

RECONCILIATION OF THE PROSTITUTE, ANCHORESS, AND WANDERING  
SHEPHERD: COMING TO TERMS WITH SELF, SOCIETY, AND THE DIVINE IN  
THIRTEENTH CENTURY IBERIA

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A Dissertation  
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the Temple University Graduate Board

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Doctor of Philosophy

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## ABSTRACT

Title: Coming to Terms: Reconciliation with Self, Society and the Divine

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This doctoral dissertation examines the manifestation of Christian reconciliation in three thirteenth century literary works from the Iberian Peninsula and the island of Mallorca, then part of the Crown of Aragon. This study discusses interpretations of the term “reconciliation” and applies the term to each work with regard to three aspects: reconciliation of self with self, of self with society, and of self with the divine.

Chapter 1 discusses the various connotations of the term “reconciliation.” It outlines reconciliation as a synonym of penance, as in the four-steps of the Catholic Sacrament of Penance, now referred to as the Sacrament of Reconciliation. It also discusses the related Pauline concept of reconciliation and Paul's possible sources.

Chapter 2 will analyze these three aspects of reconciliation in an anonymous thirteenth century Castilian work in verse: *La Vida de Santa María Egipciaca*, or the Life of Santa María, the Egyptian. The prepubescent Alexandrian prostitute has an epiphany outside a church in Jerusalem, realizes the error of her ways, repents at the moment of intersection between human activity and divine intervention, and changes how she views herself, interacts with society, and regards the connection between earthly life and divinity.

Chapter 3 takes a look at Gonzalo de Berceo's *cuaderna vía* poem, written in Castilian about 1250<sup>1</sup>, *Vida de Santa Oria*, the *Life of Saint Oria*, through the same three lenses of reconciliation. This time the female figure is the Egyptian's opposite. Oria is a young anchoress who has behaved in a saintly way mortifying the flesh since childhood. It might seem that in her case there is no need of reconciliation with herself because her virtue exceeds that of the majority of humans around her. I posit that, even in her case, there is room for acceptance of inner conflict. In addition, Oria reconciles herself to society (which admires her but tries to pull her back toward Earth against her will) and to the divine (which promises she will receive what she most desires when God deems it time).

Chapter 4 studies the *Romanç d'Evast e Blaqueria*, a prose work in Catalan which dates from 1283-85. This early text provides an opportunity to analyze not only the protagonist's reconciliation with self, society, and the divine but also that of an array of fictional characters including family members, his potential fiancée and the many people he meets along his journey to become a hermit.

Finally, the Epilogue suggests that the idealistic notion of reconciliation has already been put to practical use in modern times in large-scale conflicts within and across borders. Coming to terms and living peaceably with differences, even grave ones, was accomplished at moments in Medieval Iberia among the three monotheistic religions: Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, and hope remains that such moments of peace will extend beyond borders and be found again today.

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<sup>1</sup> See Lappin's introduction to *Vida de Santa Oria*, p. 3.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

“They saw the hermits coming along hand in hand, and the two outer ones beckoning the ship to stop. All three were gliding along upon the water without moving their feet [...]. And the Bishop bowed low before the three men, and they turned and went back across the sea. And a light shone until daybreak on the spot where they were lost to sight.”

“Three Hermits” Tolstoy 1886

Endless gratitude goes to Dr. Montserrat Piera for her encouragement and unwavering support during this extended investigation which represents an intellectual and spiritual journey seeking the boundary between the tangible and the ethereal, the earthly and the divine. She has opened up to me and many others, a world named Medieval which could just as well be labeled New Modern or Perpetual. Her commitment to scholarship, generosity in providing students opportunities to share their own research, and her subtle sense of humor are the reason this dissertation may see the light of day.

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## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated with love to Jim Smolen,  
my husband and all-terrain hiking partner.

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**CHAPTER 1**

**RECONCILIATION WITH SELF, SOCIETY, AND THE DIVINE:**

**ARTICULATIONS AND INTERPRETATIONS**

This dissertation will examine the topic of reconciliation in three thirteenth century literary works from the Iberian Peninsula and the island of Mallorca<sup>2</sup>. It will ask the questions if and how the protagonists of these works are able to come to terms with three types of struggle: inner conflict, the conflict between self and society, and the conflict between self and the divine<sup>3</sup>. The works to be analyzed are: *La Vida de Santa María Egipciaca*, an anonymous Spanish translation of the French poem composed in roughly 1215; *Vida de Santa Oria* by Gonzalo de Berceo<sup>4</sup>, also composed about 1215; and finally, the *Romanç d'Evast e Blaquerna*, written in Catalan between 1283 and 1285 by the prolific Mallorcan theologian, Ramón Llull.

Secular definitions of “reconciliation” will be contrasted with the varied religious uses of the term in Christianity. The word’s origins will be discussed, and the answers sought to the questions asked above with regard to the works to be analyzed. At the conclusion of the paper, a short discussion will be undertaken of how the term has come to be employed in modern political conflicts as they de-escalate.

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<sup>2</sup> In 1283, the approximate date of composition by Ramón Llull of the *Llibre d'Evast e Blanquerna*, Mallorca was a possession of the Crown of Aragon.

<sup>3</sup> In her article “*The Vida de Santa María, Egipciaca and Julia Kristeva’s Theory of Abjection*,” Connie Scarborough uses this phrase on p. 18 (*Medievalia* vol. 20, 1995).

<sup>4</sup> This text was based on a lost Latin version of the saint written by her confessor Munio, and reconfigured in Castilian by Gonzalo de Berceo.

The term “reconciliation” has multiple meanings. In general, it refers to the amenable resolution of a conflict between two or more parties. The Oxford Dictionaries define reconciliation as “the restoration of friendly relations” or “the action of making one view or belief compatible with another.” It results in a state in which friendly connections or communications have been reestablished after a period of discord. In addition, it indicates that a state of harmony between differences has been reached, or that there has been an acceptance of, or submission to, a former point of disagreement.

According to Weaver, reconciliation is possible when both grave wrongs and seemingly minor infractions are committed (165). She adds: “Reconciliation [...] consists [of] a communion that corrects and overcomes the disruption of proper relationship to God, ourselves, and others” (166). The author provides two relatively current examples of reconciliation, one illustrating an egregious wrong and the other a seemingly insignificant incident in which there appears to be nothing important to reconcile. Weaver writes of the horrific October 2, 2006 shooting of young Amish school girls in Pennsylvania. In a dramatic example of communal forgiveness and reconciliation arrived at by an intentional process occurring over an extended period of time, the mother of the murderer was allowed to consistently visit one of the maimed survivors in the girl’s home (Weaver 164-5). In the second example, a 101-year-old man made a seemingly insignificant deathbed confession: he had re-shelved a library book in the wrong place many years before and confessed this “crime” in order to die in peace (165). In his “Introduction: Penitential Questions: Sin, Satisfaction and Reconciliation in the Tenth and Eleventh Centuries” Rob Meens asserts that:

Despite the difficulties involved, acknowledging your faults and being prepared to make up for them is one of the most intimate ways in which an

individual is related to the religious community that is the church, is confronted with ecclesiastical norms and with the ways in which he has lived up to those norms, or failed to do so (1)

Christianity's definition of "reconciliation" includes both a supernatural and a socio-secular meaning. In the supernatural realm, one must begin with the basic tenet of the Christian faith that man is a fallen creature as a result of having given in to temptation in Eden and that the lapse in judgement and willpower has caused an eternal separation between himself and God. Reconciliation viewed in this light encompasses bridging the divide between God and post-lapsarian mankind. This coming to terms between God and sinful man, according to this religious doctrine, can only be accomplished by the atoning sacrifice of God's son, Jesus. Furthermore, God descended to Earth in human form while at the same time maintaining divinity in order to bridge the gap between perfect God and imperfect mankind (McCullough 28).

In the New Testament, the apostle Paul employs the Greek, *καταλλάγη*, transliterated, *katallagé*, and uses it to refer to God's reconciling grace. Some scholars surmise that Paul's use of this term derives from a combination of influences. One possibility is that it originates from Hellenistic culture and is used in a social context having to do with the normalizing of relations between warring parties. Another is that it comes from the Jewish practice of wearing sackcloth, covering oneself in ashes, and fasting as depicted, for example, in the books of Job and Esther. This was done to show God an attitude of repentance, appease his anger, and restore the Hebrew nation to favor. Another example of this would be *kiffer*, animal sacrifice, which served as expiation and atonement for the sins of the group (Darity, 110). The New Testament parallel is Jesus seen as the sacrificial "lamb of God".

McCullough connects prophetic Isaiah in chapters 40-66 with 2 Corinthians 5:14-21 and speaks of a “new creation”. Based on Jesus’ sacrifice, this “new creation” for individuals spoken of by Paul in 2 Corinthians, could be construed to refer back to the reconciliation of Israel with God. Paul would have been very familiar with this Old Testament passage and it is plausible that he would have melded the two sets of ideas (McCullough 29, 37).

Yet another analysis has suggested that Paul used this term because of his experience on the road to Damascus. That is, before being temporarily blinded by God, the man formerly known as Saul had nothing to do with reconciliation, but rather, its opposite – persecution of the newly formed Christian sect. After this incident, Paul not only experienced personal reconciliation with God through Christ, but is tasked with spreading the very ministry he persecuted. Unlike the Jewish concept of atonement in which human beings must first repent of their sins and take the initiative to go to God to ask for forgiveness, God, the offended party made the radical move to descend through Christ to reach out to mankind, offering the possibility of reconciliation (Constantineanu 26-30). This concept is referred to as “vertical reconciliation” (Constantineanu 34).

Constantineanu concludes his survey of the origin of the term “reconciliation” as used in Christianity by agreeing with the view that in reading Paul’s epistles as a narrative rather than as a theological treatise, the implicit “stories” speak not only to Paul’s own reconciliation with God, nor just to the vertical reconciliation of others to God, but also to the social reality of trying to convince early Jewish Christians and new Jewish and Gentile converts, that despite very contrary habits and traditions, their new common identity superseded ethnicity (9-15).

This suggests the other dimension of Christian reconciliation which is “horizontal” that states that we are reconciled to God and if He, being perfect, reconciled himself to us, we must make an effort to resolve the differences which separate us from one another (Constantineanu 34, 72). Expressed another way, Jesus’ expiation serves to pardon man’s overarching sinful nature, and requires, additionally, that people follow the guidelines as outlined in Matthew 5:23-24: “Therefore if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift” (Wainwright 80-81).

This dual nature of Christian reconciliation, to restate, has what is called a vertical and a horizontal dimension (McCarthy 46). Wounded divinity descends to Earth to reestablish an affirming relationship with imperfect humans and requires that we extend this same *agape* love motivated by will, rather than feelings, to our fellow man who may have hurt us. These two forms of reconciliation are actually intersecting rather than separate, and in the early Church were played out in what was referred to as the Sacrament of Penance and later, as the Sacrament of Reconciliation (Darity 110).

In early but post-apostolic Western Christianity, views on penance appear to have been divided. Penance was not considered repeatable by a baptized Christian for grave sins until the early sixth century under Caesarius, the Bishop of Arles. In Spain, as late as 589 the Council of Toledo maintained penance could only be undertaken one time (McNeill 14). Poschmann acknowledges that strict penitential practices took place, but offers biblical evidence of the theoretical invalidity of *not* (my emphasis) allowing repeatable penance (14-15). That is, in the early Church, as recorded in the New Testament, apostles had the

power given to them by Jesus as written in Matthew 18:18 to “bind” or “loosen,” that is, to exclude from the fellowship of the church those who had violated Christian norms, but also to forgive and reinstate members into the Church body (Poschmann 8). Paul upholds this policy of excommunication for heinous behaviors like incest, but also believes in reincorporating the offender into the church after he has confessed and made amends (Poschmann 10-11). It is worth quoting at length Poschmann’s summation of biblical thought on sin and penance:

Every sin calls for penance; but no sin, not even the gravest, is excluded from forgiveness provided that sincere penance is performed. Prayer and works of mercy are means for obtaining the remission of sins. Personal prayer receives efficacious support from the intercession of the faithful as its counterpart. Joined to prayer is confession of sins. Where the sins are grave, the rulers of the Church are obliged to admonish the guilty, and, if this proves fruitless, to exclude them from the community. If the excommunicated person is converted (has stopped committing the infraction) the Church grants him forgiveness, and this is a guarantee of “forgiveness in Heaven” also, in accordance with the promise of the Lord. (18-19)

From the fourth to the sixth century penitential practices from various ecclesiastical writings were collected into lists of tenets or canons. There were versions in both the Eastern and Western churches and these covered more serious rather than “ordinary” or non-malicious sins. Some ecclesiastics used Tertulian’s earlier categories of grave sins, “idolatry, murder, and adultery”, as those subject to public penance (Poschmann 84-85). Whether a publicly or privately confessed sin, according to Poschmann, only public penance existed at this time and, ideally, the community of believers served not to reprimand, but to encourage the penitent so as to restore him to the flock (86). Although practices varied in complexity, penitents were not allowed to take communion, often had to stand or kneel at the back of the church, wore distinctive clothing or *cilicium*, fasted,

prayed, gave alms, abstained from marital sexual relations, and deprived themselves of sleep (Poschmann 89-91). The bishop decided when the period of penance was long enough to make amends for the sin committed. If there was any doubt, the ceremony of reconciliation which involved the laying on of hands was delayed until the next Maundy Thursday, that is, Holy Thursday (Poschmann 96). There was some difference of opinion on whether or not the absolution of the Church was absolutely necessary to complete the process of reconciliation. The Eastern and Gallic Churches appear to have been somewhat more forgiving in this way, whereas the Western Church, for example, under Pope Leo I did not consider a penitent reconciled without the Church's absolution (Poschmann 99-100).

Before examining *La Vida de Santa María, Egipciaca, Vida de Santa Oria*, and *Blaquerna*, it will be useful to go back further in time to New Testament biblical stories which demonstrate how the process of reconciliation works. Whether or not one believes in the divinity of the Christ figure, from a purely intellectual standpoint these two-thousand-year-old stories pique interest in human psychology and the construction of narrative fiction. Since the beginning of what later became known as Christianity,<sup>5</sup> examples abound of believers of all economic and social strata who felt a powerful emotional pull toward Christ or his post-resurrection, apostle-delivered message. One might wonder what the protagonists in many New Testament stories found so appealing about Jesus.

Stature-challenged Zacchaeus, a hated Jewish tax collector, felt compelled to gain a better view of the new prophet:

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<sup>5</sup> See Acts 11:26.

He wanted to see who Jesus was, but being a short man he could not, because of the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way. When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today. So he came down at once and he welcomed him gladly. [The people observing this grumbled.] But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount. Jesus said to him, today salvation has come to this house .... For the Son of Man came to seek and save what was lost. (Luke 19:1-10, New Open Bible)

This story exemplifies a sort of speed version of the Sacrament of Penance, renamed the Sacrament of Reconciliation by Pope Paul VI in 1973 (O'Collins 82). The four steps of the sacrament are contrition, confession, absolution, and satisfaction (O'Collins 81). Although from a narrative standpoint the steps may appear to be out of order, all four are clearly discernible. First of all, in mid-story we have proof in the form of an utterance that Zacchaeus exhibits "contrition" when he says he will give away half his net-worth and will quadruple the sums he essentially stole from his fellow citizens. This same statement serves as a "confession." By saying that he will give back more than he stole, he is announcing his crime: theft. With the action of enhanced restitution, he is giving "satisfaction," in the form of "almsgiving." Finally, Jesus offers "absolution" by deigning to speak to Zachaeus and much more so by putting himself in a situation in which he will share "table fellowship" with the former cheat.

In the social milieu of the day, to have "table fellowship" or to share a meal with someone indicated they were social equals. Jesus, if acting as a typical rabbi, would never have gone to the house of a social pariah like Zacchaeus (McCullough 31-2). Zacchaeus, motivated by the presence of an individual who inexplicably knew the details of people's lives and healed the ill, came to terms with his error, confessed it and offered satisfaction

to those he had cheated. He reconciled with himself, with the society (at least from his point of view) from which he had ostensibly been ostracized, and with the divine by accepting Jesus' gentle rebuke. We see first vertical reconciliation, God descends to Earth in the form of Jesus and then the horizontal offshoot, sharing newly gained peace and equilibrium with others. Divine presence motivated Zacchaeus to feel guilt, repent, make amends and heal him of avarice, in effect, creating a "trickle-across" effect, or horizontal reconciliation to his fellow citizens.

Another very different plot in Acts 10-11:18 involves the Gentile, Cornelius, a Roman centurion. We learn certain facts about him: First of all, he is in the Roman regiment (Acts 10:1) and so one surmises, is part of the establishment. Contrary to his probable upbringing, he and his family believe in God, pray, and give money to the poor (Acts 10:4). One day, in Caesarea where Cornelius lives, he has a vision to send for the apostle Peter. At the same time, in Joppa, Peter has a corresponding vision in which a sheet rolls down from Heaven and is filled with many animals including those Judaism considers unclean. God tells him it is now alright to eat any animal. At the same moment, Cornelius' messengers arrive, state diplomatically to Peter that their master "... is respected by all the Jewish people" (Acts 10:22) and relate their employer's vision. Peter understands the analogy of the two visions, that is, eating formerly unclean animals is to dietary rules as entering the home of a Gentile is to former Jewish social prohibitions. In short, it is now permissible for a Jewish person to enter the home of a Gentile. Peter experiences a radical reconciliation within himself by accepting a concept that completely turns upside down a belief he has held since childhood. On a societal level, he enters into fellowship with a

representative of the dominant culture, Rome, an entity which has oppressed his Jewish brethren.

On the level of the divine, Peter, a Jewish Christian, shares the account of Jesus' healing mission, death, and resurrection with Roman Cornelius, his family, and friends. The centurion's household accepts what they hear and all are baptized. This story is a pictograph of Galatians 3:28: "In Christ, there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, you are all one in Christ, Jesus."

In this story, rather than in the ecclesiastical sense of the four steps of contrition, confession, satisfaction, and absolution, we see an example of vertical reconciliation: God loved mankind to such an extent that he descended to bridge the gap between human and divine. He was the wounded party, but was also the one who reached out to the offender thus reestablishing communication.

Men were not the only ones who found reconciliation through the living Christ. From the beginning of his ministry, Jesus violated social norms by speaking to women outside his family. He shocks a Samaritan, doubly inferior because of her gender and ethnicity when he asks her to draw water from the well and give him a drink. He amazes her more when he offers her "living water" and recounts her intimate past with "five husbands," telling her "the man you have now is not your husband" (John 4:18). While we are not told if the woman actually reformed her behavior, we do know that she served as a catalyst for reconciliation between the divine and herself, as well as between the divine and her townspeople. Her fellow villagers tell the woman, "we no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves; and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world" (John 4:42).

Zacchaeus, Cornelius, and the woman at the well believed in Jesus' power because he either helped them with specific problems or named their deficiencies. In other words, he helped them reconcile the discrepancy between the real and the ideal. In every story, there is a problem, often of the protagonist's own making as in the case of the woman at the well "with five husbands." Her lascivious living left her in a precarious social situation in a culture where a woman was provided for materially and protected from the maliciousness of others only if she had a male protector.

Zacchaeus, the dishonest tax collector, did not have friends, because he was stealing from his own ethnic group. In ways far kinder than those of some of his post-Crucifixion followers, Jesus gently led those he confronted to see the error of their ways and to express their repentance by changing their behavior. Hypothetically expressed in first person, his message is two-pronged: first, "I am the Son of God, therefore omnipotent, yet, loving and sent to reestablish an eternal connection between you and the Father who also loves you" and second, "part of my mission is to point out faults and forgive you so you can make changes which improve your own life; by extension, in the finite ways of which a human being is capable, you are expected to forgive and help heal the lives of others."

