Crown's brutal quelling of that revolt. Furthermore, Ribera's views might have also been colored by his long-standing professional rivalries with other Neapolitan artists. Yet his relationship with the king's son was a scandalous one. According to both fact and fiction, Juan José of Austria presumably fathered a daughter out of wedlock with either Ribera's daughter or niece, thereby aggravating the public dishonor of the painter.

More tellingly, Ribera's allegories manifest the tenuous nature of Spanish rule in Naples. This essay also focuses on two paintings that reflect the changing conditions of Habsburg rule in Naples: *Vision of Belshazzar* (1635, Archbishop's Palace, Milan) and Battling Women (1636, Museo del Prado, Madrid). In analyzing these extraordinary painted parables, the author examines how the plays of the court dramatist Calderón de la Barca, principally his *La cena del rey Baltasar*)and *El nuevo palacio del Buen Retiro* (both composed in 1634), further fueled Ribera's political imaginary.

Emily A. Engel's "Changing Faces: Royal Portraiture and the Manipulation of Colonial Bodies in the Viceroyalty of Peru" notes that

when Charles III died in 1788, Charles IV ascended to govern the Spanish Empire. In Madrid, this transition was visualized in ceremony and art. Authorities and individuals in the colonies faced the challenge of representing political change in royal portraiture. Royal portraits were imported from Europe, though the monarchical apparatus did not manage a formal export program. Official portrait models were slow to reach America, and artists struggled to keep up, relying upon rough substitution or imagination of the king's physiognomy. Imagined portraits soon appeared on coins, canvases, and in prints.

Publicly visible royal portraits were present in religious and secular visual culture inspiring public recognition of the absence of immediate royal governance in America. Portraits of the Spanish monarchs were usually displayed in male/female pairs, indicating their dual capacity as absent rulers. Most royal portraits produced in the Viceroyalty of Peru from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries have either been destroyed or lost (purposefully or by neglect); however, government records, travel accounts, and correspondence record verbal descriptions of royal portrait paintings that no longer survive in material form. Early modern American portraits of Spanish royals have been conceptually implicated in perpetuating imperial rule across the continent. Possession and display of Habsburg and Bourbon royal portraits has become synonymous with royal allegiance. Víctor Mínguez's L*os Reyes Distantes* (1995) and Rosemarie Mulcahy's *Philip II of Spain: Patron of the Arts* (2004) have discussed royal portraits in the context of the wider genre of portraiture as effectively projecting the imperial message of Spanish dominance and superiority in all its territories. However, questions remain regarding the changes in the reception of these objects by American subjects from elite colonial creoles to rural indigenous groups.

Many artists commissioned to create royal portraits in America cities became renowned local portraitists who imbued the genre with a creative capacity not present in European practice where monarchs served as physical models for their portraits. Manipulation of the royal visage in official portraits conceptually paralleled the social contortion of American bodies throughout the early modern period. The ability to visually manipulate a political identity was an invaluable skill in the tumultuous Bourbon reform era. Collective institutions accumulated collections of official portraits in civic and ecclesiastical contexts. The archbishopric and city council of Lima commissioned and displayed royal portraits throughout the viceregal period. Official royal portrait collections paralleled institutional portrait series that featured their American institutional leaders, archbishops and viceroys, respectively. Together,

royal portraits and portraits of American leaders competed for valuable socio-political collateral. Groups rallied around royal portraits to advocate for causes that defined collective identities, from civic order to Eucharistic theological doctrine.

American royal portraits visually confront the physical absence of centralized authority in the management of American social relations throughout the vice-regal period. The images are integral components in processes that exert control over subject bodies in colonial contexts. In this essay, Engel looks at American royal portraiture arguing that the ability of imagined official portraits to represent monarchial authority made it possible for the genre to validate emerging social and political identities.

ESTABLISHING IDENTITY: PORTRAITS OF THE SPANISH KING ALFONSO V IN NAPLES

MARGARET ANN ZAHO

Establishing a favorable royal identity for the Spanish King Alfonso V of Aragón (1396 - 1458) was of paramount importance; particularly after his protracted and tumultuous rise to power in Naples in 1442. Portraits made in stone, paint, in manuscripts, and on medals, were practical choices for Alfonso to disseminate his royal image and to establish a noble, legitimate, and powerful identity.

