

Cynthia Robinson. *Imagining the Passion in a Multiconfessional Castile: The Virgin, Christ, Devotions, and Images in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries*.

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The lack of documentation and often partial preservation of painted and sculpted religious works in the fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Kingdom of Castile has, in the past, limited most art historical treatment of this material to discussions of stylistic developments. Cynthia Robinson has approached the material in a new, interdisciplinary fashion. Her meticulously researched and densely written volume sheds new light on the iconographical emphases of the uniquely Castilian focus on the Virgin Mary with respect to Christ's Passion at this period. This does much to explain the Castilian avoidance of meditation exercises on the physical abuses suffered by Christ from his arrest through his crucifixion, and the emphasis instead on the Virgin's reactions to these events and her divine triumph over these sufferings.

Robinson examines late fourteenth- and early fifteenth-century exegetical texts circulating in Castile dealing with the Passion to demonstrate how this is articulated. The most notable of these works is Francesc Eiximenis's *Vita Christi* (*Vida de Jesuchrist* in Catalan), available via Spanish translation in a variety of manuscript collections and contexts from the 1430s, with its strong emphasis on the Virgin Mary's role both in Christ's life and his afterlife. Using this text as well as others, most notably the *Mariale Sive de Laudibus Beatie Virginis*, probably from Avila, and *The Virgin's Psalter*, she carefully demonstrates how this view of the Virgin Mary colors her portrayal in painted and sculpted production of the period. This is even more impressive since none of the extant manuscripts was illustrated.

This powerful view of the Virgin is further reinforced by Raimon Llull's *Llibre de Santa Maria*, which to some extent uses the Islamic view of the Virgin. Called Maryam in Arabic, she was considered to be a prophetess, and the author makes the case that Llull and probably other Christian writers adapted some of the Islamic view of Mary, both in terms of the multiconfessional environment of the time and for the possibilities of conversion.

Discussion of these works' impacts on Jews is somewhat sketchier, with the author relying on texts by conversos, since the existence of Christ and the Virgin Mary were not acknowledged in Jewish belief or liturgy. It should be noted that Eiximenis's *Vida de Jesuchrist* was certainly used against Jews in the Crown of Aragon in a very illustrative manner, such as Bartolomé Bermejo's four post-Passion panels, now in Barcelona, but probably painted for either a Valencian or Aragonese *retablo*. While Barcelona was void of Jews after 1391, both Valencia and the Aragonese towns of Daroca and Zaragoza still had ongoing Jewish populations up to 1492, with active conversion and inquisitorial operations.

The author contributes salient observations stemming from her analyses. Though not illustrated, she demonstrates the early propagation of the manuals' positions on approaches to Christ's Passion and the Virgin Mary's role via her analysis of Fernando Gallego and his collaborators in the many panels of the *Retablo Mayor of Ciudad Rodrigo*. She also traces the beginning of the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception in Castile, found in the late fourteenth-century *Mariale* and, perhaps most elaborately, in a treatise on the life of the Virgin written for Doña Leonor de Pimentel, Countess of Plasencia, by the Dominican Fray Juan López de Salamanca in the 1450s. The image type of the Virgin of the Immaculate Conception would become immensely popular in Spain and, by extension, Latin America in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, surviving the later reforms made by Queen Isabel of Castile and the Council of Trent in suppressing many of the fourteenth- and fifteenth-century popular and apocryphal accounts of the lives of Christ and the Virgin.

For art historians, Robinson's examination of Roger van der Weyden's *Miraflores Altarpiece* iconography in the light of these peculiarly Castilian texts should finally put to rest the notion of Castilian painting and sculpture as a derivatively Hispano-Flemish phenomenon. Instead, her research clearly demonstrates how little the painters of the time had any say in the depiction of content, this being governed rather by the choice and devotional needs of the patron.

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