In the early centuries after Jesus' death, his relatively subtle teaching and gentle correction led to human - and harsher - reinterpretations of this new awareness of one's sometimes negative behavior and its consequences. This led to the formalized practice of the Sacrament of Penance, now known as the Sacrament of Reconciliation. The Sacrament of Penance came about in the Church due to mankind's imperfection. Baptized Christians, like all human beings, make mistakes or, in Christian terms, commit sins. The Early Church

was logically comprised of fewer people, and there was a strong sense of community as shown in this description of everyday life.

And they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. And everyone kept feeling a sense of awe, and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. And all those who had believed were together, and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions, and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need. And day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved. (Acts 2:42-47)

It is also important to keep in mind that although today we think of the church, whether Catholic or Protestant, as a mainstream and even conservative corporate structure as well as a spiritual center, in the early post-Resurrection church, Christianity was a revolutionary, radical, sometimes persecuted movement. People who were part of this sort of group tended to pull together and be vehement in following their "rules" because this was what united them and often kept them safe from incursions by *status quo* institutions which may have felt threatened by new ideas.

Since two of the works examined here were written about the same time as the convening of the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215<sup>6</sup> (although the third was composed approximately seventy years later), the cultural backdrop is that of the Christian West. As such, there were two important and somewhat parallel concerns. First of all, the Catholic Church, as the Reformation was still several years in the future, was trying to regulate the spiritual practices of its adherents, both lay and ecclesiastic. The second important

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<sup>6</sup> The eight hundredth anniversary of the opening of the Fourth Lateran Council was November 11, 2015.

backdrop of the thirteenth century was the mission of geographical-political entities attempting to reconquer parts of its territory from followers of Islam.

The first concern, attempting to control the spiritual practices and behavior of laity and ecclesiastics, took shape in the 70 canons presented at the Fourth Lateran Council by Pope Innocent III. The most significant for the layperson's connection to the Church was Canon 21. *Omnis utriusque sextus*, as it is also known, regularized the requirement for both men and women to go to confession once a year at Easter and then to take Communion and specified that neglecting to do so would have dire consequences (Logan 183). The following quote from Canon 21 makes this clear: "Otherwise they shall be barred from entering a church during their lifetime and they shall be denied a Christian burial" (Bornstein 206). This requirement was for males of 15 and females of 12 and above (Hamilton 92).

The Ancient church practiced *exomologesis* or public confession to the whole congregation and major violations of the Christian moral code, for instance, adultery, resulted in temporary banning from the group (McNeil 4-7). Although no promulgated decree guarantees a unanimous change in behavior, Canon 21, in theory, changes the focus from the harsh nature of penitential practices of earlier Christianity to one of encouraging increased contact between lay populace and clergy.<sup>7</sup> The early Penitentials, for example one in sixth century Ireland, often imposed extended regimes, sometimes for years, of

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<sup>7</sup> In *The Penitents' Treasury: Indulgences in Latin Christendom, 1175-1375*, Shaffern explains, "In the high medieval church ancient customs coexisted and created the patchwork of parallel and overlapping practices characteristic of high medieval Catholicism. Like their late antique predecessors, for instance, thirteenth century French bishops imposed public penances, although private confessions had long been heard as well (37).

consuming only bread and water (Shaffern 38). After the promulgation of Canon 21, emphasis was placed on private confession and pastoral counseling rather than on punishment. The confession of mortal sins often garnered more rigorous penance than venial ones (Hamilton 93).<sup>8</sup>

In order for a confession to be deemed viable, three requirements were necessary. Shinnars cites an English tract from 1224-37 which advises the priest to follow certain steps. First of all, the priest had to be convinced that the person was truly sorry for the offense committed. That is, the person had to exhibit contrition. Secondly, the person had to verbally admit to the deed, in other words, make confession. Thirdly, the wrongdoer had to make amends for the misdeed committed and needed to provide what was known as satisfaction (19).

The influence of Canon 21 is seen quite directly in *La Vida de Santa María Egipciaca*. The title character is a repentant sinner and a member of what might be considered the lowest social segment of society; she is a prostitute. By means of contrition, confession, and extreme penance she makes satisfaction for her sins, takes communion in the desert at Easter and is absolved by the monk Gozimás. She serves as an object lesson to all, demonstrating that if God forgives a shameless prostitute, reconciliation can be achieved by all believers. All that is required is to be truly sorry for infractions committed, to be willing to confess one's transgressions to an ecclesiastic, and to give satisfaction by exhibiting a change in behavior. Partaking of the Eucharist renews the connection with

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<sup>8</sup> By the same token, Shaffern mentions that handing out penance in the early church also took into consideration not only the infraction itself, but the attitude of the penitent (37-38).

Christ's sacrificed body and blood which establishes the possibility of reconciliation between God and mankind in the first place.

Reconciliation is much subtler in *The Vida de Santa Oria*. The young girl's life may follow a typical hagiographic model, but this saint's story in the vernacular voice of Riojan writer Gonzalo de Berceo reiterates the constant tug of opposing magnetic fields – Earth and Heaven. Even though this young woman has led a stainless life from childhood, she confesses she is not holy enough to become a bride of Christ. After returning to Earth from Heaven at the conclusion of her first vision, Oria tries to make amends for the sin of imperfection by intensifying her fasts and mortification of the flesh.

As for the third text studied in this thesis, although written almost seventy years after the Lateran edicts of 1215, the *Romanç d'Evast e Blaquerna* illustrates, as well, how many of the novel's characters reconcile with themselves, with the Church, with other members of society, and, ultimately, with God. In Lull's novel or romance, the Sacrament of Reconciliation is shown not only in many of the fictional characters' confessions to Blaquerna, even before he officially becomes a priest, but equally in the protagonist's concern for wiping out corrupt practices within low and high ranking church entities and increasing their literacy to become more effective shepherds of the flock. Unlike their monastic brothers, local priests, most of whom were uneducated, now needed training (Packard 106).

The second important backdrop of the thirteenth century is the mission of geographical-political entities attempting to reconquer parts of its territory from followers of Islam. This aspect of conversion to Christianity and thus bringing potential reconciliation to God for both individuals and an entire group of people does not figure

into either *La Vida de Santa María Egipciaca* or the *Vida de Santa Oria*. Conversely, in addition to the reconciliation of laity and clergy, the issue of missionizing and the conversion of infidels is the other axis on which the *Llibre d'Evast e Blanquerna* turns.

Although this thesis deals with the topic of reconciliation, it also bears mentioning that as Sarah McNamer states in *Affective Meditation and the Invention of Medieval Compassion*: “At the center of medieval Christian culture, there was a human figure—male, once beautiful, dying on a cross” (1)<sup>9</sup>. She argues that the pre-eleventh century image of Jesus, both in art and devotional literature, was that of a figure who had vanquished death. His body and clothing were represented intact. Later, in the thirteenth century, representational emphasis was placed on Jesus as a mutilated, suffering Savior, one who needed human empathy (2). McNamer posits that women did not learn how to “perform” affective compassion from men like Bernard of Clairvaux. Instead, for historical, non-religious reasons repeatedly read devotional literature depicting the sufferings of Christ in order to become so emotionally tied to him that after physical death they would become his bride.

This identification with Christ’s suffering was cultivated through the woman’s reading of various affective texts, like the Passion section of the *Wooing of Our Lord* from England which declares: “... the words scripted here become the vehicle for cultivating compassion in the *sponsa*’s heart, thus deepening the quality of marital affection and aiding

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<sup>9</sup> The three texts from the thirteenth century analyzed in this dissertation, unlike the texts which McNamer examines, do not directly address the audience using commands such as “Behold!” when talking about the crucifixion. Nor are they written in first person and so do not read as “performative scripts” when read. All three texts are written in the third person. What they do have in common with McNamer’s chosen texts are the explicit expressions of pain and sorrow, and longing when speaking of the Passion.

in the enactment of her marriage to Christ” (52). By means of reading passages which described Christ’s physical suffering, a sort of emotional suffering was stirred up in the female reader (8).<sup>10</sup>

Some would say that belief is what changed a person’s feelings, in turn, effecting positive spiritual, mental, physical and emotional transformations. In *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages* Barbara Rosenwein says, “Belief has much to do with feeling...” (196). Psychotherapists Berenbaum and Boden take this a step further when they state, “[i]n general, the greater the self-relevance of a belief, the greater will be its emotional salience since emotions are responses to the attainment (or lack of attainment) of one’s own needs, goals, or concerns” (71).

As Rosenwein mentions in “Problems and Methods in the History of Emotions,” some scholars’ opinions have made it difficult to write a history of emotions. Researchers like Paul Ekman have suggested that emotions are both “universal” and “presentist” (2). By this they mean that the same emotions exist in all cultures and have essentially not changed over time. To some extent, neuroscientists in recent experiments have corroborated this viewpoint. In contrast, the research of some anthropologists like Lutz give evidence that different cultures prioritize or categorize emotions differently, and that “happy” and “sad” in the United States, for example, do not have exact equivalents in the island cultures of her studies (9). Rosenwein proposes that emotions do change over time

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<sup>10</sup> In Chapter 3, please see discussion on the recent film *The Passion of the Christ* which in a similar way to the affective texts studied by McNamer, provokes empathetic suffering in many viewers because of the graphic nature depicted and to some extent really experienced by the Christ figure and by the actor Jim Caviezel who played Jesus.

and that even during the same time frame various subgroups value certain emotions which other subgroups of that time period would either not recognize or not value (10).

The Fourth Lateran canons exhibited a continued concern with church reform begun in the eleventh century monastic reform movements which sought to end several practices: first, simony, or the purchase of ecclesiastical office; secondly, clerical marriage; and thirdly, lay investiture, that is, the distribution of positions in the church by kings rather than by ecclesiastical leaders. If Pope Gregory VII (1073-1085) continued the reform taken up earlier by the devout emperor Henry III (1039-1056) to return to the simplicity of the *vita apostolica* and devotion to the *imitatio Christi*, one could say that Pope Innocent III focused on how the Church could better regulate and control the spiritual practices of its adherents (Shaffern 36-7).

As mentioned previously, Canon 21 of the approximately 70 canons delivered in 1215 by the Fourth Lateran Council required that men and women go to confession and afterwards participate in the Eucharist at least once a year. This practice often happened at Easter. We see this requirement played out indirectly in *La Vida de Santa María Egipciaca* when Gozimás the monk is wandering in the desert after forty days of Lenten penance in the monastery. The monk comes upon María in the desert, befriends the woman he first thinks is an apparition, and hears her story which can actually be considered an informal confession. Interestingly, the “*jueves de la cena*” is mentioned several times in the poem in reference to the monks doing their Lenten penance. Mention of this may be significant to the poem because “[b]y the beginning of the fifth century the custom of an annual ceremony of reconciliation of penitents on Maundy Thursday was becoming established in the West” (McNeill 17).

In their second encounter, a year after the first one, it is again Easter and the penitent woman fulfills the second half of Canon 21's requirements. She takes communion as offered to her by Gozimás. In María's case, she has more than demonstrated contrition and provided the necessary satisfaction by wandering in the desert for 47 years. Furthermore, she has confessed to Gozimás, partaken of the Eucharist, remembering once again both her former sins and vital connection to Christ through eating his body and drinking his blood, and has been absolved by a member of the clergy. In this way, a bridge has been built between reinforcing the idea of the simple Christian life, the *vita apostolica*, and the new control exhibited by the church. María is a simple sinner. The details of her life may be unorthodox, but she follows the church party line by kneeling before a recognized male member of the Church and following the steps proscribed by the church to achieve salvation (Delgado 294).

Although no one would consider forty-seven years of wandering in the desert with three loaves of bread and ragged clothing as an example of light-duty penance, the fact that a reformed prostitute could be offered absolution for her sins represents a change from early Christian penitential practices. In terms not of the practices themselves but of their meaning, Delgado hypothesizes that the fact that the repentant prostitute figure who has completed such severe penance that it essentially erases her sexuality rendering her no threat to either male clergy or laity replaces the *mulieres sanctae* as the holy woman supreme. She is no longer a female, but a sexless being who demonstrates that the forgiveness of God is infinite for all (292).

Patrick Colm Hogan, whose interest lies in emotions and their influence on and interaction with literature, discusses discoveries in neuroscience which impact how we

react to reading literary selections. In his 2011 study, *What Literature Teaches Us About Emotion*, he explains the role different parts of the brain play in registering different kinds of emotions.

Emotion episodes are initiated by concrete perceptual triggers (including remembered and imagined perceptions). These triggers have their effects in relation to particular receptive states on the part of the perceiver. The receptive states result, in turn, from innate sensitivities, critical period developments<sup>11</sup>, and more diffuse experiences (the last stored as emotional memories). (40)

Hogan differs with those who favor the appraisal theory (Lyons and Ortony) and proposes that "... emotions are not produced by the evaluation of situations or events in relation to goals-which is the central idea of appraisal theory. Rather, emotions are elicited by concrete sensory phenomena" (46). We see this reaction in Gozimás when he realizes that the naked figure he has encountered is not a male but rather a female whose penitent acts have surpassed his own, rendering her to be holier than he and the other male monks.

Hogan bridges the gap between the theory of emotion and its use in literature by suggesting that in real life and when we read, we often feel empathy either "spontaneous" or "elaborative" for the feelings of others. This empathy may be egocentrically or "other" centered. He also submits that some readers have more innate ability when it comes to empathizing with literary characters, but that improved perception of a character's feelings is a skill which can be learned (67). Hogan concludes his discussion on the nature of emotion by saying, "Literature may play a role in fostering empathic response" (75). In addition, Hogan claims that literature has the power to change the way we see things, just

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<sup>11</sup> Hogan cites the strong and lasting effect of the primary caregiver's interactions with a child during his first three years.

as Don Quijote saw giants, not windmills, and that this change in our viewpoint can potentially impact our social conscience and influence our actions (287).

David Miall, another scholar who pairs the study of neuroscience with that of literature, asserts in “Emotions and the Structuring of Narrative Response,” “... that feelings and emotions are primary when reading literary narrative” (325). Miall says he will, in part, focus “... on the processes that shape narrative understanding initiated or sustained by the emotions...on the reader’s experience of emotions while reading...and finally... how ordinary readers experiencing ordinary emotions construe literary narrative” (324). Miall describes an informal experiment in his classroom in which he had his class read a short story and then informally write their impressions of the same. He found that 45 percent of the responses used vocabulary expressing how the students *felt* (my emphasis) after reading the story. He believes emotion precedes cognition in making various sorts of inferences during the reading of a literary narrative (327). To further support his argument, Miall cites a 2007 study involving ERP or “Evoked Response Potentials”. Of one hundred eighty nouns shown to those taking part in the experiment, both positive and negative emotion words produced greater electric activity in the brain than non-emotion words (327). This response may be tied to the fact that reading a word which designates an emotion resonates with the reader because he has experienced this emotion. This “self-reference” may lead a reader of literary texts<sup>12</sup> to reencounter an emotion already experienced or may lead to a new emotion (Miall 335).

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<sup>12</sup> Miall makes the distinction between literary and “sub-literary texts.” He believes the former have the potential to provoke “fresh emotions” in the reader, whereas the latter “... call on basic, stereotypical, and expected emotions” (335).

Hogan and Miall then, are scholars who bridge the gap between the two extremes of opinion regarding the nature of emotion. They both seem to believe that the brain, its structures and neurochemicals, in other words, biology, universally produce emotional response in humans. However, like Rosenwein, they also agree that emotions are governed by some combination of one's culture, upbringing and life experiences.

Keeping in mind that the topic of discussion is "reconciliation," that our "emotional community" is the thirteenth century Christian West whose spiritual focus is on the human Christ's suffering, and the importance of stories in experiencing emotion (and to some extent quantifying it), the foundation has been set to begin an in depth analysis of three emotional literary protagonists: Santa María, from Egypt, the desert hermit; Santa Oria, the holy anchoress, and Blanquerna, the reluctant ecclesiastic and closet solitary.

**CHAPTER 2**

**RECONCILIATION AND *LA VIDA DE SANTA MARIA EGIPCIACA*: PENANCE**

**AND THE PROSTITUTE, HOPE FOR ALL**

*La vida de Santa María Egipciaca* is a hagiographic poem translated to Spanish by an anonymous author from a French version<sup>13</sup> of the twelfth century about 1215. The French version, in turn, is based on a story written in the seventh century in Greek by Sophronius then patriarch of Jerusalem. The story traces the transgressive María's journey from beautiful, juvenile Alexandrian prostitute to repentant sinner cured by the "melezina," the medicine of Christ's redemptive forgiveness via the intermediary of her holy namesake, the Virgin Mary (Delgado 281). Delgado explains that various versions in Greek and Latin of what has been called the Eastern version of the poem focus more on the monk, Gozimás than on Mary. The first French version thought to be from the twelfth century is based on a Latin copy of the Western version<sup>14</sup> and emphasizes Mary's role more than that of Gozimás (Delgado 296).

Invisible to all but the beautiful Egyptian, the Virgin Mary appears to her wayward namesake and intervenes at a humbling moment of self-doubt. At the Virgin's suggestion,

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<sup>13</sup> This is editor's dating but Fernando Baños Vallejo (1989) contends that such precision is unwarranted and that all one can say with certainty is that the translation was composed in the first half of the thirteenth century (*Diccionario Filológico de literatura medieval española: textos y transmisión*. Eds. C. Alvar and J.M. Lucía Megías, 2002.)

<sup>14</sup> The Spanish poem is from the Western variation, as are later prose versions in French and Spanish (Delgado 296, note 2). The only extant manuscript of the Spanish rendition of the story is a copy written by an Aragonese scribe a century after its composition and it is housed at the Biblioteca del Escorial. The 14<sup>th</sup> c. codex (ms. K-III-4) has 85 folios and contains two other texts in addition to *La Vida de Santa Maria Egipciaca*: the *Libro de Apolonio* and the *Libre dels tres reys d'Orient*.

this young Alexandrian Christian will cross the Jordan River and do lifelong penance in the desert. Here she will mortify the flesh she has so “over-loved” in the preceding years of her young life. The Magdalene figure transverses two thousand years to demonstrate to those who will accept her message, that no human being, no “repentant sinner,” in Christian terminology, is beyond redemption. The world may not forgive, but God will (Ardemagni 315).

The Magdalene figure is a popular one and in the Bible the figure of the female prostitute resides in what has been suggested is a composite of three female figures. The humble woman who washes Christ’s feet with her tears and hair, another who performs a death ritual anointing him with expensive oil, and Mary of Bethany, busy Martha’s contemplative sister, may have been compressed into the prototype of a redeemed woman. What is more, the composite redeemed woman can be viewed as redeemed humanity (Duby 22-23).

*La Vida de Santa María Egipcíaca* has been examined from various perspectives. Manuel Alvar studies the poem from a philological point of view.<sup>15</sup> Ernesto Delgado focuses on a historico-cultural interpretation in terms of the disruptive nature of Western versions of the poem which place the female harlot-saint in the role of protagonist rather than the male monk (282). Bañeza Román examines the close relationship between certain passages in the poem and New Testament verses (53). Michael Solomon investigates medieval medical views related to the sexual nature of the storm-tossed boat ride (428). Scarborough applies Kristeva’s theory of abjection, the idea that no matter how much

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<sup>15</sup> Alvar’s study covers a wide variety of topics, from a synopsis of the legend of Santa María Egipcíaca, to versification, comparison of various versions of the poem and details of writing conventions, phonetics, parts of speech and more.

body-punishing penance María does, she can never entirely erase impurity (18). Grieve suggests that Mary the Egyptian and the monk Gozimás represent a new Eve and Adam in “Paradise Regained” (133, 150). Finally, Mazo Karras compares María to other prostitute-saints like Thaïs and Pelagia (10-11, 13-14).

In more recent studies, Montserrat Piera investigates the bifurcated message which Valencian nun Sor Isabel de Villena presents concerning Mary Magdalene in her fifteenth century *Vita Christi*. Villena’s audience, cloistered nuns, are told to look into the mirror to see that they are sinful just like Mary Magdalene but that in repenting, they become beautiful (324). Sonia Velásquez considers María’s “promiscuous grace” and its expression not only in the anonymous poem, but also in later literary works and in paintings (3). Scarborough’s study (*Seeing* 301) and Beresford and Twomey’s co-authored analysis of the importance of the “gaze,” focus on the intensely ocular nature of the poem (103-4).