Alfonso V (also known as Alfonso the Magnanimous, Alfonso I King of Naples, Alfonso II King of Majorca, Sardinia, and Corsica, Alfonso III King of Valencia, et. al) consciously, aggressively, and successfully used portraiture in the construction of his own personal mythology and often did so by connecting his image with the Roman imperial past.[1] His portraits, particularly those found on medals and on his triumphal arch, incorporate a carefully considered selection of classical and Christian motifs in an attempt to glorify, legitimize, and solidify his reign as king.

Not only did Alfonso reenact a Roman triumphal procession in Naples in 1443 but he had the event recorded in stone on a monumental triumphal arch erected at the entrance to his castle.[2] He also commissioned several of Italy's most celebrated medalists to create portrait medals of him that clearly exhibit motifs borrowed from classical coinage. The

[1] Alan Ryder, *The Kingdom of Naples Under Alfonso the Magnanimous*, Oxford, 1976, 27. Alfonso V was born in Medina del Campo, Spain in 1396 to Ferdinand I of Antequera and Eleanor of Alburquerque. In 1414, he became ruler of Aragón and in 1416 he was named King of Sicily. In 1442, he stormed Naples conquering it and becoming Alfonso I King of Naples. Alfonso died in Naples in 1458. Other titles include King Alfonso I of Sicily and Alfonso IV Count of Barcelona.

[2] This is generally considered the first revival of the Roman triumph in the Renaissance. See also, Margaret Ann Zaho, *Imago Triuumphalis: The Function and Significance of Triumphal Imagery for Italian Renaissance Rulers*. Renaissance and Baroque Studies and Texts, v. 31. New York: Peter Lang, 2004.

imperial allusions evident in the portraits of Alfonso portray him as a powerful, victorious, pious, and learned ruler.

Moreover, these imperial allusions are, in many cases, combined with Christian imagery, suggesting that Alfonso, by his Christian faith, surpassed his pagan predecessors.

The Triumphal Entry of Alfonso

On February 26, 1443 Alfonso made his triumphal entry into his newly conquered kingdom of Naples.[3] His impressive triumph was a magnificent and regal affair consciously based on antique Roman triumphs.[4]

The procession, recorded in several contemporary documents, began with a group of twelve men on horseback dressed in elaborate and brightly colored costumes.[5] The horsemen were then followed by three large floats, each bearing elaborate allegorical scenes relating to the King's victorious and honorable character.

One of the floats, prepared by the Florentines, bore a figure of Julius Caesar carrying a scepter and wearing a laurel wreath. The emperor saluted the new king and then figuratively presented him with his throne

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[3] See Benedetto Croce, *History of the Kingdom of Naples*, trans. F. Frenaye, Chicago, 1970, and Jerry H. Bentley, *Politics and Culture in Renaissance Naples*, Princeton, 1987-10-12. In 1420, Giovanna II of Naples approached the young King to ask for his assistance in retaining control of her Kingdom. She proposed to adopt him as heir to the throne and in return he would protect Naples from the French. In 1421, Alfonso entered the city of Naples for the first time in a triumphant ceremony that proclaimed him heir apparent to the throne. In 1423, only two short years after his adoption, Giovanna, who was considered crazy, changed her mind and disinherited him. Alfonso's struggle to reclaim that city began in earnest in 1435 when on her deathbed Giovanna proclaimed René of Anjou, brother of Louis III, as King of Naples. René, however, was a prisoner of the Burgundians at that time and therefore was unable to take control of Naples. Alfonso proclaimed himself the rightful heir to Naples and proceeded to gather a fleet in Messina to support his claim. The war he launched to win Naples was not an easy one and it took almost seven years before he could enter that city and finally claim his rightful position as ruler and King of Naples. On June 6, 1442 Alfonso V stormed the city of Naples and took it by force, though he did so with a great deal of popular and diplomatic support from the citizens.

[4] There are some 320 triumphal processions recorded, the last was in 403 AD by emperor Honorious.