This chapter will draw on some of the work mentioned above, but will attempt to add to the existing scholarship on *La Vida de Santa María Egipciaca* by investigating the practice of reconciliation which runs throughout the poem. The thread of reconciliation will be investigated on three levels: first, as it relates to María’s new ascetic self in contrast to her former lascivious character; next, her new long-distance, skittish interaction with society as compared to her earlier indiscriminate, intimate association with mankind; and thirdly, her constant awareness of the divine, that is, her spiritual relationship with an invisible, inaudible, untouchable entity as opposed to her former corporeal, tactile, audible, visual, gustatory identity within the material world.

Whereas Chapter 1 discussed the concept of reconciliation from both secular and religious perspectives, Chapter 2 will focus on how Christian reconciliation is illustrated

in *La Vida de Santa María Egipciaca* based on the four steps outlined in the previous chapter: contrition, confession, satisfaction or penance and absolution. These four steps will be examined with regard to how they play out on three levels: reconciliation of self with self, of self with society, and of self with the divine.

Heffernan distinguishes between the terms *hagiography* and *sacred biography*. He takes hagiography to be “a pious fiction or an exercise in panegyric” whereas a sacred biography “... refers to a narrative text of the *vita* of the saint written by a member of a community of belief” (16). The text provides a documentary witness to the process of sanctification for the community and, in so doing, becomes itself a part of the sacred tradition it serves to document.<sup>16</sup>

Based on this definition, the story of Santa María Egipciaca is a sacred biography. The work recounts the trajectory of a breathtakingly beautiful twelve-year-old baptized Christian girl of good lineage who sleeps indiscriminately with any man she encounters. She begins this promiscuous lifestyle in her small hometown. Her mother tearfully reprimands her and urges her to behave in accordance with her breeding so her father can marry her off. Instead of changing her behavior she sets out for the big city of Alexandria.<sup>17</sup> She knows no one there and in her lonely state returns to the activity which defines her and begins working for the “*meretrices*.”

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<sup>16</sup> Heffernan continues, “The appropriation of many of these texts into the liturgical celebration of the medieval church attests to the fact that many in the church believed the texts to be inherently sacred” (16). Heffernan goes on to say that in the medieval world, the physical text, itself, was thought to have supernatural qualities (16).

<sup>17</sup> Alexandria is considered a Christian city of Egypt.

The madams adore her, one assumes, not because of her inner beauty, but because she is so attractive to men and represents profit potential. Grieve discusses the rise of the moneyed economy in which “gold and silver” begin to take precedence over the value of one’s lineage. She suggests that the figure of the harlot who refers to her body as “*mio tesoro*,” and who, the poem tells us, attracts the sons of the “*burzesses*” is a symbol of this new economic system (139). María leaves behind her lineage when she departs from the small town where everyone must know her first, as a member of a certain family, and secondly, as a prostitute. When she arrives in Alexandria she is an unknown. Her lineage is of no value. Rather, she is valued as a commodity, as worth whatever the public will pay for her.

One day María takes a walk on top of the city wall, not to get some fresh air, but to show off her beauty and provoke a response. From her superior height, she notices a boat below filled with men she recognizes as pilgrims. They get out of the boat to stretch their legs and find something to eat. María descends from the wall, her beauty catches their attention and she asks a rather unusual question. The girl wonders if she may accompany them to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Ascension. She makes clear that the only “treasure” she has to pay for the passage is her body. She gladly shares this payment with all aboard, even in the midst of a raging storm that echoes the rocking movements in the boat.

The safe arrival in Jerusalem and procession of pilgrims to the church signal the near ending of what could be considered the first half of the story. The modern reader may envision the people in the procession as exceedingly pious, but as Huizinga discusses at length in *The Waning of the Middle Ages*, medieval pilgrimages and processions were

known as opportunities for illicit behavior (161). “Procuresses” often joined the crowd looking for customers and, indeed, the poem reads that María joined the crowd, “... *pero no por buena intención...*” (430d).

The climax comes when María tries to enter the church, but is prevented by armed angelic forces. The second half of the story recounts her repentance: her permission to enter the church, an encounter with the Virgin Mary, her life-long, solitary penance in the desert, her chance-meeting with and absolution by the monk, Gozimás, her death, and the dissemination of her cautionary, yet hopeful tale by representatives of the established church to, one assumes, both clergy and laity.

The Iberian version of the story serves to reinforce the mandate of the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 which in its Canon 21 institutionalized the requirement of the laity to go to confession and participate in the Eucharist once yearly at Easter. Ardegmani points out that one result of this directive was the writing of catechisms and penitential manuals, the contents of which writers like Berceo and the anonymous author of *La Vida de Santa María Egipçiaca* adapted into didactic literary fiction. She also points out that:

The Spanish literary authors in choosing the particular literary works to adapt contributed to the ecclesiastical propaganda of this decree, as one of the most prevalent themes which Spanish hagiographic writers used was that of penance and the importance of repenting. This theme allowed for the exploration of human emotions and showed an interest in the cause-and-effect of sinning. The knowledge of how a sin had been committed led the sinner to a self-awareness. The purpose of catechisms and confessional manuals was to produce perfect Christians and penitents. The literary writers mirrored what they had learned from these documents and “created” such Christians. The massive religious education that had begun in the twelfth century and increased in the thirteenth century firmly established Christian doctrine into structural patterns that were permanently embedded on the medieval mind. (313)

Taking this into consideration, it is important to be reminded of that part of the bedrock of Christianity which states that mankind does not always act as it should, and that forgiveness and a fresh start are available because Christ serves as an eternal atoning sacrifice. The offender, sorry for past acts, confesses the “sin,” and makes amends, in part, by changing behavior, and as a result is forgiven on a spiritual level.<sup>18</sup> In the earlier universal Church and later, in the Catholic Church, so denominated after the Reformation, absolution comes through intercession of the priest.<sup>19</sup>

A telegraphic version of *La Vida de Santa María Egipciaca* from the *Apophthegmata Patrum* or “Sayings of the Desert Fathers” labeled *De scorto converso* or, roughly, “turned away from prostitution”, demonstrates both the popularity of the reformed prostitute as an object lesson and how the four steps of the Sacrament of Reconciliation are played out. In this account, the nameless woman is sought out by her brother, a desert hermit, who catches her in the act of plying her miserable trade. The sister’s *anagnorisis* occurs when she sees her presumably holy brother juxtaposed with her sordid place of employment:

There was a brother living in a cell in Egypt who was distinguished for his great humility. He had a sister working as a prostitute in the city, where she procured the destruction of many souls. [One day he goes to rescue her.] Afflicted in heart, she abandoned the lovers she had been entertaining and hastened to see her brother with her head uncovered. ... ‘My dear sister,

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<sup>18</sup> Obviously, this does not mean that there are no consequences for transgressive behavior in the here and now. As an extreme example, penitentiaries may have inmates who have followed the path of Christian Reconciliation, but who will remain incarcerated for the duration of their (earthly) life or may face execution.

<sup>19</sup> Martin Luther’s statements concerning the nature of grace and the impossibility of earning God’s love by the accumulation of human “works” and the following Protestant Revolution cause a bifurcation of thought concerning the necessity of absolution by a priest. See *Love: A Brief History through Western Christianity*, Chapter 8 “Faith Active in Love: Reformation” by Carter Lindberg.

take pity on your soul, for through you many are being lost. All-a-tremble she said to him: ‘Do you know if there is salvation for me henceforth?’ and he said to her ‘There is salvation if you want it.’ Throwing herself at her brother’s feet, she begged him to take her into the desert with him. ... “Let us go, it is better for me to suffer the shame of an uncovered head than go back... He was instructing her in repentance as they went along... [He asks her to step to the side of the road while people are passing by and then calls to her that it is time to continue on their way.] When she gave him no reply, he glanced to the side and found her dead; he also saw that her footsteps were bloodstained for she was barefoot. ... God revealed her situation to one elder: ‘Because she was totally unconcerned with any matter of the flesh and also despised her own body, making no complaint at her great wound, for this reason I accepted her repentance.’ (Wortley 39)

This short episode demonstrates the four steps of the sacrament of penance/reconciliation. The woman demonstrates contrition, in other words, repentance, when she goes to face her brother as she is “afflicted in heart,” and “hastens” or moves quickly to leave her customers. She delivers her confession more by actions than words. She is so focused on the opportunity to leave these unsavory quarters that she refuses to take time to retrieve a head covering which would make her more socially acceptable walking out in the world, and forgets about comfort and goes shoeless. The word “A-tremble,” connotes humility and she initiates the question concerning her salvation with “henceforth,” an adverb that serves as a dividing line between her past sinful life and the reformed life which she envisions ahead.

She shows further repentance by prostrating herself in front of her brother. Part of the satisfaction or amends she makes for her former life is that she must endure the shame of being sent to the side of the road, away from her brother, as people pass by. It is not fitting that a holy man be seen with a prostitute. Her final act of satisfaction is dying, that is, bleeding to death through cuts on her feet incurred while going shoeless along the road.

The fourth step, absolution, happens as a sort of epilogue. One of the fellow hermits, an elder, has a revelation from God that the repentant sister was forgiven “because... she despised her own body ...” (Wortley 39). In this case, she was not absolved by a priest, but by God himself who then communicated this to a respected elder who, in turn, shares the information with the other priests.

*La Vida de Santa María Egipciaca* is a longer, more elaborate version of the life of a repentant woman told in the short story above. As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, she was physically beautiful as an adolescent but morally corrupt. In her youth, she slept indiscriminately with as many men as presented themselves:

*quando era mançeba y ninya,  
Beltad le dio Nuestro sennyor  
porque fue fermosa pecador. (22-24)*

and further below we read:

*A ninguno non sse querie vedar. (129)*

She was baptized and her parents tried to instruct her in proper Christian behavior, but she ignored their teaching:

*Marja poco lo preçiaua,  
que mancebía la gouernaua. (125-26)*

She goes from bad to worse, leaving her birthplace and arriving in Alexandria, Egypt, the big city, where the madams are happy to take her into their establishments because she is so beautiful:

*las meretriçes, quando la vieron  
de buena mjente la Recibieron;*

*a gran honor la Reçibieron  
por la beltat que en ella vieron. (151-54)*

She is so attractive to men that they line up to sleep with her and she even causes physical violence among them, but is indifferent to it:

*dauanse grandes espadadas;  
La sangre que dellos sallía  
por medio de la cal corrja...  
nulla piedat no le prendie; (178-79, 181)*

Due to the bloodshed that María's lascivious activities cause, the population of Alexandria decreases so much "*que toda la villa fue menguada*" (202). Her behavior also contaminates the surrounding area:

*e las villas de enderredor  
todas eran en grant error. (203-04)*

The author then spends many lines elaborating on her physical appearance and her beautiful clothing. She attracts men so easily that not only the fool, but also the wise man falls when in contact with her charms:

*Así al loco como al sage  
todos la tienen por de paratge. (247-48)*

The change in her life begins with physical movement when she goes out to the city wall to take a walk, not to get some fresh air, but show off her beauty and one assumes, entice men. María sees a boat of pilgrims coming to shore in search of rest. It is significant that they are searchers, pilgrims, and that they are going to a holy place, Jerusalem, to celebrate the Feast of the Ascension. The poem's author tells us that the Feast occurs in May, the

season of new life in the natural world and symbolic of new beginnings. She asks to go with them:

*Hir me querría de aqueste logar,  
non he talente d'aqui estar. (301-02)*

As payment for taking her with them, she offers the pilgrims sexual favors:

*Yo, di<e>ze he buen cuerpo;  
este les dare a gran baldon. (310-11)*

She comes down from the wall and gets into the boat. Perhaps she is unaware, but repentance has already begun. In similar fashion to the fallen sister in the short vignette above, she does not return to her lodging in Alexandria: “*que a la posada non torno*” (my emphasis) (328). She then proceeds to recount her current “*vida*” to the pilgrims:

*En tierras de Egipto fui nada  
y aqui fuy muy desaconsejada;  
non he amjgo nin parjente,  
vo mal y feble-mjentre. (339-42)*

The future “*vida*” that will be written about her after she repents will offer a clear contrast to this one. She once again establishes that she has no money with which to pay for her passage to Jerusalem but reiterates she will pay with the “*mio tesoro*,” her body (347). Although very soon María’s turning from her former life will become more apparent, her behavior in the boat remains the same for now and none of the men can sleep that night: “*mas de dormjr, non ay nada*” (367). The present participles build rhythm linguistically as María “pays” the male pilgrims in the only way she knows how. This progression goes

from “*Primerament los va tentan[d]o*” then “*abraçando,... echando,... and besando*” (373-376). She drives even the old men to sin:

*si quier vieijo, si quier cano,  
que conella non fiziesse pecado.* (378, 380)

When a storm arises, unlike Peter and the disciples in the boat with Christ or the men in the boat with Jonah who first avoids God’s command to go to Nineveh, María does not call on God for deliverance. Instead, she comforts the terrified men and “invites them to play”: “*y conbidalos a jugar*” (Solomon 390).<sup>20</sup>

The poem contrasts the wishes of the devil who wants her to perish, and those of God who saves her: “*que Dios la saco a puerto*” (400). When they disembark in Jerusalem, the beautiful prostitute knows no one and doesn’t know what to do, so she goes back to plying her well-practiced trade and the poem’s author suggests her behavior becomes worse; in fact, it would have been better if she had never been born:

*Ella fue tan peyorada,  
mejor le fuera non fues nada.* (419-20)

One day both the townsmen and the visiting pilgrims are headed to church to celebrate the Day of the Ascension. María places herself in the middle of the crowd: “*Mas non por buena entencion*” (433). She tries to enter the church, but men who appear to be knights with swords impede her:

*cada vno tenje su espada*

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<sup>20</sup>Michael Solomon details medical beliefs in the Middle Ages and sees the story as a paradigm for disease and the sexual act. He posits that the raging storm is a metaphor for rising sexual tension. The calm after the storm is like post-orgasmic tranquility and signifies health re-gained.

*menazauan la ala entrada; (448-49)*

Another step toward repentance is made as signaled by the literal turning around of her body:

*atrás faze la tornada;*

*allí esta muy desmayada. (453-54)*

In addition to changing the direction of her body, she begins to think and then cry:

*Aquí comienza a pensar*

*y de corazón a llorar, (456-57)*

These are two signs of impending repentance for her ongoing sinful lifestyle. Until this moment she has not been given to thinking or crying, but rather seeking pleasure without reflection. Now, besides, turning her body in a new direction, she pulls her own hair and, it is implied, digs her fingernails into her breasts until she draws blood:

*d'amas manos tira a sus cabellos,*

*grandes feridas dio a sus pechos. (458-59)*

As Connie Scarborough suggests, María tries to damage some of the attributes that have led to “success” in her life as a prostitute (*Gaze* 308). The carefree prostitute now comes to the realization that:

*fuy tan pecadora.*

*de luxurja y de maldad, (463, 467)*

Furthermore, she laments being alive and recognizes her state of captivity. She is a prisoner of her own behavior and asks herself:

*¿Que fare agora, catiua?*

*Tanto me pesa porque so biua... (470-71)*

The word “*torno*” or “she turned” or “*tornar*” (to turn), is used four times in the next 145 lines as María is literally turning her body to look at an image of the Virgin which appears only to her (474). There is a great deal of physical movement. At first she is sitting, then she turns to see an image of the Virgin Mary which has just appeared, then she kneels before the Virgin:

*los ynogos antella finco,*

*tan con uerguença la cato,*

*atan piadosament la reclamo,*

*y dixo: <<Ay duenya, dulce madre, ...[>>]. (480-83)*

Thus, it can be argued that when the celestial armed guards prevented her from entering the church she experienced a clear vision of who and what she truly was. She realizes at that juncture, I suggest, just how far she lives completely at odds with herself, with society, and with God. In this moment, she expresses contrition to the Virgin and as the text says, María the Egyptian sinner “looked at her [the Virgin] with shame...” (481).

In his contemporary study of the connection between emotion and neuroscience, Giovanni Frazzetto nuances the related emotions of guilt and shame by proposing that guilt is what we feel individually when we have wronged someone or violated a norm we usually follow. It is private. Shame, on the other hand, makes us blush (a physiological response) because it is public and “... originates in exposure to other people’s judgement of behavior, mistakes or transgressions from our past that we consider unacceptable or disgraceful” (48). This corroborates the view of the fourth century by John Chrysostom who in *Homily* 4, “Repentance and Prayer,” says that when we do something wrong, we “are ashamed and

blush” and, although we may feel somewhat relieved when we confess to another person, when we confess to God, we feel much better (44).

María recognizes she has “*llagas ... mortales*,” that is, mortal wounds, and that the Virgin will be her “*melezina*” or medicine, because the *Dolorosa* is the gateway to Christ who saves the sinner. She continues verbalizing her desire to convert and turn, physically and spiritually, to God:

*tornar me quiero a penjtencia:*

*tornar me quiero al mjo senyor.* (my emphasis) (500-01)

María expresses further contrition and confesses the sins of her past life:

*que me parto del diablo*

*que no lo sierua en enlos mjos dias.*

*E dexare aquesta vida,*

*e siempre aure repintencia,*

*mas fare graue penitencia.* (506, 508-09, 511-12)

María begs for the Virgin’s intercession with her son, because “*bien se que haure perdon*” (526) and “*bien sanare de aquestas plagas*” (528). The penitent woman knows she will be forgiven. María then recounts the gospel story in lines 549 – 599 from the Immaculate Conception through John the Baptist’s preview of the coming Messiah, Jesus’ resistance in the wilderness to the devil’s temptations, his betrayal, death, resurrection, assumption into Heaven, sending of the Holy Spirit to Earth, and the fact that one day He will judge us all.

Based on the recognition that the Virgin Mary gave birth to the Savior of the world, the young prostitute makes one more appeal to the Virgin: “*Assi como es verdat, /*

*assi me faz oy carjdat*” (606-07). At this moment, the Egyptian seems to understand what she must do. The poem tells us she raises her hands, puts her palms together, and prays:

*A Dios ffizo oraçion  
con su diestra mano se santigo.* (610, 612)

This marks the next turning point in María’s life:

*D’alli se lleuo Marja,  
en su senyor nouell fia.* (614-15)

She has changed direction; she is taking a new path. She knows that “*de Dios houo perdon*” (617). She is pardoned by God.

From lines 401 through 529, we see the progression of María’s rise to (and walk along) the town wall of Alexandria, her descent into the boat, her horizontal journey across the water with the pilgrims, her loneliness at arriving in Jerusalem, the taking up again of her practiced trade as a default behavior, her capricious walk to the church, the supernatural knights who bar her from entering the church, and as just detailed, the moment of realization of how she is viewed by God, society, and herself.

María has displayed contrition and made confession and now she finds that she is able to enter the church unimpeded:

*Torno al templo ssines dubdança* (my emphasis)  
*non vio njnguna enparança.* (618-19)

Her activity of interest has changed completely. She hears the prayers: “*a grant sabor,*” or with great delight, she prays to the cross, and then God fills her with the Holy Spirit: “*luego de Dios fue aspirada*” (620, 623). Supernaturally, she knows God’s “mester”, his trade or

craft. That is what God is “about” and of course, the contrast with her former life could not be greater.

María’s former employment was all about the body, with no guidelines attached. God’s trade is about the spirit, but since human beings are made of flesh and bone, his work is also about the body. María understands this now, and with

*De sus pecados bien alimpiada  
ala ymagen dio **tornada**. (my emphasis) (626-27)*

Again, we see a form of the word that indicates change in direction, both in the physical sense of turning the direction of the body, and in the metaphorical sense of changing behavior. María understands that after contrition and confession, comes satisfaction in the steps toward reconciliation. She asks her namesake for the penance she must carry out, that is the price exacted for her misbehavior:

*conseio le pide de penjtencia;  
por qual guisa la manterna  
o a qual parte yra. (629-31)*

Once more, elements of the supernatural intervene. This time María does not see the Virgin Mary, but hears her. The reader learns in lines 632-643 that Mary directs the penitent woman to go to the River Jordan to the monastery of St. John. She will take a medicine that will heal all her sins:

*Vna melezina prenderas,  
de todos tus pecados sanaras: (636-37)*

She will receive the Eucharist, cross the Jordan, end up in the desert and live there a long time until she dies:

*Despues entraras en hun yermo  
y moraras hi vn grant tiempo. (640-41).*

The repentant woman's reaction to this difficult penance is traditional and therefore, acceptable; she makes the sign of the cross on her forehead: "*en su fuente hizo cruz*" (645).

Now the hard part of María's life begins. If before her repentance, she ate rich foods, now her diet is reduced to three loaves of bread<sup>21</sup> given to her, significantly, by a fellow pilgrim along the road. She stays along the Jordan River; the church of Saint John<sup>22</sup> is there. She eats half of one loaf, drinks holy water from the Jordan and after putting her head in the water, she feels her sins are forgiven:

*Laua la tiesta enla onda:  
de sus pecados se sintio monda. (662-63)*

In contrast to the comfortable bed of her former life, María: "*en tierra su lecho fizo,*" (666) and the hard ground does not allow her to sleep.

Contrary to her former activities as well, the following morning María gets up and goes to church to hear the prayers: "*por oyr las oras ala eglesia fue*" (671). Rather fantastically, the woman crosses the Jordan riding on some boards:

*...subio en unas tablas;  
[d]el flumen Iordan paso las aguas. (672-73)*

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<sup>21</sup> For a discussion of the links between food, fasting and penance in *Vida de Santa María Egipciaca* see Martha Daas' article "Food for the Soul: Feasting and Fasting in the Spanish Middle Ages" (*Ehumanista* 25. 2013: 65-74).

<sup>22</sup> John the Baptist is known, in particular, for his call to humanity to repent. His is "the voice of one crying out in the wilderness" announcing the Christ who is to come (Matthew 3:3). He is known for baptizing Christ in the Jordan River ("Behold the lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world" (John 1:29)) and, for his martyrdom, his head served "on a platter" requested by Salomé for Herodias, her mother, current wife of Herod but formerly his sister-in-law (Matthew 14:8).

Upon arriving at the desert, she reaffirms her commitment to the Virgin and to the *penitencia* given to her. With two and a half loaves of bread and God's help she keeps walking and finally finds shelter under a tree where she lives for a long time: "*hon muchos anyos hizo morada*" (697). She stays in this spot for forty-seven years, and in contrast to her finery back in Alexandria which included an ermine cape and shoes of cordovan leather, wears what remains of the clothing on her back. After the first seven of these years we learn that María is "*desnuda y sin panyos*" (702) and wanders about naked and exposed to the elements. After forty-seven years, she decides to move to a new place in the desert.

She has lost her clothing; the poet spends twenty-five lines (722-47) describing the deterioration of her once exquisite body. If before her ears were white as sheep's milk, "*blanquas como leche d'ouejas*" (214), now they are black. If when young, her breasts were significantly like apples (perhaps an allusion to Eve's tempting fruit), "*tetillas...tales son como maçana*" (223-24), now they are basically non-existent and dried up:

*en sus pechos non auja tetas,  
como yo cuydo eran secas. (738-39)<sup>23</sup>*

She abuses the body which once provided her illegitimate livelihood. She does not avoid stepping on thorns with her bare feet because each one she steps on takes away a sin:

*quando huna espina la firja*

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<sup>23</sup> The radical bodily transformations suffered by women to avoid carnal temptations as well as rape are a common *topos* in the female hagiographies and other medieval narratives (for example in the three Castilian texts *Fermoso cuento de una santa enperatrís que ovo en Roma & de su castidat*, *Carlos Maynes* and *Otas de Roma*) and have been amply studied from different perspectives. Although such discussion is beyond the scope of this thesis, a comparison of all these narratives and the various ways in which they articulate the changes in physical appearance among women would no doubt be very fruitful.

*vno de sus pecados perdia. (752-53)*

When her remaining two and a half loaves of bread are gone, for eighteen years she lives on grass and grain like the animals, and for twenty she does not eat at all if not provided for by an angel: “*si el angel non gelo dio*” (777). Through all this physical deterioration, the poet tells us about a good thing that happens. María no longer remembers her former sinful and comfortable life. This amnesia cleanses her, as what she does not remember has no power to tempt her. Her only thoughts now are of God:

*De Dios pensaua qua non d'al,  
tanto es su vida espirital. (796-97)*

Unlike the monk's sister in the short story, María is not so easily persuaded to leave her former life. We hear the voice of her mother lamenting her daughter's shameful behavior, asking her to reform:

*... Por ti Ruego, fija Maria,  
que **tornes** a buena via. (my emphasis) (109-10)*

María's mother beseeched her daughter to reform so that they could find her an acceptable husband, but the young woman's lifestyle being what it is, she is an embarrassment to her family and her mother bemoans that María's father curses the hour when she was born, because she did not follow his advice:

*... maldize esa hora en que tu nasçiste  
por que su consejo non prisiste. (121-22)*

In other words, the daughter did not follow the societal norm of staying at home until of marriageable age when she would move to her socially acceptable husband's house. María roundly refuses to change and decides to leave her family behind and go to the big city

“*por mas fer su voluntat*” (133) to do even more of what she pleased. The author reiterates that she sets out alone “*como ladrón,*” like a thief. As a further symbol of her licentiousness, María holds a lark in her hand to which she grants great honor because every day it sings of love:

*la tenje a grant honor*

*por que cada dia canta d’amor.* (145-46)

The fact that María gives more honor to a bird which symbolizes a lascivious lifestyle than to her family, or “*linatge,*” demonstrates the depth of her moral inversion.

María’s sinful life is both private and public, but a case could be made that the Sacrament of Reconciliation begins sooner than is immediately apparent. When her mother reprimands her, the young girl doesn’t answer but instead, the poem says, she heads for Alexandria so that she can do whatever she wants to. Her outward behavior does not change for a while, and, in fact, becomes worse in the big city. I would suggest, however, that the seed of her repentance or *metanoia* is already sprouting as she has become alienated from her immediate family, used by the men of her extended family, and occupies a low rung in the social hierarchy of her town even though she is of good lineage.

Before María chooses to abandon her home, even though she is estranged from her family, the girl still can count on them as a sort of societal anchor. The protagonist, whom the poem has made clear already lives separated from God, further isolates herself when she leaves her hometown and takes the road “*sin companyon,*” unaccompanied, and goes to Alexandria. Again, we see the inversion of honor as the city’s madams receive the beautiful girl: “*a gran honor ...*” (153). Here she is truly alone and begins to ply her trade again, it seems, almost by default. The increased outward enthusiasm for her profession

may be attributed to the fact that this is all that she knows. Human beings tend to repeat familiar activities, even if they are negative: “As a dog returns to its vomit, so fools repeat their folly” (Proverbs 26:11).

Even though María returns to her former lifestyle, it could be said that her conversion, starting with “contrition”, has already begun. It is a question of movement, first in the change of physical space and then of her mind. The first of four steps of the Sacrament of Reconciliation, “contrition” is expressed in the Greek concept of *metanoia*, that is, “change of heart” or “repentance” (Coffey 84). Change involves movement both of will and mind, and often includes physical movement.

In both cases, as Rosenwein points out, the vocabulary is important. The use of the verb “*tornar*”, to turn, and its various forms becomes frequent. The main focus of her contact with society is her frequent interaction with the men, first of all in her small town in Egypt and then in the big city of Alexandria. The poem tells us that María has interacted with both young men and old, with the foolish and the wise<sup>24</sup>.

Her change of heart takes place in the presence of human beings who have faded to the background of her awareness. María’s interaction in this part of the poem is really with the supernatural in the form of “angel-knights” and the Virgin Mary, all of whom are visible only to her. Her penitential years have been spent up to this point in complete solitude. The author digresses for a moment from María’s story to introduce another place and other potential characters.

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<sup>24</sup> Obviously, the men who lay with María are not considered wise in this context because they display a complete lack of self-control and are immoral.

The place is a monastery and between lines 798 and 910 we are not given any names and learn only the general habits of the monk's lifestyle. The poet tells us they serve God, go barefoot, keep vigil and so do not sleep much and not in beds. They cultivate poverty and their treasure is God, rather than gold and silver. The monks eat sparingly and simply, only "*pan de ordio comjen que non d'al*" (818). They drink unclean water, that is, it is not moving water: "*que non era de fontana*" (823). The behavior is exemplary; they do not exhibit any of the seven deadly sins like avarice, or envy.

The first night of Lent the abbot celebrates mass, everyone takes communion, they eat dinner together, the abbot washes the monks' feet, they pray, and the abbot gives a sermon. After that, two of the monks stay in the monastery to pray, but the rest are sent out to the mountains to live on their own and forage for food as a Lenten exercise. They do not speak if they happen to run into one another. They sleep out in the elements, commend themselves to God in the morning and exhibit the gift of tears:

*Delos ojos llorauan sin negun viçio;*

*miembrales del grant juyçio. (872-73)*

They return to the monastery on Palm Sunday. This description sets the scene to be introduced to one specific monk, Gozimás, who will play an important role in Santa María Egipciaca's story.<sup>25</sup>

María, whose exterior appearance and spiritual beauty work as opposing forces, is able to enjoy a platonic relationship with Gozimás. In *Sisters in Arms* JoAnn McNamara discusses "syneisactism" or the erasure of gender differences between males and females,

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<sup>25</sup> See Coakley, "Gender and the Authority of Friars: The Significance of Holy Women for Thirteenth-Century Franciscans and Dominicans."

thus facilitating a shared spiritual, and by extension, intellectual life (6). María the Egyptian has identified with the suffering Virgin Mary in the church in Jerusalem, but the monk experiences this emotion at one remove. Instead of suffering with the Virgin, he suffers with the reformed prostitute's sacrifice of hunger and exposure to the elements and the consequent deterioration of her body. Precisely because she no longer presents a physical (sexual) threat, he may identify intimately with her suffering. They cry simultaneously, and the fact that he asks for her blessing, as Delgado points out, certainly seems to indicate that he sees her as a holy being and not as a woman (287). The text reads:

*Tan fuerte comjen[ç]a de llorar  
y tan apriessa de fablar,  
et ell otro tal,  
aquj verjedes grant llorar:  
don Gozimas en tierra jaz,  
las lagrimas corren por su faz;* (1025-30)

María quickly counters:

*Tu eres clerigo misa cantano  
[y en l'altar pones tus manos],* (1041-42)

She recognizes that his touch changes the elements into Christ's body and blood, and without hesitation states in verses 1049-50:

*Non [ha] en tu nunca luxurja,  
nyn cobdicia nyn pecunia.*

And because of this recognition that the monk does not covet her even after he has seen her naked, María agrees to tell him all about her life and penitence:

*Pues que tu viste mi carne desnuda,  
 mj vida non te çelare nulla. (1149-50)*

Gozimás, thus, becomes attached to her in a chaste way. Her naked body, precisely because it is now ugly, holds no danger for the monk. He will return the next two years after Lent to meet up with her again, although he does not even know her name. In verses 1342-1345, we read:

*Don Gozimas priso la via,  
 tornose a su abadía.  
 Mas de huna cosa es mucho yrado;  
 porque su nombre no le a demandado.*

Upon the monk's discovery of Maria's death at his last visit, God gives Gozimás explicit instructions as to what to do next written on the ground but they are credible as they are composed first in Heaven. The poem reads: "*mucho eran claras y bien tajadas, que en cielo eran formadas*" (1370-71). Gozimás goes back to the monastery and tells his fellow monks the reformed prostitute's story. All are so moved by her death that in lines 1434-36:

*El santo abat ploro muy fuerte,  
 qua[n]dol oyo contar su muerte;  
 e los monges que eran hi  
 todos plorauvan otrosi. (1434-36)*

Santa María Egipcíaca is the active agent of this poem. Whether in the guise of beautiful, pubescent prostitute or withered, aged, sexless being she provokes emotion in

men. When young and beautiful appealing only to their carnality, she is described as making all men believe in the “rightness” of being with her:

*asi al loco como al sage,  
todos la tienen por de paratge. (247-48)*<sup>26</sup>

A very loose translation might be: “For both the foolish and the wise (males), all saw her as being noble, as paragon, as an example of the correct way of being.” Her power to transfix was such that the preceding description was used to define the same woman who in a fashion completely lacking in *mesura* incited swordfights and blood running in the streets: “*La sangre que dellos sallía / por medio de la cal corria*” (179-80).

With the same emotional power, although now her message is spiritual with no hint of sensuality, even as an emaciated, sun-blackened specter she provokes tears in celibate men who hear her story of sin, penance and reconciliation. Gozimás, the representative of the established Church, maintains the upper hand, so to speak, as it is he who offers María the Eucharist thus allowing her to die in peace, but it is her story retold back in the monastery that touches men at their core and causes them to weep.

Even today the Magdalene’s story resonates as “Pope Francis encouraged the faithful to pray to God for the gift of tears to imitate Mary Magdalene...” (Catholic News Agency) who like St. Mary the Egyptian, acknowledged and confessed her sin, made restitution for past actions and in so doing reconciled with herself, with the society into which she had brought upheaval as well as with the divine who absolved her.

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<sup>26</sup> Bagley discusses the multidimensional meaning of *paratge* with regard to the “*Chanson de la Croisade Albigeoise*.” The Occitan concept of *paratge* (or “peerage”) encompassess the purest attributes of honor, righteousness and nobility and alludes to someone that can be seen as a model, a paragon, a superior and much admired person.

**CHAPTER 3**

**RECONCILIATION AND THE *VIDA DE SANTA ORIA*: PENANCE AND THE ANCHORESS, SEEKING PERFECTION**

Chapter 2 examined how Santa María, Egipciaca, a former harlot could find reconciliation with herself, society and the divine. At the beginning of the young Alexandrian prostitute's story it seemed impossible that she could ever forgive herself and come to terms with her former lascivious behavior, make amends to society and be reconciled to God. In Chapter 3 we will explore the former harlot's polar opposite, Santa Oria. Unlike Santa María, it may seem that Santa Oria has no need to feel remorse or confess her sins because she seems to have done nothing for which she must forgive herself or make amends to society. From the outset of her tale, it appears that she and God must already be on very good terms.

Although the young Oria behaves impeccably from a human perspective, this chapter will suggest that she, too, must seek reconciliation with self, society and the divine. Her journey begins differently than that of Santa María Egipciaca, but we will again ask if the protagonist, Oria,<sup>27</sup> succeeds in this triple endeavor by following Catholicism's four-step Sacrament of Reconciliation/Penance: contrition, confession, satisfaction, and absolution.

Santa María, Egipciaca's way of earning a living needs little explanation, but Santa Oria's chosen vocation of " anchoress" may be less familiar. What, exactly, is an anchoress?

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<sup>27</sup> A literary figure based on the historical anchoress of the same name who lived in San Millán de la Cogolla from 1043-70 (Dutton 83).

Chewning defines an anchoress<sup>28</sup> as “... a woman who has chosen the solitary life and lives in an anchorhold in relative isolation from her community, seeing chiefly only her servants and her confessor” (103). Rotha Mary Clay’s 1914 study of anchoritism, ground-breaking in its moment and basis for further study from the 1980s forward, states that male anchorites and the female anchoresses were both “*αναχωρητής* ... withdrawn from the world ... [and] *inclusus*, shut up in a strait prison, whether in the church, chapel, convent or castle” (73). The idea of being withdrawn from regular society dates to early Christianity<sup>29</sup> when the word *anachorein* “to withdraw” could refer both to a person who wandered in the desert in the Holy Land as well as to someone who stayed in a single place (Hughes-Edwards *RM Anchor*. 3-4). The important factor was that the individual had withdrawn from what was considered a more common form of daily life in which one interacted with others on a regular basis.

In the Middle Ages, the words “hermit” and “anchorite,” began to differ in meaning; the hermit referred to someone being free to wander while the anchorite was a person who was enclosed in one place (Warren 8). The purpose of enclosure was to mimic the hardship of the Egyptian desert and cultivate the ascetic life suffered by earlier famous anchorites like St. Anthony. The early anchorites were, in turn, copying the behavior of John the Baptist and Christ whose spiritual discipline and struggles with supernatural

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<sup>28</sup> This study will focus on the female enclosed person, the anchoress, although of course, there were also enclosed males, that is, anchorites.

<sup>29</sup> Christianity is not the only religious tradition which embraces withdrawal from society to devote oneself to a life of greater emphasis on the spiritual rather than the material (Hughes-Edwards *RM Anchor* 3).

forces were seen even earlier in the Old Testament stories of Moses and Elijah (Warren 9).<sup>30</sup>

In summary, the spiritual disciplines of the physical desert were adapted to life in the reduced space of the solitary cell of the anchorhold where the enclosed anchoress focused on becoming closer to God. Like the desert hermits, the anchoress lived and behaved differently than most segments of secular society with regard to food, sleep, physical comfort and pastimes (Warren 11, 14). Anchoresses usually relied on the financial support of the community, but some supplemented this provision with needlework. They may have sewn items for the church (Licence 106). Others came from moneyed families and were able to arrange receipt of a yearly income (Licence 106-107). In England from the twelfth through the sixteenth centuries there were more females than males who adopted this lifestyle (Warren 20) and in return for material support the anchoress prayed for the salvation of the community as well as for her own (Warren 15). It is important to realize that although these women were more concerned with the spiritual rather than material life, they could not exist without resources either from family, ecclesiastics or royalty (Clay 74-77).

Why would a woman become an anchoress? In earlier studies of anchoritism, some scholars suggested that women became anchoresses to escape marriage and childbirth or because there were no marriage prospects.<sup>31</sup> This may well have explained the choice of some women, but the advantage of further years of scholarship has led Liz Herbert

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<sup>30</sup> Warren also mentions St. Paul of Thebes and Saint Mary, the Egyptian (9).

<sup>31</sup> Hughes-Edwards and McAvoy mention this opinion of Ann Warren who did earlier research on anchoresses (*Anchor. WT* 9-10). See Warren's *Anchorites and Their Patrons in Medieval England*.

McAvoy and others to embrace a more wide-ranging view of gendered anchoritism. Walling oneself in was a way of life actually chosen by some women. For some it was a calling rather than simply an escape from secular life and as more recent scholarship is uncovering, had to do with issues of control and power as well as spiritual predilection (Hughes-Edwards, McAvoy *Anchor*. WT 9-10).

The choices people make often have to do with individual preference, but the culture and historical moment into which one is born also exert influence. Licence suggests the eleventh century preoccupation with sin and its effect on the soul resulted in a growing number of individuals who entered some form of religious life. In “Thinking Historically about Medieval Emotions,” an article by Barbara Rosenwein published several years after her influential book *Emotional Communities in the Early Middle Ages*, this critic further develops the idea that certain emotions are manifested by a population in a certain place, at a certain historical moment. Rosenwein believes that the pervading emotion at a given place and time among an identifiable group of people helps us understand the norms which governed their behavior (828).

Based on her idea, we suggest that the eleventh through the thirteenth centuries, and perhaps somewhat beyond, might be considered the age of existential doubt and guilt. The second millennium had arrived without Christ’s return. As cities grew, a market economy was supplanting the former lord-vassal relationship. In addition, some members of the clergy had lost sight of Christ’s call to poverty and service or had insufficient training to minister to their flock (Shaffern 37).<sup>32</sup> In light of this scenario, the penitential life of an

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<sup>32</sup> See Mundy pp. 83-89 for a brief description of changes in land use and commerce. Individuals farmed small plots of land, thus generating personal income.

anchoress was thought to be one way to expiate both personal sin and that of a community.