[5] George L. Hersey, The Aragonese Arch at Naples 1443-1475, New Haven, 1973, 14. Lorenzo Valla and Panormita both recorded the event in their laudatory works about Alfonso. Panormita in the De Dictis et Factis Alphonsi Regis in four books and the Alphonsi Regis triumphus. Valla in the De rebus gestis Ferdinandi Primi.

and crown. Another float, prepared by the Catalan contingent, represented a scene from Arthurian legend. The float depicted the legendary throne whose seat would ignite in flames if an unworthy ruler sat upon it. The seat was surrounded by five figures representing the virtues of Justice, Fortitude, Prudence, Charity, and Faith. The figure of Justice addressed the newly crowned king while Charity distributed gold coins to the spectators.

Alfonso, seated regally on a grand throne, rode in the procession atop a four-wheeled cart drawn by four white horses. In his hands, he held symbols of his power, the orb and scepter, while his throne was draped with the mantle of the defeated former King of Naples, René of Anjou (1409-1480).[6] Opposite Alfonso's throne was the Arthurian flame of the *siege perilous*, now displaced from the seat by the righteous ruler. The *siege perilous* or 'dangerous throne' or 'perilous seat' is a motif borrowed from the legend of King Arthur. The legend claimed that only a chaste knight who was invincible and pure of heart (and would be successful in the search for the Holy Grail), could sit in the *siege perilous* at the round table and not be consumed by flames.[7] Alfonso's association with the grail is of particular interest since the Holy Chalice, or Santo Caliz, had been kept in Valencia since 1134, and was now technically his as part of the property of the King of Aragón.

Clearly, the triumphal event was intended to exalt the king in much the same manner that Imperial rulers had been celebrated.[8] Though in this case the attributes exalted were predominantly Christian.

The enthroned figure of Alfonso was covered by a great baldacchino held aloft by twelve poles, each of which was carried by a representative of the twelve seats (or neighborhoods) of Naples. Following the royal cart

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[6] Alfonso's six kingdoms were Aragón, Catalonia, Valencia, The Balearic Isles, Sicily, Sardinia&Corsica, Naples, at his triumph, became his seventh. See Croce, History of the Kingdom of Naples, 44.

[7] Ebenezer Cobham Brewer, *Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*, London, 1959, 1000. According to Arthurian legend, the one who finally claimed the siege perilous was Sir Galahad. Galahad was considered the purist, most chaste and rightful heir to that throne. Certainly, this is a comment by Alfonso about his rightful, just and divined right to rule the throne of the Kingdom of Naples; especially considering the trials he surmounted to attain it. The symbolism is medieval, chivalric, and Christian; perfect for Alfonso and his persona.

[8] Anon., "Racconti di storia Napoletana," in Archivio storico per le provincie napoletane 33, 1908; 478-80. "...un Arco corrispondente al carro trionfale, tutto di legname inaurato e colorato. Questo carro passava disotto, fatta misura per tutte le strade dove avea a passare...alla sommità di ogni angolo li trombetti vestiti di seta all'arme di Napoli, et alla parete per ogni banda ...con le laude della prospera e buona fortuna del Re Alfonso..."

were the most important members of the court, including Giovanni Orsini, the princes of Taranto and Salerno, the ambassador to the King of Tunisia, and the humanists Valla, Panormita and Porcellio. In addition to these notables there were also numerous trumpeters and musicians.[9]

After the procession, the triumphal cart was preserved inside the church of San Lorenzo Maggiore and became revered as a kind of relic.[10] The cart remained in the church until at least 1580 after which point it seems to have been lost.

Bisticci da Vespasiano, the humanist author, briefly mentions the triumph and its antique quality in his work *Le Vite*.[11] "There are many remarkable things to be told about his expeditions against the infidels, of his acquisition of the kingdom and his siege of the city of Naples, and of his triumph when he entered it like a conqueror of old."[12]

The Triumph of Alfonso in Art

At least two illustrations of Alfonso and his triumphal procession have survived. One is a sixteenth century engraving in Summonte's *Historia della città e regno di Napoli* and the other is a full-page miniature in Lorenzo Valla's *De rebus gestis Ferdinandi Primi*, from 1445.[13] Both the engraving and the miniature depict, basically, the same components as were recorded as present at the event.