T. Licence proposes that:

During the eleventh century...the anchoritic life came to be regarded as a model of spiritual perfection... [P]enance was prerequisite to the process of improving or perfecting sinful humanity. To perform penance meant to undertake prescribed actions such as reciting the psalms or fasting, either in public or in private, often for a fixed period of time to make atonement to God. (112-3)

In *Hermits and Recluses in English Society: 950-1200*, Licence sees a progression over time of the nature of anchoritic practices. He says that in the eleventh century an anchoress chose a sort of “exile” from everyday life, exhibited contrition and engaged in “fasting, vigils, and prayer,” (120) practices viewed as sufficient penance to atone for earthly sins and enter into everlasting, heavenly life after earthly death (115-20). Texts from a century later indicate that it became more common to add external discomforts like wearing a hair shirt or chainmail without an undergarment, and engaging in self-flagellation. These more extreme acts of “mortification of the flesh” added the element of purgation now seen necessary to atone for one’s sins and provide an entryway to everlasting life (Licence 120). A third iteration demonstrated that the eremitic life coupled with acts of penance was insufficient for absolution and thus, in addition, one had to imitate the life of Christ in order to gain entry into Heaven (Licence 121-22).

Who became an anchoress? In patristic times a woman named Alexandra is supposed to have enclosed herself, not because she actively tempted a man sexually, but rather because she noticed that she represented a temptation to him (Cloke 28). Warren posits that between 1100-1500, the majority of anchoresses came from the lay population with a small number of nuns leaving the active life to take on what St. Benedict considered

the more difficult and disciplined contemplative life (23). In the thirteenth century, lay religious were not, as were the former nuns, from an aristocratic background (Warren 25).

Becoming an anchoress, therefore, for some, provided a means of upward social mobility within a society where this sort of movement was nearly impossible. A variety of marital statuses were represented among the anchoresses, although the virgin is considered the most worthy (Heffernan 252-53). Jerome, a Church father, expressed the belief that in Heaven virgins are given a hundred-fold blessing, widows a blessing of sixty-fold and married women, thirty (Clark 170).<sup>33</sup> Many anchoresses had never been married, although Christina of Markyate (1097-1160) made a dramatic escape, virginity intact, from Burthred to whom she was forcibly wed. She lived as an anchoress until her husband legalized the dissolution of their marriage and Christina became a nun (Ranft 42-43).

Ecclesiastic insistence on the virginal state manifested itself in the writings of male authors. Eve of Wilton, an anchoress, was counseled in the *Liber confortatorius* written about 1080 by her mentor, Goscelin, “to curb the instincts of her body and mind” (Hughes-Edwards *AnchorMA* 32, Hayward 55). In the twelfth century, Aelred of Rievaulx’s sister, for whom he had written a “rule,” the *De Institutione Inclusarum*, was an enclosed or as Aelred saw it, “entombed,” virgin (Mulder-Bakker 3, Barratt 33-34 and Clay 96-97). Oria, the protagonist of the *vita* to be examined in this study is representative of this idealized chaste virgin.

The *Ancrene Wisse*,<sup>34</sup> another guidebook for anchoresses authored by an anonymous English clergyman during the general time frame of the convening of the 1215

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<sup>33</sup> See Note 2, page 170.

<sup>34</sup> Although it is thought the original version was written in Midlands English in the first half of the thirteenth century, other apparently somewhat later versions exist in Latin and

Fourth Lateran Council, gives eight reasons for becoming an anchoress. This book of spiritual and practical advice also stresses the importance of bodily purity. It counsels the three well-born sisters, for whom it was originally written, that it is good for young females to be enclosed because they will: have security, protect their virginity contained in its “brittle glass,” be able to reach Heaven, become “God’s spouse”, leave material wealth in exchange for the riches of Heaven, enjoy God’s companionship, see God’s light more clearly in the darkness of enclosure, and be able to pray more intensely (Morton 122-27).

JoAnn McNamara sums up Medieval views regarding female virginity in a way which seems to apply equally well to anchoresses as to nuns, her specific field of study.

She states:

Chaste celibacy, originally merely a vehicle for liberating time and energies for divine service, tended to be promoted as an end in itself for women. As the clerical hierarchy incorporated monks into the priesthood and co-opted many monastic virtues, the legal condition of celibacy (the unmarried state) overshadowed the spiritual value of chastity. But for women, all virtues were folded into an engulfing discourse on sexual purity. In the second millennium, praise of virginity degenerated into fretful nagging about keeping all the senses fastidiously unspotted, as well as the mind that controlled them. (4)

As indicated in Jerome’s thoughts above, widows and married women, although perhaps not thought to be as valuable to God as virgins, did possess some spiritual worth and some chose to be enclosed. In the *Vida de Santa Oria*, Amuna, Oria’s mother, became an anchoress after her husband, García, passed away. Historical examples include thirteenth century Lauretta, Countess of Leicester, who became enclosed after losing her husband. In the following century, Katherine of Ledbury, also a wife and mother chose the anchoretic

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French. I have not found evidence that this text was known in the Iberian Peninsula in the thirteenth century (or even in the later Middle Ages).

life after her husband died (Clay 74-75). Sometimes, a woman's husband was still living and both partners decided to pursue separate religious lives but not become enclosed in a monastery or anchorhold.<sup>35</sup> A married woman could vow henceforth to have a "continent" marriage, in other words, refrain from relations with her husband. Sometimes women even abandoned children already born to the couple (Clove 33-35).<sup>36</sup>

The fourteenth century Prussian, Dorothy of Mantau, married and had a family before later becoming an anchoress (Hartmann 101). According to her confessor and hagiographer, Johannes of Marienwerder,<sup>37</sup> she felt a calling to the spiritual life from age seven when a pot of boiling water fell on her (Hartmann 105). After eight of their nine children died, the couple took a vow of conjugal continence, disposed of their earthly goods and together pursued a spiritual life (Hartmann 107). Dorothy's husband died and she was enclosed three years later in 1393 (Hartmann 104).<sup>38</sup>

What exactly was the physical arrangement of an anchorite's cell? Warren details it thusly:

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<sup>35</sup> A fictional example from the literary work to be examined in Chapter 4 comes from Ramón Llull's *Romanç d'Evast e Blaquerna*. In Chapter 1, "Of Marriage", the protagonist's father wants to make this arrangement with his wife Aloma, but she withholds her consent. Instead of living separately, they take a vow of conjugal continence, sell their possessions, give away the proceeds, and then wander their town to help people with material and spiritual needs. They live by random acts of generosity and by begging for alms.

<sup>36</sup> Paula, Jerome's acolyte is a famous example. See Cloke's discussion of the various children she left behind (35).

<sup>37</sup> Of interest, but not pertinent to this thesis is that Marienwerder wrote Dorothy's *vita* in thematic segments, rather than chronological order (Hartmann 103-104).

<sup>38</sup> This study will treat the physically enclosed anchoress, but before describing the physical structure in which an anchoress lived, it is worth noting that McAvoy and others have broadened the category to extend beyond the physical enclosure to the idea of a self-imposed anchoritism. One English anchoress, Margery Kempe, who lived during the same century as Dorothy, inhabited an anchorhold "of the mind" says McAvoy, whereas another, Julian of Norwich, lived enclosed in a cell. (10).

The typical English anchorite lived alone in a cell abutting or enclosed within a parish church, a chapel, or perhaps a hospital.... The cell could also form part of a monastic complex. After the fourteenth century, there is increasing likelihood that the anchorage might be attached to a friary. Such cells were sometimes built by the recluses themselves, sometimes by their patrons, --- whether king, bishop, gentleman, lord, parish, municipality, or monastery. Once built, the cells were in turn inhabited by a series of anchorites, with the rights of patronage ----... (30)

How was an anchoress enclosed? The general rule was that the bishop, as well as, the patron of the building to which the anchorhold was attached needed to give permission for enclosure. The prospective anchoress had to exhibit a convincing desire to be enclosed as well as a potential aptitude for the physical and emotional rigors of that way of life. Written evidence suggests that discussion often led by the bishop took place to determine the candidate's suitability.<sup>39</sup>

The bishop usually performed the enclosure ceremony enumerated below in an abbreviated, paraphrase, (very close to a direct quote) and identically numbered list abbreviated from E.A. Jones' description:

1. A woman began the ceremony face down in the western part of the church.
2. A litany was recited which spoke of both baptism and extreme unction<sup>40</sup>, a procedure which usually prepared an ailing person for death.
3. She was sprinkled with holy water and the censer was swung over her. She was helped to her feet and handed two candles, signifying her love of God and neighbor.
4. A lesson from Isaiah and verses from the gospel of Luke were read as she listened.
5. She proceeded to the altar, kneeled and took a vow which was acknowledged.
6. A sermon was given.
7. A mass was said.
8. The future anchoress, celebrant and other witnesses walked through the cemetery to the space where she was to be walled in, as she would soon to be considered dead to the world.

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<sup>39</sup> "... [W]e commit to you, in whose trustiness, diligence, and caution we have full confidence, an enquiry [concerning] whether she excels in those notable virtues which ought to prevail in persons who give up the life of the world" (Clay 91-92).

<sup>40</sup> The Sacrament Extreme Unction is now known as Anointing of the Sick. See Poschmann for a detailed description of the history of this Sacrament (233-57).

9. All entered the cell and words from the book of Tobias were spoken reiterating that the person to be enclosed would be leaving the dark of the world and looking toward the light of Heaven.
10. “Commendations” to the dead were read.
11. The woman entered the enclosure and laid down in a grave which had been dug and sang an antiphon which stated that she had entered her final resting place.
12. Dust was sprinkled on the grave.
13. Everyone but the new anchoress and the bishop left the anchorhold as he gave her final instructions (37-42).
14. The bishop left and the anchorhold was sealed (36-42).

We have taken a look, in general, at the life of an anchoress. As we have seen, there are a number of extant records of English and continental anchoresses, but fewer uncovered to date specifically in the Iberian Peninsula. It appears there is one semi-preserved anchorhold in Astorga, a town located in Castilla-Leon of northwestern Spain. The anchorhold shares a wall with the Capilla de San Esteba and an interior window although now re-positioned, formerly opened into the church of Santa Marta so the enclosed women could hear mass. Currently, *La Hermandad de las Cinco Llagas de Astorga* is hoping to restore the cell of *las emparedadas* of Astorga, glassing in the window that faces the street and highlighting what remains of the interior window (Del Río Sánchez n.p.). The description of this Spanish cell with its window facing the street and another opening in to a church agrees with descriptions of medieval English anchorholds. A recent male visitor wrote of his visit to the interior of this cell:

... I entered into that place where women in the flower of youth enclosed themselves for life to dedicate themselves to prayer. The room is narrow and the only connection [with the world] is a small bar-adorned cavity which faces the street. The main bars are arranged in such a way that the two middle ones, splayed in the center allow the insertion of an arm, of a bowl, the smallest space possible to pass through a little food or alms that a medieval pilgrim who horrified would read this inscription on the stone postern of the hermetically sealed window, the phrase comes from Ecclesiastes and its meaning is ambiguous ... “Acuerdate de su juicio, porque tal ha de ser el tuyo, ayer a mí, hoy a ti” (“Keep in mind your final

judgment because such must be yours, mine was yesterday, yours is today.”)  
(My translation). (Carlón 7)

Gregoria Cavero Domínguez’ *Inclusa entre ‘parietes’: La reclusion voluntaria en Espana medieval* displays a picture of this cell on the cover of her study of enclosed women in medieval and early modern Spain. Her analysis of anchoritism in Spain agrees in large part with the research of those studying English and other Western European anchoresses. She says more females than males cultivated this lifestyle. Although the theory behind being “walled in” implies extreme asceticism, Cavero’s research has found substantial variation in the rigor with which the anchoritic life was actually lived out. She affirms that documents dating from the Early Modern period indicate the presence of anchoresses at one time or another throughout the Iberian Peninsula<sup>41</sup> (58).

Cavero cites a variety of Early Modern sources. The fifteenth century *Libro limosnero de Isabel la Católica* specified donations for the “*emparedadas*” of Salamanca. The 1389 last will and testament of one Sancho Díaz leaves a certain number of *maravedís* to male and female anchorites living attached to the Salamanca church of San Juan as well as to others attached to the wall outside the city (59). In addition, Church documents indicated that until approximately the beginning of the sixteenth century a connection existed between the Dominicans and anchoresses (62). There was also a connection between Franciscans and anchoresses in the monastery of Santa Clara of Tordesillas with

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<sup>41</sup> The author also mentions the many words: “*beatas, terciarias, donadas, beguinas ...*” used to refer to various categories of non-ecclesiastically governed (non-cloistered) women and implies that the definitions of each may not be entirely clear. There may be overlaps in meaning or practices (58).

which Juan II was associated.<sup>42</sup> The nuns and anchoresses appear to have given one another mutual help (63).

Cavero's research has found evidence of additional Spanish anchoresses. For example, there were anchorholds attached to many churches in Sevilla in the 1500s. Records indicate that anchoresses appeared to be part of a post-*Reconquista* repopulation effort in Córdoba, the former capital of the Umayyad Caliphate (65, 67). Bishops bequeathed sums to anchoresses, sometimes with the express expectation that the anchoresses would pray for the souls of the dead (67). While it appears anchoresses were given support they did not escape paying, along with other religious groups, the *diezmo* tax to the local church (70-71).

With this introduction to the life, in general, of a medieval Western European enclosed woman dedicated to prayer, contemplation, and penitential practice, we will begin our analysis of a historic medieval Spanish anchoress through the hagiographical poem the *Vida de Santa Oria* composed by Gonzalo de Berceo.

Gonzalo de Berceo wrote his *cuaderna vía* poem, *Vida de Santa Oria*, the *Life of Saint Oria* in the vernacular "romanz" of the Riojan region about 1250, when as he tells us in verse two, he considered himself to be in his "vejez," his old age (Lappin 3). There is only one extant medieval manuscript from the late fourteenth century. It is Manuscript 4B, also labeled F for its folio format, which was donated to the Real Academia by C. Carroll Marden who discovered it at the beginning of the last century (Uría Maqua 39-40, Lappin

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<sup>42</sup> At this monastery, "... Juan II fundó un oratorio en el que tres emparedadas vivirían en estricta clausura" (Cavero).

1). Although Lappin mentions the manuscript was once located in the monastery of San Millan, it is unclear if that is where Marden found it.

Other manuscripts known to have existed are Q in Quarto format thought to be from the thirteenth century and once held at San Millan and F used by Friars Mecoleta and Ibarreta used F for copies they made. This may mean that the lost Q manuscript never contained the *Vida de Santa Oria* (Lappin 1-2). There is also a prose account of the saint's life written by Fray Prudencio Sandoval published shortly after the turn of the seventeenth century and whose source was most likely Berceo's poem (Keller 97).

Berceo's source was a supposed manuscript, now lost, written in Latin by Munio, Oria's confessor. The young saint's *vita* was purportedly recounted to him by the girl's mother, Amuna. Uria Maqua claims there are two good proofs for Berceo's statement that he used Munio's Latin version. First, in the poem he uses the Mozarabic calendar date of December 27 as her feast day rather than the Roman calendar date of December 25. Uria Maqua argues that since Berceo does use the older Mozarabic calendar date, it shows he is basing his text on the earlier customs of the saint's era, rather than on those contemporary with his own lifetime. The critic states the Councils of Agde in 506 and 813 pronounced that the faithful were required to take communion three times a year - at Pentecost, Easter, and Christmas - but in the poem Berceo tells us that Oria's first vision takes place after the Eucharist celebrated at Christmas. In contrast, during Berceo's lifetime, this obligation was reduced by the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 to taking communion only once a year, at Easter (25-26).

Secondly, she offers as proof that Berceo used the original Latin manuscript that he retains the first person singular "yo" used by Munio, rather than changing it to what should

be a narration about Munio which would require the third person singular, “él.” When Berceo, who would not be a figure in the original Latin manuscript as he lived two centuries later, talks about himself in the *vita*, he uses the third person singular, “él” (Uría Maqua 26-27).

What would Berceo’s interest be in writing Oria’s *vita*? The saint’s story was probably read: “... during the sermon at the feast of the saint, and ... within the very building in which Oria lived and died” (Lappin *Comm.* 90). Since her life took place in the location in the place where Berceo lived, he may have chosen to write Oria’s *vita*, as Walsh suggests, because Oria and her mother Amuna are buried together at San Millán. The example of their holy lives as recounted in the poem may have attracted pilgrims. Pilgrims passing through a monastery brought economic support which would have helped the faltering financial status of the monastery of San Millán (300).

As saints’ “lives” served as some form of *exemplum*, what was Berceo trying to communicate to his audience in the 205 verses of *La vida de Santa Oria*? Critics have focused on various aspects of the poem. To cite a few, James Burke sees the timing of events of Oria’s life, death, and visionary resurrection occurring at key moments in the liturgical calendar as reminders to the poem’s audience that a peaceful Heaven is the reward for a life well-lived (293). Julian Weiss in “Writing, Sanctity, and Gender” differs with T. Anthony Perry’s conclusion which equates Berceo with Oria, and instead, suggests that Berceo may identify with Oria, but marked himself as separate because as a male writer he controls her story (461). Farcasiu focuses on the imagery Berceo employs and its theological connections (308).

More recently, Casaldüero, in similar fashion to Aldo Ruffinatto believes that this hagiography was directed, not to a general population, but specifically to thirteenth century Benedictine convent nuns. Its purpose was to encourage the women in their spiritual exercises and to help them through moments of monotony to live out their lifelong vows of humility, poverty, and chastity (239). Casaldüero affirms:

*“El poema muestra, por eso, el trabajo que a lo largo de la vida y la victoria que en el instante de la muerte aguardan a las reclusas, y anima a éstas – como resultado – a mantener la profesión que han elegido.”* (240)

Casaldüero explains a possible origin of this idea of “seeing” the future reward in present time. The critic explains that Jerome, a church Father, wrote to Eustoquia, Paula’s daughter, and counseled her on how to continue with the enclosed and abstemious life. His advice was to imagine that she could leave her body for a while and mentally go to Heaven to “see” ahead of time her future reward: becoming Christ’s bride after earthly death (241).

I suggest that it is precisely through Oria’s three visions, the first of which pulls the anchoress, a mortal, to Heaven, the second in which the celestial Virgin Mary descends to visit Oria in her cell and the third in which the girl is inexplicably transported to the Mount of Olives, that Oria eventually finds reconciliation with self, society, and the divine. This overlap and fluidity of time and space made possible by the three visions push the narrative of the suffering Oria forward through the four steps of ecclesiastical reconciliation.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> It has been suggested that dreams or visions in Medieval literature serve to emphasize the veracity of an account because the character “saw” the evidence rather than “thought” about it and secondly, even a fanciful vision can plausibly be put to didactic use after a return to “reality” (Goldberg 27). In addition, Walsh thinks that Berceo may have taken some fictional liberties with his *romanz* version (300) of Oria’s life by copying a salient detail of St. Eugenia’s life (300). The mothers of both girls experience a vision, letting them know their daughters have been accepted into Heaven, a message plausibly directed to thirteenth century Christians at large (Walsh 301-04).

Recently, Mark Alquilano's study makes an extensive analysis of Oria's first vision pairing discoveries in neuroscience with religious belief. He reviews the work of Hobson who in REM (rapid eye movement) studies focuses on the differences between the content and images experienced while dreaming and those in the conscious mind while awake. He also examines the work of Domhoff who proposes that in a sense the brain quiets down during dreams, yet harnesses the material dreamed to work out something that has been on the dreamer's mind. A third researcher, Bulkeley, combines the dream science focus of Hobson's work with that of Domhoff on dream interpretation to talk about the narratological strength of dreams, in particular, with regard to religious belief (Alquilano 135-37). Bulkeley talks in terms of "root metaphors" and Alquilano quotes him, "Root metaphors are concrete images that metaphorically express our ultimate existential concerns, that are powerful and challenging, and have deep transformative effects in our lives" (138).

How does Oria reconcile with herself? I maintain that Oria will resolve her feelings of existential unworthiness only when she also determines her relationship with the divine. Oria must follow the four steps of the Sacrament of Penance or Reconciliation: contrition, confession, satisfaction, and absolution. Three of these steps will be accomplished by Oria and traditionally, the fourth step, absolution, must be carried out by a member of the male clergy. Contrition is an activity of the heart and mind; it implies feeling remorse for missteps or in Christian parlance, sins. Confession implies admitting the sins aloud to self or another or in Catholicism, speaking them aloud to a priest.

The formal process of this Sacrament, as dictated in 1439 by the Council of Florence, placed satisfaction or making amends after the fourth step in the process, that is,

after absolution had been granted by the priest (O'Collins 81). Oria, living four centuries before this formal pronouncement, initiated her practice of satisfaction ahead of receiving clerical absolution by choosing to live or walled in.

The opening of the poem sets the scene for an individual who will likely be successful in her endeavor. After acknowledging God, Christ, and the Virgin Mary, Berceo continues in typical hagiographic form by telling the reader that Oria has the correct genealogical pedigree. Of her parents, Berceo says, "*Omnes eran cathólicos ...*" ("Both were devout ...") (12a).<sup>44</sup> "*Apriso las costumbres de los buenos parientes*" ("She learnt her good behaviour from her parents") (16a). In addition, her mother, a widow, was also an anchoress "*entró enparedada, de celicio vestida*" ("she was enclosed as an anchoress, wearing a hairshirt") (17b) and a respected one, at that, "*salié a luengas tierras la su buena loor*" (18d).

Oria has demonstrated pious behavior since childhood: "*De ninnes fazié ella fechos muy convenientes*" ("From her childhood she did many fitting things") (7c). Even before Oria chooses to become an anchoress, she cultivated austere habits: "*Por consentir al cuerpo / nunca soltó la rienda.*" ("She never loosened the reins to give in to her body.") (15d). Oria dresses in monastic fashion: "*Vistio otros vestidos de los monjes calannos.*" ("She dressed in other clothes, the same as the monks.") (20c). In stark contrast to the lavish embroidered cordovan shoes Mary the Egyptian wears, Oria's "*podrien pocos dineros valer los sus peannos*" ("her shoes would fetch but a few coins") (20d).

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<sup>44</sup> All quotations both in Spanish and English are from Anthony Lappin's bilingual version of Berceo's *La vida de Santa Oria: Text, Translation, and Commentary*; Legenda 2000.

Berceo offers the reader only the barest of details of Oria's place of residence, but as a girl, Oria "*en un rencon angosto / entró emparedada.*" ("She was walled in to a cramped place<sup>45</sup>") (21b) (My translation.) Her tiny habitat, penitential in and of itself, becomes metaphorically expansive as the space in which the young anchoress, who unlike the young, Saint Mary of Egypt, is described as a "*vaso de caridad*" ("a vessel of charity") and a "*templo de paçiençia e de humildat*" ("a temple of charity and humility") (22a-b) will perform acts of penance: "*Porque angosta era la enparedaçion*" / "*teniela por muy larga el su buen corazón*" ("[Although] <sup>46</sup>the anchorhold was narrow" / "her good heart considered it to be very wide") (23 a-b).

The *Ancrene Wisse* agrees with Berceo's inverse perception of physical and spiritual space, "... an anchoress shut up here [on Earth] shall there [in Heaven] be, ... both more light and more swift; and shall play in Heaven in such wide confines – as it is said that in Heaven there is large pasture – that the body will be wheresoever the spirit will, in an instant" (Morton 72).

While Oria is present in "real time" in her cell, the anchoress experiences her first vision in which three virgin martyrs, Eulalia, Cecilia, and Ágata, appear and take her to Heaven where she is given a vision of the past. Farcasiu says, "... the implicit identification of Oria with the virgin martyrs in the first vision establishes a parallel between their fate and her self-inflicted suffering, a spiritual – and explicitly penitential – martyrdom" (314). The three virgin martyrs, cross the boundary between Heaven and Earth and set in motion the four-step process of Reconciliation: contrition, confession, satisfaction (making

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<sup>45</sup> "She entered a narrow cell as an anchoress." is A. Lappin's English translation of line 21b, which may not adequately depict the discomfort of such a space.

<sup>46</sup> Lappin's word choice is "[b]ecause."

amends), and absolution which takes place, both on Earth and in Heaven connected by the bridge of Oria's visions. They know that she has read the stories of their martyrdom. They say to her: "*Tú mucho te deleitas en las nuestras pasiones; / de amor y de grado leyes nuestras razones*" ("You find such delight in our passions; / you read our speeches lovingly and willingly") (34a-b).

Oria follows the girls and a white dove by supernatural means, and the four ascend a ladder-like column and rest in a celestial tree until three men dressed in white open the door to Heaven. Oria sees processions of people both known and unknown to her who have passed from earthly to celestial life: canons, bishops, virgins, martyrs, holy hermits, Urraca, her teacher and fellow anchoress<sup>47</sup>, her deceased father, the twelve apostles, and evangelists all of whom, with a few exceptions, have lived virtuous lives.

Even with the encouragement of this first vision, Oria still feels unworthy to become a bride of Christ and therefore, expresses contrition, that is, remorse, for her sins and confesses them at the same time.

When the three virgins first come to take her for a temporary visit to Heaven she says, "*Yo non sería digna / de veer tant gran gloria. / Mas si me reçibiessedes / vos en vuestra memoria, / allá seríe complida / toda la mi estoria.*" ("I would not be worthy to see such great glory, but if you agree to remember me all of my life will therefore be fulfilled") (35 b-d). The three holy messengers reiterate that she is "*de dios mucho amada,*" well-beloved by God, (49a) and it has been recognized that "*a dios avíe pagado por manera alguna*" ("She had pleased God in some way") (50c), so apparently, she is worthy of God's

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<sup>47</sup> Urraca's voice is heard, but, significantly, she is too far ahead of Oria's view of the long procession to be seen.

attention. Oria does find reconciliation with herself as she travels through her three visions.<sup>48</sup> While in Heaven she is included in the praise for her three virgin martyr guides when “*alegrósse con ellas / la cort’que y morava*” (“the court that dwelt there rejoiced over them”) (51b).

When she breaks through the firmament into Heaven and sees the first participants in the heavenly procession, canons also dressed in white, Oria is still very unsure of her position and says, “*en el mi coraçon / una grant dubda trayo*” (“I feel a great dread”) (53c). When the third group, the procession of virgins, meet her they are singing and preparing to embrace her but “*envargada fue Oria / con el reçevimiento / ca tenie que non era / de tal merecimiento*” (“Oria was troubled by this greeting for she held that she was not sufficiently worthy”) (65a-b). If the procession of virgins has received her with such enthusiasm, they must see Oria as potentially one of their number. Thus, they are “living” proof of Oria’s future.

Further along the lengthy procession, she hears Christ’s voice: “*mas non podió verlo / a todo su talento*” (“but she could not see him for all that she desired”), clearly because she was not of such merit (88 c-d). Despite her self-doubt, she is given constant encouragement by the three virgins and others they meet along the way.

Oria is also given a foretaste of her future by the somewhat enigmatic figure, *Vox Mea*, a beautiful, ethereal woman who tells the young anchoress that if she maintains her

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<sup>48</sup> Goldberg believes that dreams or visions in Medieval literature serve to emphasize the veracity of an account because the character “saw” the evidence rather than “thought” about it and secondly, even a fanciful vision can plausibly be put to didactic use after a return to “reality” (27).

ascetic behavior, the golden girl<sup>49</sup> will inherit the special golden, jewel-encrusted chair. At the encounter with Vox Mea and the glimpse of a glorious seat reserved just for her, the young anchoress hopes to remain in Heaven. God's voice informs her that it is not yet to be: "*Aun ave un poco / el cuerpo a lazarar*" ("her body still has a little while to suffer") (102c) on Earth.

Oria feels that because she is "*peccadriz mezquina*" ("a miserable sinner") (104a) she will never succeed in returning to Heaven. Before God sends Oria back to her cell, he tells her, "*con lo que haz lazado ganas el mi amor*" ("With what you have suffered you have gained my love") (105).

She returns to Earth and wakes up in her cell. For eleven months Oria increases her penitential activities. Although not described with much detail in this poem, anchoresses, in general, devoted themselves to prayer, night vigils, reading the psalter, fasting, and exposing oneself to the elements. More aggressive means of mortifying the flesh involved eating spoiled food, self-flagellation, immersion in cold water, the wearing of clothing which irritated the skin, and the re-infliction of pain on already wounded flesh. The point of these practices, although perhaps viewed as sadistic to the twenty-first century mind, was to liberate the spirit from the body. These behaviors were meant to increase focus on existential sin, to foment contrition and confession, as well as to aid identification with Christ. By performing acts which harmed their own flesh in imitation of what was inflicted upon the innocent God and sacrificial lamb dressed in human flesh, they hoped to be worthy of the eternal life Christ promised (Licence 133-137).

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<sup>49</sup> The girl is aptly named after a precious metal, gold, for her great spiritual value. "[A]s she was precious, more than precious stones, she had a golden name, she was called Oria" (9c-d).

After eleven months of a more exacting regime of penitential practices, Oria has a second vision. This time, three unnamed virgins appear in her cell along with a luxurious bed and announce that the Virgin Mary will descend from Heaven to visit Oria. Against the girl's will, they throw her into the comfortable bed of which she feels unworthy. The Virgin Mary, does appear, but Oria, a bit in the manner of a Doubting Thomas wants proof that the woman she sees is truly "*madre de Christo e fija e esposa*" ("mother and daughter and bride of Christ") as the three virgins describe her (127c). The proof, the Virgin tells her, is that the anchoress will suffer a fatal illness and will regain entry to Heaven.

As predicted, Oria soon becomes ill and has a third vision in which she is transported to the Mount of Olives but is jarred awake by her mother before the vision is over. Brought back to Earth once more she is delirious and her confessor, Munio, is called. They converse about the joys of Heaven. Oria's exhausted mother, Amuna falls asleep and she has a vision in which her deceased husband García tells his wife their daughter is about to die. Back on Earth, Oria does die, is properly buried and then in a leap forward to the future her mother dies and is buried in the same tomb.

At the end of the first vision, Oria is returned to the present, her Earth-bound anchorhold, and corporeal form. Following Christ's instructions given in Heaven, Oria intensifies her spiritual disciplines demonstrating satisfaction, or making amends by more extreme mortification of the flesh. She endures further fasting, and long hours of prayer resulting in sleep deprivation. All of these sacrifices, joyfully made, are performed to make her worthy to become Jesus' bride after earthly death. Christ suffered physical deprivation. He fasted, spent extended time in prayer, and suffered physical torture. Santa Oria will attempt to imitate aspects of the life of her beloved, thus expressing empathy and

compassion in word and deed. Oria would have been aware of the meaning if not of the actual verse of Romans 8:17, in that Christians are "... heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him." In this way, she increases her identification with the sufferings of Christ hoping that this additional penance will soon make her worthy to become his heavenly bride.

Identifying with the suffering and humanity of Christ is a topic taken up by both Rachel Fulton in *From Judgment to Passion: Devotion to Christ and the Virgin Mary, 800-1200* and the somewhat later *Affective Meditation and the Invention of Medieval Compassion* by Sarah McNamer albeit from different perspectives. Fulton sees the feminized male, ecclesiastical influence of Bernard of Clairvaux and others whereas Sarah McNamer sees empathetic suffering with Christ as a culturally learned response to repeatedly reading affective texts like the *Meditationes Vita Christi*.<sup>50</sup> Suffering with Christ is seen as a way to become worthy to be his bride after material death.

Although Oria's mortification of the flesh is described simply as fasting, sleeping on a hard bed, and keeping sleep-depriving vigils, Hartmann mentions Marienwerder's account of Dorothy of Mantau's disciplines, the less graphic of which are quoted here: "What a conqueror she became over her body through God's love anyone may hear and marvel about, for she flagellated her body often with rods, whips, thistles, thorny branches, and with hard knotty, barbed scourges" (106). This identification with the physical

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<sup>50</sup> McNamer somewhat radically posits that the *Meditationes Vita Christi* was written in Italian by an Italian nun, possibly a Poor Clare (907). Later the text was amended by a male ecclesiastic. She bases this supposition on the apparent differences in style found at the beginning and then later in the text.

sufferings of Christ is not limited to the Middle Ages. A similar mind-set is depicted in the 2004 Mel Gibson movie, *The Passion of the Christ*.<sup>51</sup>

Although viewers did not suffer physical torture themselves, there is evidence that the brutality of the film provoked empathetic suffering. Some saw the film as pornographically violent, while others viewed the action as a replica of Christ's torments before and during the crucifixion. In "Beholding Blood Sacrifice in *The Passion of the Christ*," Stephen Prince says:

Among those most hostile to the film, it was seen as a kind of violent pornography or an exercise in anti-Semitism. But among viewers who supported the film, particularly Christians receptive to their very graphic modern rendition of a passion play, the judgment was that Gibson had gotten it right, that the film was truthful and was the most accurate and realistic film depiction of the physical torments inflicted on Jesus after his arrest.<sup>52</sup> (12)

Amelia Arenas, a self-proclaimed atheist, says she found herself asking if a moral lesson justifies the violence as she was: "... caught for more than two hours between ardent morbidity and overwhelming pity. For Gibson's movie threatens to collapse the tenuous barrier that the Aristotelian model depends on – the place where witnessing is no longer safe, where empathy and sadism merge" (15).

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<sup>51</sup> The film is deemed controversial for its inaccurate portrayal of the gospels as well as for its bigotry (Weeks 422). In addition, it has been accused of plagiarizing *Das bittere Leiden unsers Herrn Jesu Christi or The Dolorous Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ*, a novel written by Clemens Brentano about Anne Catherine Emmerich, a nun who lived at the end of eighteenth into the nineteenth century (Droge 1342-3, Weeks 421).

<sup>52</sup> Prince's area of interest is film, not religion, as his article explores "real" versus "fictive" violence. His study of *The Passion* hopes to separate "real" violence, as in watching a documentary in which someone is tortured and killed, versus watching digitally enhanced film footage in which it "appears" that a victim is being tortured and killed (14).

She concludes that Mel Gibson's *The Passion* of 2004 is to Zeffirelli's 1977 *Jesus of Nazareth* as the mutilated Christ figure of Caravaggio and the German painters is to the dead, but relatively intact Christ figure of Renaissance *Pieta* representations. If the latter in each case (*Jesus of Nazareth* and the *Pieta*) provoke tears, the former provoke anguish and therefore, empathy on the part of the viewer (8-10).

Pizzato would concur that although difficult to watch, the brutal violence of *The Passion of the Christ* may be justified. He cites the work of French poet, playwright, and theater director Antonin Artaud (1896-1948) whose Theater of Cruelty "... evokes a ritual transformation of spirit and body in those watching, as they identify with the suffering of the tragic character and actor, as scapegoat and martyr ..." (372).

James Caviezel, in an interview, describes the mistaken blow of the whip, separated shoulder, and hypothermia he suffered while playing the role of Christ. The actor is a practicing Catholic and reports that the physical suffering was not only a brutal physical test of endurance but also a deeply spiritual episode. He processed the extreme discomfort as a time of expiation for his sins intensified by realization that the role put his life in jeopardy. In addition to the physical suffering while hanging on the cross, he mentions the strangeness of looking down at the actors and extras on the ground below as he noted looks of empathy and indifference (Catholic Inside interview).<sup>53</sup>

Bridging the gap between the mindset of the twenty first century and the Middle Ages is Allison Griffiths' study, "The Revered Gaze: The Medieval Imaginary of Mel Gibson's *The Passion of the Christ*." The author states that the "revered gaze" of three

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<sup>53</sup> <http://catholicinsideusa.wordpress.com/2014/05/03/the-passion-of-the-christ-jim-caviezel-complete-interview/>

historical time periods represented by the medieval cathedral, the panorama [painting] of the Passion exhibited in Canada in 1895, and Gibson's 2004 film have much in common (3). She believes that all three visual representations can be categorized as "... spectating as a form of pilgrimage ..." and argues that even though the ethos of the three historical periods differs greatly, there are "echoes of a medieval aesthetic across time" (4). She points out that believers share a sort of "pilgrimage performance."

For Griffiths, a pilgrimage on foot, whose destination is a cathedral with Heaven-high ceilings, produces the same identification with Christ's suffering as turning 360 degrees to gaze at a 1895 panoramic painting of the Crucifixion or observing images on a movie screen in the twenty first century. In each case, the believing spectator has the potential to become, says Griffith, "immersed" almost one with the performance (13-14) and also with the performer (Piera).<sup>54</sup>

In like manner the poem tells us that Oria "*non fazié a sus carnes / nulla misericordia. / Martiriava las carnes / dándolis grant lazerio, / cumplié días e noches / todo su ministerio, / ieunios e vigiliás / e rezar el salterio*" "allowed no mercy to her flesh. She martyred her body, giving it great suffering she fulfilled by day and night all her office, fasting and vigils and praying the psalter" (111d-112c).

In *Holy Feast, Holy Fast*, Caroline Walker Bynum writes of the importance of fasting and of Eucharistic devotion for female religious. Bynum says that during the late Middle Ages people both craved the Eucharist and were afraid of it. A step beyond transubstantiation, the belief that the elements of bread and wine turn into Christ's actual

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<sup>54</sup> This idea comes from a conversation with Dr. Montserrat Piera on August 27, 2016.

blood and bones, caused both reverence and fear in the physical presence of the Eucharist (56-8).

The evidence for fasting varies, but became a *topos* for the *vidas* of female saints (Bynum 82-83). John Chrysostom in *Homily 6* “On Fasting,” a Lenten sermon, says of the 40 days of food deprivation: “How delightful the waves of this spiritual sea ...” (69). He cautions the monks in his charge to learn something from the “toil of fasting” and that it is a difficult practice, but one meant to cleanse not just the body, but the mind. Fasting’s goal is to produce something positive – not just serve as an endurance contest (70-71). The *Ancrene Wisse* also addresses the issue of food intake. It says “this is true religion -- that every one, according to his station, should borrow from this frail world as little as possible of food ...” (Morton 153).

The girl’s second vision comes to her, we are told, about eleven months after the first one. The virgin martyrs again appear in Oria’s cell and Oria is referred to as “*de dios buena amiga*,” “the good friend of God” (120c). She is also told the Virgin Mary is on her way for a visit to Oria’s cell, so the reader knows that the anchoress is making good headway in her reconciliation with the divine. The heavenly messengers find Oria in a state of suffering: “[A]vié mucho velado Oria, era cansada. Acostóse un poco flaca y muy lazrada. Non era la camenna de molsa ablentada” (“Oria had kept vigil for a long time she was tired. She lay down a little, weak and suffering. Her bed was not softened by down”) (117 b-d). In contrast to the uncomfortable physical state in which Oria lies on her cell floor, the heavenly visitors bring a surreal bed from Heaven, but Oria says, “*Lecho quiero yo áspero de sedas aquijosas. Non mereçen mis carnes de yacer tan viçiosas:*” (“I want a bed with prickling bristles. My body does not deserve to lie in such comfort:”) (123 a-b).

The author of the *Ancrene Wisse*, speaking of Christ in the book's section on penance, concurs: "His follower must surely follow him in his sufferings with bodily pain. Let no one think that he can ascend to the stars with luxurious ease" (Morton 275). Mari Hughes-Edwards sums up these body-punishing disciplines by saying, "[a]sceticism offers the recluse the means of reconstructing the unity between God and mankind shattered in the Fall; thereby transforming her body from a state of sin to the site of potential purity" (*RM Anchor*. 60).

Oria continues to feel unworthy of the virgins' offer of comfort and in a move which seems out of character for the three wispy girl martyrs: "*Tomáronla las vírgines dando-l grandes sossannos, Echaronla a Oria en essos ricos pannos. Ória con grant cochura, dava gemidos's trannos ca non era vezada entrar en tales vannos.*" ("The virgins took hold of her, hitting her hard. They threw Oria into those rich cloths, Oria, in great suffering, gave out strange groans for she was not accustomed to wallow in such luxury") (124a-d).

Shortly after, the Virgin Mary, herself, appears in Oria's cell giving the girl a sign which will indicate that her permanent move to Heaven is near.