The engraving depicts Alfonso riding in his triumphal cart through the city of Naples. The triumphal cart displays many of the attributes recorded in the historical account. Alfonso is seated on a large triumphal cart drawn by horses. The cart itself, as described, has a crenellated upper portion and round turrets at each of the corners. These round turrets were certainly

[9] Hersey, *Aragonese Arch*, 13-16.
[10] Hersey, *Aragonese Arch,* 15.
[11] Vespasiano di Bisticci, *Le Vite*, ed. Aulo Greco, 2 vols. Firenze, 1976, I, 107. For an English translation see, *Vespasiano, Renaissance Princes, Popes, and Prelates*, trans., William George and Emily Waters, intro., Myron Gilmore, New York, 1963.
[12] Ibid., 76-77. "Sonci molte cose memorabili dello andare contro agli infideli, et de l'acquisto fece del reame di Napoli, et dell'asedio dell città di Napoli, del trionfo fattogli a l'entrare in Napoli, come triunfante a modo degli antichi, per l'acquisto di sì degna patria."
[13] G. A. Summonte, *Historia della città e regno di Napoli*, 6 vols., Naples, 1748-9. See Hersey, Aragonese Arch, plate 8 for a reproduction of the engraving. Lorenzo Valla moved to Naples in 1435 and spent ten years at the Court of King Alfonso I. See also *Gesta Ferdinandi regis Aragonum*, ed. O. Besomi, Padua, 1973. For a miniature see Rome Lat. 1565.

intended to be a reflection of the architecture Alfonso's own Castel Nuovo. The king is shown seated at one end of the cart while in front of him are the flames that he has displaced from the throne. Also included in the engraving are the dignitaries who flank the cart and hold aloft the baldachino.

A Latin inscription on the engraving hails Alfonso as King Alfonso V, lists his kingdoms, and refers to him as eternal ruler and new father of Naples.[14] The miniature depicts a crowned and seated Alfonso holding a scepter riding on a large triumphal cart pulled by four white horses.[15] The cart, however, does not include any of the architectural elements described in the literature or the flame from the Arthurian legend. An addition, not seen in the engraving, is the horseman who wields a sword and drives the triumphal cart forward; a figure common in Petrarchan descriptions of triumphs.

What is clear from the literary description and both illustrations is that Alfonsos's procession actually departed in a number of ways from extant descriptions of antique triumphs (like those described in Livy and Suetonious).

First, King Alfonso did not ride in the traditional two-wheeled military chariot of the Roman Emperor but instead was enthroned on a larger four-wheeled cart. A type envisioned and described by Petrarch in his *I Trionfi*.[16]

He also does not wear or display the regalia or '*ornamenta triumphalia'* worn by triumphant emperors.[17] Perhaps most important, is that he has included none of the specifically military components required by the antique Roman triumph such as captives, trophies, or carts of booty. Instead, his procession, while enacting the general format of an antique triumph is more akin to a Medieval pageant. Furthermore, the themes of the carts, including Alfonso's own cart, were allegorical and Christian in nature, not classical. The inclusion of motifs from Arthurian legend reinforced King Alfonso's image as staunchly Christian, and were in direct

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[14] "ALFOS 9.REX ARAGON V SICILIE CITRA & CVLRA EARV HVGARIE VALECIE IHRLN MAIORICARUM SARDINIE CORCICIE COMES BARCHINONE ROCILLIONIS & CIRITA N.E DUX ATENARV & NEOPATRIA."

[15] See Hersey, *Aragonese Arch,* plate 9 for a reproduction of the miniature.

[16] Petrarch's *I Trionfi* was written between 1356-74. It describes a series of allegorical triumphs one after another; Love, Chastity, Death, Fame, Time, and Eternity. Each ride in a triumphal procession on a large four-wheeled cart.

[17] See Aline Abaecherli Boyce, *The Origin of the Ornamenta Triumphalia*, Classical Philology, Vol. 37 No. 2, 130-141.