[S]erás fuert' embargada / de 'fermedat mortal  
 qual nunca la oviste. / Terrásla bien por tal.  
 Veraste en grant quexa, / de muert' serás cortada;  
 serás a pocos días / desti mundo passada  
 irás do tú codiçias, / a la silla honrrada,  
 la que tiene Vox Mea / para ti bien guardada.

[Y]ou will be stricken with a fatal illness  
 which you have never had before. As such, you'll think it's good.  
 You will, see yourself in great pain, you'll be cut off by death;  
 you will, in a few days, have passed from this world,  
 you will go where you desire, to the honored chair,  
 which Vox Mea keeps securely for you. (135c-136d)

We see here a progression in contacts with holy figures which I believe indicates that Oria is going through the process of reconciling with the divine, in turn allowing her to reconcile with herself. In the first vision, when the three virgins pay Oria a visit in her cell and then lead her to Heaven, the young anchoress, even though she feels unworthy, must have some idea that she has been singled out for special notice. Various echelons of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, as well as martyrs dressed in blood-soaked clothes parade before her. Vox Mea, whom Kevin Poole equates with faith, is saving her a special chair (303). God and Christ speak directly to her. All of this individualized attention must give her confidence that although she feels unworthy of such treatment, those in the holy realm accept her penitential practices as leading her toward reconciliation with the deity.

Another indication that Oria is moving toward reconciliation with the divine is that if in the first vision Oria, a mortal, rises to Heaven, in the second vision a divine figure, the Virgin Mary, descends to Earth to further encourage the anchoress. The visit to the humble cell of the young anchoress by one so revered as the Mother of God and Queen of Heaven, appears to be yet another indication that anchoress is on track to obtain her goal.

The third vision, this one of the Mount of Olives, comes while she lay dying “... *era quebrantada*” (“... racked with pain”) (139a). As Lappin points out, Oria feels no pain on the Mount of Olives in contrast to the agony she feels in the anchorhold. In the vision, she finds relief: “*que non sintié un punto de todos los dolores*” (“she felt not a lot of pain”) (146d).

On the Mount of Olives, she finds herself in a sort of *locus amoenus* where many angelic men come to greet her. The girl thinks she is about to receive her “*galardón*,” her prize for all the earthly suffering that she has endured. The heavenly men support her

sanctity: “*Querién si fuesse tiempo al çielo la sober*” (“wanted, if it were time, to raise her to Heaven”) (142d).

Just at this moment her anchoress mother, Amuna, exhibits the natural earthly traits of a parent concerned for her daughter rather than those of a seeker of the spiritual life. Much to Oria’s chagrin, Amuna awakens her (Francomano 170). Not unlike a baby about to exit the birth canal only to be drawn back inside once more, Oria thinks she has escaped and gained Heaven but is pulled back to earthly suffering.

In addition to Oria’s mother, the poet tells us that there are nuns present at the death bed scene and that, additionally, “*otras buenas mugerese / que çerca li sedién / vedién que murmurava, / mas no la entendién.*” (“Other good women who sat near her saw that she was murmuring, but did not understand her”) (148 a-b). I would suggest that they do not understand her because she is already speaking “in the tongues of angels” mentioned in 1 Corinthians 13:1. Oria’s body has returned to Earth, but her spirit already belongs to Heaven. Mother-daughter conflicts are not uncommon and Oria has already spent years as an anchoress. The time and physical separation may have distanced the relationship between mother and daughter, but Amuna still has maternal feelings for Oria. Oria, on the other hand, has already detached herself from Earth so completely, that even the bond with her mother is no longer important.

Oria’s confessor Munio is called and the girl remains in the throes of death until the second week of March when Amuna, her mother, falls asleep and has a vision in which she sees the girl’s deceased father. Again, the line between Earth and Heaven is breached as García appears to his wife and says: “[*C*]erca anda del cabo / Oria de la carrera, / Cuenta que es finada / ca la hora espera / Es de las sus ioradas / ésta la prostremera” (“...

Oria is close to the end of her journey / Announce that she is dead, for the hour awaits. / This is the very last of her days”) (167b-d).

Amuna’s visitor from Heaven, unlike in the visions experienced by her daughter, does not inspire her to pull closer to Heaven, but in contrast, increases Amuna’s earthly concerns. The mother awakens her daughter, who has already said goodbye to terrestrial concerns and has one foot in Heaven. Amuna pesters her further: “*Fija, ’si dios vos lieve / a la su sancta gloria, / si visión vidiestes / o alguna istoria, / dezítmelo de mientre / avedes la memoria*” (“Daughter, as God may take you, to his holy glory, / if you have seen a vision or some revelation, / tell it to me whilst you can remember it”) (172b-d).

Oria answers: “*Dexatme, ’sí vos vala... / assaz tengo en mí / lazerio e quebranto; / más me pesa la lengua / que un pesado canto*” (“Leave me alone, ... / I have enough in my suffering and pain; / my tongue weighs upon me more than a heavy stone”) (173b-d).

Before dying, Oria suffers still more: “*fuesse mas aquexando, a boca de noch’ era*” (“[H]er suffering was increasing; it was almost night”) (176b). Interestingly, we do not witness the sacrament of extreme unction. Oria had the company of the “Abbot don Pedro ... monks and hermits” as she died, but she actually blesses herself. “*Alço ambas las manos / iuntólas en igual, como qui rinde gracias / al buen rey spiritual*” (“She raised both hands, joined them together, / she yielded her soul to God”) (177a-c).

In a move which does not seem to follow ecclesiastical procedure, Oria blesses herself before dying, rather than receiving the blessing of a priest. This is in contrast to one of the last scenes in *La Vida de Santa María Egipciaca*, in which ecclesiastic authority is reconfirmed as María requests communion from the monk Gozimás’ hand. Oria returns to

Earth to complete this step, that is, to take communion from the hand of the Church in her mother's second vision.

At this point Oria's story is essentially over. Berceo digresses a bit and tells us that Amuna is deceased and talks about the grave near Oria's cell where the mother and daughter are buried next to one another. Then, suddenly in verse 185, the poet takes up the story again and in verse 187b Amuna is still alive and Berceo tells us God gives Amuna a second vision. In verse 189d he tells us that the mother dreams of her daughter.

In the dream, Oria has come back from Heaven to receive the Eucharist because it is Pentecost. The girl says: "*pascua es en que deven / christianos comulgar*" ("[Pentecost] is a feast when Christians should take communion") (192a). She continues, "[']*manda llamar los clérigos: / vénganme comulgar / que luego me querría / de mi grado tornar*" ("[']send for the priests to come and give me communion, for then I want to return willingly") (193b-c). Santa Oria returns from Heaven in her mother's dream to receive the Eucharist, one can surmise because it is unfinished business in the step by step nature of her earthly leave-taking.

The mother inquires of Oria's treatment while waiting to get in to Heaven and whose company she is now in. Oria calms her mother's fears with her answers. The Virgin stayed with Oria in death. The three virgins waited with her outside the gates of Heaven the night before the girl was allowed to enter and Oria concludes with "*Madre, dixo la fija, / 'estó en buen logar,' / qual nunca por mi mérito / non podría ganar*" ("I am in a good place, which I could never have gained through my own merit") (199c-d). "*Yo non lo merezría / de seer tan honrrada, / mas plogo a don Christo / la su virtud sagrada.*" ("I would not deserve to be so honored, but it pleased Christ and his sacred virtue") (200c-d).

It is clear that even though the anchoress has “worked” at penance, she admits that in the end she has received unmerited favor or grace from the Bridegroom.

This leaves us to discuss how Oria reconciles with society. First of all, it is important to ask who makes up Oria’s society. The anchoress’ society can be divided in two groups: the earthly and the heavenly. Members of her earthly society are the townspeople, that is, laymen. Also in this group fall Oria’s mother, Amuna, herself, an anchoress, and local ecclesiastics. Oria lived in a cell attached to a Benedictine monastery and we know from the text that her mother and confessor were permitted to visit her and that as Oria lays dying, nuns were also present (146b). As she is being awakened from her dream of the Mount of Olives “other good women” were there (148a).

In the moment in which she died “the good abbot Don Pedro” as well as “monks and hermits” were with her (178b-c). In short, one concludes that her earthly society is composed mostly of ecclesiastics and that perhaps some townspeople in the guise of “the other good women.” In any case, we know that she was “a light and comfort to those around her” (22d). This can be interpreted as a sense of peacefulness that others receive from her, perhaps as a result of her hours of focusing on the heavenly realm and not on “the cares of this world” mentioned in Mark 4:19.

This phrase would fall in line with what we know, in general, about an anchoress’ conversational interaction with lay passersby, although we are not privy to actual conversations with inhabitants of Villa Velayo in the poem. In fact, the only earthly two-way conversations which take place are between Oria and her mother and between Oria and her confessor. The conversations between mother and daughter are rancorous, but the verbal interaction with Munio, her confessor, acts as the bridge between her earthly society

and her heavenly one. As mentioned above, Oria already has one foot in Heaven; in fact, she has already had both feet there in her first vision.

In Oria's third vision she is transported to the Mount of Olives where, in the spiritual realm she feels no pain. This contrasts with the severe physical pain Oria experienced as she lay dying in her earthly cell and with the emotional pain of her grief-stricken mother, Amuna: "*Començó de traerla, / ovo a despertar*" ("She began to shake [Oria], she had to wake her up") (140d). In contrast, Oria, "*en aquella sazón / non querrié espertar*" ("...did not want to wake at this point") (145b) and "*Aviélis poco grado / a los despertadores*" ("was little pleased with those who woke her") (146a). Shortly after this when Amuna calls Munio, Oria's confessor, the dying girl rallies a bit: "*abrió ambos los oios / entró en su memoria*" ("she opened both eyes, came to her senses") (151b). She says to the priest, "*Si solo un poquiello / me oviessen dexada / grant amor me fizieran, / sería terminada. / ca entre tales omnes / era yo arribada / que contra los sus bienes / el mundo no es nada.*" ("If they had only left me a little, / they would have shown me great love, I would be finished, / for I had arrived amongst such men / that compared to their goodness / this world is nothing") (152a-d). When Munio asks for more details, Oria answers: "*Vidi y grand gentes / de personas honradas*" ("There I saw great crowds of honoured people") (156 a). "*Todas me reçibieron / con laudes bien cantadas*" ("All greeted me with well sung praises") (156 c). Then Munio asks if she wants to go there, implied is, "again," and she answers affirmatively, saying "*Yo sí, más que vivir*" ("Yes. I do, more than to live") (158b). Oria essentially invites her confessor to come along when she adds, "*E tú non perdriés nada / de conmigo venir*" ("And you would lose nothing if you came with me") (158c).

The priest responds affirmatively and Oria is “*con sabor de la cosa*” (“Pleased by this”) (159a).

Contrast these exchanges with the warm greetings outlined above given to Oria by the three virgins, Eulalia, Cecilia and Ágata; the Virgin Mary; Vox Mea; and the voices, respectively, of Urraca, “her spiritual mother,” Christ, and God, himself. I think it is clear that from the very beginning, Oria, unlike the repentant prostitute of chapter 1, in a sense has no need to reconcile with her society in San Millán. She has no quarrel with them and is only at odds with them in the sense that she really no longer takes part in the earthly, daily life of her society.

Not only has she distanced herself from secular relationships because of her status as an anchoress, but also from the monastic men and women who surround her as she lay dying, and, in addition, from her own flesh and blood, her mother. In a spiritual sense, she has already left them when she became an anchoress and withdrew from earthly society. Her goal is to become a bride of Christ and her life of fasting, poverty, reading the scriptures and lives of saints, and general mortification of the flesh has already removed her from identification with people who go to bed, sleep, get up, eat, work, interact with family and friends and repeat the cycle daily (Casalduero 347). She, too, has a daily routine, but it is based on spiritual and physical disciplines which will bring her closer to her goal, that is to die. She lives in similar fashion to Paul who in Philippians 1:21 says, “For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.”

Oria’s society, thus, is not really comprised of people of flesh and blood who dwell on Earth. Her society is composed of the figures she encounters in her three visions. In the first vision, she witnesses the parade of canons, bishops, a choir of virgins, her spiritual

mother, famous martyrs like Saints Lawrence and Stephen, holy hermits, as well as a monk and bishop she knows by name, her father Garcia, and the Apostles and Evangelists. Although Oria allegedly knew a substantial number of the people mentioned in her visions, I would suggest that the groups mentioned are simply representations of types of holy people. The original audience, Benedictine nuns, if Casaldueiro's assumptions are correct, would be able to identify with these ecclesiastical "types" as well as with Oria's life, if not with her enclosure.

With regard to society, Oria chafes at the ties imposed by the earthly family structure represented in the poem by her mother, Amuna. As there is no reference to the young girl's friends, Berceo himself tells us it is not known if she had any other siblings,<sup>55</sup> and because her father, Garcia, is deceased, we will regard Amuna as representative of earthly society. By nature of choosing to become an anchoress, Oria is a recluse "set apart" and yet also a part of society, walled into a small cell, on an edge of the monastery of San Millán de la Cogolla. As she becomes more desirous of death so she can join Christ, her bridegroom, she becomes less social. Her mother has been an anchoress, too, but exhibits her motherly, nurturing qualities and, as in the case of most mothers, wants to keep her daughter alive and with her on Earth. Although an anchoress, herself, Amuna subverts spiritual priorities for maternal ones and tries to pull Oria back to terrestrial living against her will (Francomano 170).

Berceo, in a sense, is part of Oria's community and is also permitted to suffer along with Santa Oria, because like Santa María, the reformed prostitute, Oria mortifies the flesh

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<sup>55</sup>"*Si lis dio otros fijos, non lo diz' la leyenda*" 15a "If he gave them [to Oria's parents] other children the Life does not say" (15a).

to a point where her gender is ostensibly of no importance. In “Writing, Sanctity, and Gender,” Julian Weiss suggests that through severe mortification of her body, Oria becomes genderless so that Berceo can safely look to her as an intercessor (449), much in the same way Gozimás was able to revere Mary the Egyptian as a saintly, not earthly, woman.

The eleventh century Spanish Oria’s behavior resembles that counseled two centuries later by the English *Ancrene Wisse* written to advise three young secular sisters who choose to become enclosed. The three sisters, like Santa Oria, want to become brides of Christ and in order to do so, must follow guidelines which curb the flesh to empower the spirit. The author says of the inner Rule: “This rule is always within you and directs the heart” (Morton 2). He explains that the outer Rule “teaches ... how they should eat and drink, dress, take rest, sleep and walk .... and this rule is only to serve the other. The other is a lady; this as her handmaid; for, whatever men do of the other outwardly, it is only to direct the heart within” (Morton 3). The outer rule, the author asserts, may vary according to the constitution and strength of the anchoress. “It ordains fasting, watching, enduring cold, wearing haircloth, and such other hardships as the flesh of many can bear and many cannot” (4). The writer suggests that the anchoress only pay attention to Christ. “... [L]et no man see thy countenance, nor blithely hear thy speech; but keep them both for Christ, for thy beloved spouse” (Morton 75).

Both Santa Oria and Santa María die at the end of their stories and leave us the message, that first of all, according to the Christian faith there is forgiveness and an eternal life following earthly death. This applies to both those like Santa María, the Egyptian, who repent of “bad” behavior as well as to those like Santa Oria, who are contrite for the notion

of existential sin. Working through the four steps of Penance or Reconciliation (contrition, confession, satisfaction and absolution) these women realize their goal of becoming brides of Christ through penitential acts on Earth combined with a measure of divine grace to earn a place of eternal peace in Heaven.

## CHAPTER 4

RECONCILIATION AND THE *ROMANÇ D'EVAST E BLAQUERNA*: PENANCE  
AND THE WANDERING HERMIT

My Lord, said Blanquerna! By the Divine light is my soul moved to remember, comprehend and love the life of poverty, and of the hermitage, and the renunciation of this world, that it may the more perfectly contemplate and love the Son of God, who came to this world for us sinners, and suffered most grievous Passion, which the sign of the cross portrays to my bodily eyes. (54)

*–Senyer –ço dix Blaquerna--, per lo lum divinal ma anima se mou a memprar e a entendre he a amar pobretat e vida ermitana e renunciament d'aquest mon, per ço puscha pus perfetament contemplar, amar lo Fill de Deu qui vench en est mon per nosaltres peccadors e sostench passió molt greu segons que-l senyal de la creu ho significa a mos hulls corporals. (107)<sup>56</sup>*

With these words to his father, Blanquerna or in Catalan, Blaquerna, refuses the keys and seal of the family patrimony, both material and social.

The *Romanç d'Evast e Blaquerna*, begun after 1274-1276, possibly composed between 1283 and 1285 and before March of 1286<sup>57</sup> by the Mallorcan Ramón Llull, traces the adventures from youth to old age of the devout Christian, Blanquerna (Soler i Santanach 25). His desire and motivating force throughout what is considered to be the first novel in Catalan, is to become a hermit so he can better worship and contemplate God. These plans are thwarted until near the end of his Canterbury-tale like journey in which he lives in an

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<sup>56</sup> All quotes in English are for from Allison Peer's *Blanquerna: A Thirteenth Century Romance*. All quotes in Catalan are from Albert Soler's and Joan Santanach's critical edition *Romanç d'Evast e Blaquerna*.

<sup>57</sup> Soler and Satanach cite Llull's favorable mention in Chapter 76 of the Templars who were condemned in March of 1286, so the book or "*sí més no aquest capitol*" (at least that chapter if not more) had to be finished before then.

almost constant state of contrition and confession not just for his own acts, but for those of his fellow man. He sees the vast gulf separating humanity from God and constantly expresses how sorry he is for this grievous state of affairs.

If Santa María Egipcíaca comes to terms with her past by isolating herself in the desert from the society which provokes her sins and those of others, and Santa Oria finds resolution by enclosing herself in an anchorhold, Blaquerne's reconciliation with self, society, and the divine is played out much more publicly. Rather than follow his desire to retreat from society to contemplate God in solitude, he works out his own penance by leading secular and ecclesiastic sinners to work out theirs.

The author of this intriguing work, the Mallorcan philosopher or theologian Ramon Llull (1232-1315), is an equally captivating historical figure, whose long and unconventional life and extensive literary production exerted a substantial influence on his contemporaries and later thinkers. In his *Moral Dilemmas in Medieval Thought: From Gratian to Aquinas* (2011) M.V. Dougherty summarizes thusly Llull's relevance in medieval thought:

The author of approximately 260 works, Llull is best known for his *Art (Ars)*, a complex technique that was intended to solve problems in metaphysics as well as convert Islamic and Jewish believers to the Christian faith. In the course of his extensive travels, Llull approached popes, kings and sultans in an attempt to find endorsement and material support for his apologetic aims, and his efforts included lecturing at universities throughout Europe to defend his *Art*. His extraordinarily diverse literary corpus, written in Latin, Catalan, and Arabic, included poetic works and novels, and treatises on philosophy, theology, and nearly every other established discipline of the period (86).

The literary production of Ramon Llull is as multifaceted as it is extensive as can be seen in the following very partial list of titles: *The Book of Contemplation, The Book of the Gentile and the Three Wise Men, Book of the Order of Chivalry, Doctrina pueril, Felix*

or the *Book of Wonders*, *Book of Beasts*, *Desconhort*, *Rhetorica nova*, *Logica nova*. A comprehensive list includes *Blaquerna* and some 264-other works (Bonner, *Doc. Illum.*, xi).<sup>58</sup> Among these, the *Ars magna* or *Great Art* aims to show the connection between all areas of knowledge. A recurring premise throughout the author's works is that reason, although important to understanding, must always be preceded by faith (Bonner *Doc. Illum.* 54-55). This premise is illustrated over and over in *Blaquerna*. The eminently rational protagonist often begins or ends his tasks whether resolving interpersonal conflicts or reorganizing Church administration, by uttering words and shedding tears which recognize God's supremacy.

Some parallels can be drawn between the goals of fictional *Blanquerna* and those of author Ramón Llull: proselytizing to unbelievers by means of rational argument, re-igniting spiritual fire in Christians to foment support for his cause, and suffering martyrdom for the Christian faith (Hillgarth 4, Abulafia 106-7). In addition, like Llull, the protagonist *Blaquerna* hopes to reconcile sinful mankind to God. Stated another way, the fictional character guides both layman and cleric through the four steps of Reconciliation: contrition, confession, satisfaction and absolution to realign focus and reform behavior based on Christian precepts.

All people are influenced by the time and place into which they are born and Ramón Llull is no exception. Until his conversion to Christianity, Llull led the life of a well-born male at the Court of James II of Mallorca. Not unlike the man later known as St. Francis of Assisi, the young Ramón devoted himself to secular pleasures. Llull married Blanca

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<sup>58</sup> Also, see the Ramon Llull database compiled by Anthony Bonner at <http://orbita.bib.ub.edu/llull/velec.asp>.

Picany and had two children, Domingo y Magdalena (Bonner 10 *Doc. Illum.*). It was not until Christ appeared to him in dreams on successive nights at age 30 or 31 that his life changed (Bonner, *Contemp. Life* 33 (note), Hillgarth xxiii, 3-4). This conversion experience is detailed in Lull's *Life*, known as the *Vita coetanea* written in Paris in 1311 by monks to whom Lull, then in his late seventies, had recounted his story. The *Vita*, viewed guardedly as an (auto)biography, was published by Thomas Le Myésier, a protégé, a decade after the Mallorcan had died (Bonner *Contemp. Life* 7).

As a result of these night visions described in the *Vita coetanea* Lull turned away from his pre-conversion life of troubadour poetry and erotic love to one of spiritual love, compassion for the suffering Christ and willingness to be a martyr for the faith (Johnston 181). Lull's proselytizing spirit can also be attributed to the geographic location of his birthplace, Mallorca, an island off the east coast of the Iberian Peninsula and in the thirteenth century home to a large Muslim population (Bonner *Doc. Illum.* 6-7).<sup>59</sup>

Lull learned Arabic from his Muslim slave<sup>60</sup> in order to be able to debate tenets of Christianity and Islam, with the goal of converting all to his Christian faith (Bonner, *Doc. Illum.* 16). He became so proficient in the language that he wrote some of his works in Arabic. His linguistic ability was startling as he did not study the language until adulthood, but language-learning always served the purpose of proselytization. Lull used encounters with all levels of society to advance his goal of converting the "Saracens" including an

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<sup>59</sup> Lull's father was part of the Barcelona court of James I and received land in Mallorca after the king reconquered the island in 1229. Ramon was born there three years later (Hillgarth xxiii, 2).

<sup>60</sup> The slave later hung himself after Lull had him put in prison. The slave had previously attacked Lull when his master tried to convert him to Christianity (Bonner, *Contemp. Life* 41).

opportunity to propose his ideas for evangelizing non-Christians to Pope Celestine V before he stepped down from the Papacy in 1294 after less than a year<sup>61</sup> (Badia 10) (Mundy 262).

Llull was known in his own time and after<sup>62</sup> as a controversial figure and hard to categorize. On the one hand, he was a learned man, but as an autodidact did not fit in with the Scholastics of his day. In addition, for all his railing against the Islamic faith, unlike most theologians of the thirteenth century he knew Arabic and something of Islamic philosophy. He was compared to a Muslim Sufi by Hillgarth, and Llull would have been counted among the seventeen missionaries who knew Arabic between 1200 and 1399. Llull, born in 1232 in what is now Palma de Mallorca just two years after its Reconquest by James I of Aragon, grew up in a place governed by Christians, but still permeated with Islamic culture (Simon 22-25).

Llull's "interfaith dialogue." and melding of ideas garnered from the study of Christian and Islamic texts led him "... to produce a logical and metaphysical system to act as a missionary instrument for the conversion of the Moslems and the Mongols to Christianity at a time of acute global instability in the late thirteenth century" (Goodrick-Clarke 176).<sup>63</sup> Thirteenth century instability, not unlike that, I would suggest, in East-West relations in the twenty-first century, became even rockier with the devastating invasions of Russia, first in 1223 and then of Russia and Eastern Europe from 1237-42 by the as yet,

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<sup>61</sup> It is interesting that in the fictional *Romanç d'Evast e Blaquerna*, Pope Blaquerna, like Celestine, also renounces the papacy, although in this case he chooses to do so, allowing him, as an old man, to finally fulfill his dream to live as a hermit.

<sup>62</sup> Simon discusses the enmity of Nicolas Eymerich. See Simon's "Remarks on Ramon Llull's Relation to Islam," p. 22, note 8.

<sup>63</sup> See Goodrick-Clarke, pages 177-79 for his succinct "Geopolitical Survey from 600-1300.

unknown, Mongols (DeWeese 41). These invasions were seen by some as both divine punishment for lukewarm Christianity and as one sign along with Joachimist predictions, of the imminent Apocalypse (DeWeese 42-44, 47-49). The violent attacks put to rest earlier legends surrounding the figure of Prester John who would lead supposedly Christianized Mongols to help defeat Islam (DeWeese 54-57).

At the same time, the rise of the Franciscan Order with its emphasis on a return to the ideal of Christ's material poverty and care for others as embodied in the spirituality of the Desert Fathers, carried with it a renewed aspiration to convert non-Christians (DeWeese 44-45). This desire was manifested in two directions: first, the more violent route of the military Crusades, in an effort to regain control of the Holy Land and force conversion; and second, peaceful conversion by proselytization as supported by Roger Bacon and to some extent by his contemporary, Ramón Llull (DeWeese 58-60). DeWeese discusses conversion of the Mongols in Llull's *Blaquerna* (60-71), but before taking a further look at how the fictional character Blaquerna helped others arrive at a new or renewed conversion to Christianity through the four steps of the Sacrament of Reconciliation or Penance, it is useful to note Llull's own conversion experience.

The *Life of Ramón Llull* exhibits the lay piety or "conversion to penitence" which characterizes the later Middle Ages (Johnston 180). By the time the Mallorcan author is writing *Blaquerna*, he has already experienced this transformation. If the *Life* is considered loosely autobiographical, then the same story, that of "conversion to penitence," is played out in fictional form in the *Romanç d'Evast e Blaquerna*. Johnston tells us that the *Life* combines the sense of personal, existential guilt with the emotional connection to the suffering, crucified Christ (181). In like fashion, the protagonist Blaquerna repeatedly

illustrates the practical steps of “conversion to penitence” with examples from his own life and that of the many characters he meets during his lifelong pilgrimage.

Mark Johnston also suggests that the late thirteenth to early fourteenth century author has not been adequately studied, with regard to the medieval view and practice of popular piety. Johnston submits that although Lull’s *Life*, written in 1311 has been viewed as a biography or autobiography, it is quite possible that fictional elements have entered the narration.<sup>64</sup> Johnston studies the practice of penance, with regard to Lull’s *Life (Conv. to Pen.* (180). In this chapter I propose to study penitence in Lull’s *Blaquerna* as it relates to the four steps of reconciliation: confession, contrition, satisfaction, and absolution.

Johnston cites the passage in the *Vita coetanea* in which the convert takes to heart a sermon on St. Francis who was born in 1182 and died six years before Lull’s birth (183). The parallels between Blaquerna’s path and that of the famous Italian advocate of popular piety become even clearer when reading *The First Life of Saint Francis* written by Thomas of Celano in 1257. Celano recounts that the bishop of Sabina “...urged [St. Francis] to turn to the life of a monk or hermit. But St. Francis refused his counsel in his pious leaning toward another life, he was inspired by a higher desire.”<sup>65</sup> Pope Innocent III gave Francis his blessing to “...preach penance to all” (Celano 31).

As Francis’ biographer says, the saint “... went about the *towns and villages* announcing the kingdom of God, preaching peace, teaching salvation and penance unto the remission of sins, *not in the persuasive words of human wisdom* but with the learning and

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<sup>64</sup> Johnston refers to the concept of “sacred biography”, also the title of Heffernan’s book in which he supports the idea that the “Lives of saints” contain fictional as well as factual elements (180).

<sup>65</sup> Quotes from the 1988 English translation by Placid Hermann of Thomas of Celano’s *First and Second Lives of St. Francis of Assisi* are used in this paper.

power of the Spirit”(Celano 34). <sup>66</sup> Blaquerna, representative of the spiritual ethos of his time, depends on the Spirit, but also uses common sense as he deals with various sins of those he meets along the way. The “penitential piety” illustrated in Blaquerna was part of a popular movement among the laity in the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries especially prevalent in southern France (Occitania) and throughout the Crown of Aragon which included the island of Mallorca, Lull’s birthplace (Badia 32).

Bonner refers to the *Romanç d’Evast e Blaquerna* as both a “didactic work” and “utopian novel” (*Doc. Illum.* 46, 241). Soler and Santanach state that during the time frame in which Blaquerna was written, Lull’s works had a moralizing and educational purpose aimed at the laity (30). In “The Good Upbringing of Ramon Lull’s Blanquerna: Appropriation and Misrecognition as Social Reproduction,” Johnston suggests that the instruction ostensibly written for all of society is actually only directed to those of Lull’s own social background and economic status which it serves to propagate (n.p.).

Within the novel, the character Blaquerna makes reference to several of Lull’s other works including the *Doctrina pueril* (1280) which was most likely used as a catechism for children. The eight-year-old Blaquerna is given the book by his father to further his moral education (Flemming 133). In Chapter 2 of Book One “Of Matrimony” we read that Blaquerna’s father Evast gave him the book “...wherein it is related that a man should instruct his son in the mother tongue, and impart to him sound doctrine and knowledge of the articles of faith and the ten commandments of the law and the seven sacraments of Holy Mother Church and the seven virtues and the seven deadly sins, and the other things that are contained in the said book” (39). Flemming notes that Lull’s use

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<sup>66</sup> The italics are part of the quotation.

of Catalan rather than Latin combined with the story line of Blaquerna illustrate the confluence of the rising literary use of vernaculars with the popularity of the mendicant movement:<sup>67</sup>

There are ... particular circumstances which... explain the ...influence of the mendicant religious institutions on the literature of the larger secular world about them. The first is ... that the mendicant religion appeared and then flourished in Europe at precisely the time that major European vernaculars were claiming the prerogatives of versatile literary languages. ...The second ... is its social dimension. The friars' image of themselves was not one of monkish scribes... but of ... figures of the 'apostolic life': evangelists, missionaries, doctors of the spirit. (14-15)

Blaquerna has fully absorbed from the catechism the values which his father had hoped to impart and the wandering pious figure admonishes the sinners he meets, that is, everyone, with words meant to inspire a change in heart and a resultant change in behavior. The young man provokes the four steps of reconciliation both in characters who the reader would not necessarily consider to be committing an error, or in Christian parlance, sinning, as well as in figures who are clearly making mistakes. I suggest that it is by leading others to repent, confess, and offer satisfaction that these figures are absolved of their sins. Moreover, through living among and helping others, Blaquerna, who longs for solitude with God, performs his own four-step penance. In so doing he becomes a more compassionate person, spurs on changes in individual behavior, corrects social injustice, and finds reconciliation with himself, society and the divine.

How does Blaquerna reconcile with himself? To begin to answer this question it is important to take a look at Chapter 1 "Of Matrimony" which presents the exemplary

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<sup>67</sup> Soler and Santanach affirm that Llull was concerned when translating his works to tailor the translation to his audience. They mention that Llull translated his works to Occitan as an intermediate step before translating his works from Catalan to Latin or French (31).

marriage of Evast and Aloma, Blaquerna's parents. When their son is grown, Evast first suggests that he and his wife live apart in separate male and female houses thus dedicating their lives to Christ. Aloma is not in favor of this plan so to resolve the marital conflict they decide to sell their house, use the proceeds to help the poor and live as the poor, themselves, begging for food.<sup>68</sup> They closely mirror the profile given by Lola Badia based on the work of Lee, Reeves and Silano describing those who formed the diverse penitential lay movement.

The trend brought together people of all classes: the nobility, the wealthy, those who earned their living from manual labour and even those who subsisted on alms. The chief values ... were radical poverty, piety (particularly penitential piety focused on the Passion of Christ), active charity, (i.e. provision of aid to the poor and the sick, the foundation of hospitals) and sexual continence. (33)

Johnston has already established that their son, Blaquerna, is a product of his upbringing. His parents chose his food with care, finding a wet nurse without vices, allowing him to ingest only milk his first year, and keeping rich foods from him. He was well cared for, yet not coddled; he is allowed to feel heat in the summer and chill in the winter (Essays in Medieval Studies 12, "Good Upbringing" n.p.). He was schooled by a tutor who also took him regularly to mass. Blaquerna has been inculcated in the articles of faith and the Scriptures, and presented by his father with stories which encase a moral dilemma and he has to solve each one "correctly." In short, as a young adult, he is the non-materialistic, non-entitled person that his parents raised him to be, and yet, Evast and Aloma pull the rug out from under him when they want him to become a sort of accountant-

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<sup>68</sup> Abulafia gives a similar plot synopsis to the one in this paragraph and further on in this dissertation, for example in Blaquerna's encounter with Natana, with the allegorical Faith, and in describing the aspiring hermits career path (108-9, 112, 115.)

caretaker of their considerable wealth. He has been inculcated with the idea that allegiance to the spiritual world and worshipping God take precedence over everything else.

One day Blaquerna's father pronounces:

'We make thee, then, fair son, inheritor of all our temporal goods...Do thou rule and govern this house in such a manner that the goods distributed therein be not lost, and that we ourselves receive sustenance in our lifetime, and that such children as thou shalt have may be nurtured in a way well-pleasing unto God'. (53)

*'I per això, bell fill us fem hereu de tots els nostres béns temporals, ... procureu i regiu aquesta casa de tal manera que no s'acabi el bé que en surt i que nosaltres en tinguem sustentació a nostra vida i que els fills que tindreu] ne pusquen esser nudrits en tal manera que a Deu sin agradables. (106)*

Contradicting one's parents provokes conflict, but Blaquerna boldly counters:

'[f]or the honor and the favour that ye do me, may ye be rewarded and have thanks of God. But as for me, know ye that from henceforward I will have in my heart neither honors nor riches nor pleasures of this world, but only God Who has created me and made me to be His dwelling-place'. (54)

*'[De l'honor e de la grac]ia que vosaltres me fets, de Deu [grat e guardó n'haja]ts, mas de mi sapiats que en mon [cor, d' aquí en avant] no vull metre honrament ni riquel[ses ni delits d'aquest m]on ni negunes altres coses, mas [Deu tan solament, qui m'h]a creat e fet per ço que sia son [tabernacle]'. (101)*

The father-son discussion continues at some length, but Blaquerna remains firm in his resolve. He has reconciled within himself that answering to God is more important than answering to his parents. On the day Blaquerna is about to enter the forest and leave his family forever, his father asks him why he feels called to be a hermit. The son answers,

'Through the will of God ... ye have caused me to be instructed in theology and in other sciences whereby I have had knowledge of God...and since this world is a hindrance to the contemplation of God ...therefore this world I do forsake'. (69)

*‘Per volentat de Deu s’es sdevengut que vos m’avets feta mostrar theologia e d’altres sciencies, per les quals he hauda conexença de Deu,... e cor aquest mon es embargament a contemplar Deu...per açó desemparr lo mon’.* (117)

Blanquerna enters the woods never to return even as his father Evast prays to God that he, Evast, be allowed to do penance for his son’s sins, perhaps easing the penance which lies ahead.

Another temporal temptation dangled in front of him is the prospect of marriage. After Blaquerna refuses the monetary wealth and societal status of his parents he states he will become a hermit. His mother, Aloma, tries to tempt him back into the secular world by engineering an encounter with Natana, an eligible marriage partner who was “right fair and gracious” (60) “*una filla molt bella*” (111). After Natana essentially proposes marriage to Blaquerna, he tells the girl, appreciating her logic:

*‘When thou, Natana, didst reveal to me thine heart, the lust of the flesh began to tempt my soul through my bodily nature and the work of the evil spirit. But forthwith my soul turned to the remembrance of its Lover, and the Divine Light illumined my soul with Divine Love... I marvel, as I follow thine arguments, how in one so fair as thou there can be so foolish a thought as this which counsels me to forsake the love of my Sovereign Lord for love of thee’.* (63)

*‘Quan vós, Natana, em dèieu el vostre sentiment, el delit carnal començà a temptar la meva ànima per la natura corporal i per obra de l’esperit maligne. I immediatament la meva ànima tornà a recordar el seu amador i la llum divina il·luminà la meva ànima amb l’amor diví...ans em fa menysprear tant les vostres paraules que em sorprèn, segons el vostre capteniment, com en tan bella persona com la vostra ha pogut caber tan foll pensament com el vostre, que m’aconselleu que deixi l’amor del Senyor sobirà pel vostre’.* (113)

Again, Blaquerna has reconciled within himself that the usual order of things, that is, as a grown man he would both inherit and manage his parents’ assets and at the same time marry and engender a family is not his choice, and he is comfortable with it. Not only

is he convinced that remaining chaste is a good idea for him, he believes it is also a good idea for Natana and has no trouble telling her so. "...I counsel thee to forsake the world and find companionship among women in one of the religious orders..." (66). "...*don-vos per consell que vos desem parets lo mon e que en .i. dels ordens ab les dones de religió...*" (115). Natana allows herself to be persuaded by the logical argument of her ex-suitor that Jesus Christ will be the best husband when she answers, "...aforetime I desired to be thy wife, thou hast given me now for a Spouse Jesus Christ" (67). "...*lo meu cor havets donat a Deu, Jesuchrist m'avets donat per espós dementre que jo desirava esser vostra muller*" (115).

Blaquerna overcomes the sin of lust a second time when he resists the temptation of seducing a damsel in distress temporarily under his care. She has been stolen from her mother's castle by an aggressive knight and Blaquerna wrests her from the evil-doers' control: "Now while Blanquerna journeyed with the damsel, he felt within his mind temptation of carnal pleasure by reason of the surpassing loveliness of the damsel and the solitude wherein they were both together in the forest" (192). "*Dementre que Blaquerna anava ab la donzella, Blaquerna sentí temptar son coratge de carnal delit per la gran bellea de la donzella e per la soliditat en la qual era ab ella en lo boscatge*" (240).

To combat repeated feelings of lust, Blaquerna uses prayer to maintain his composure, but even he is tempted to fall when the damsel says "No other reward can I give thee than this, that thou mayest command my person and do therewith all thy pleasure" (193). "*Altre guardó no us pusch fer mas d'aytant que us podets plevir de ma persona a tot vostre plaer*" (240). This offer is almost too much, so this time Blaquerna not only prays for himself, he also explains three techniques to the maiden for overcoming temptation. He

counsels that she thinks about the vile consequences of the particular sin, contemplate God and all his attribute and erase thoughts of the sin from the mind (193-94).<sup>69</sup>

Blaquerna comes to terms with the wishes of his father and the initial desire of both Natana and the unnamed damsel. He is able to deflect desires which are contrary to his point of view by means of reason and logical arguments. He thus reconciles with himself. He knows that his first priority is to worship God, and he has reconciled in his own mind this belief with the opposing desires of those who are close to him, i.e. mother, father, and potential wife. He has also maintained this stance when temporarily caught off guard alone with the rescued damsel.

In addition to Blaquerna's reconciliation with self, a related example is the transformation in desire and the resultant change in plans of Natana. After Blaquerna leaves Natana's house, although he has succeeded in refocusing her romantic feelings for him toward chaste love for Christ, Natana continues to use logic before she finalizes her decision to enter the religious life. Nastasia, Natana's mother, argues all the positive points of marriage and says if Blaquerna is no longer available, they will find another well-to-do mate.

In a last effort to convince her daughter, Nastasia calls Natana to look out the window<sup>70</sup> at the showy spectacle of a wedding party passing by. The bride rides an elegant

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<sup>69</sup> In "*La finestra di Natana*," María Roca Mussons discusses some of these same ideas but the focus is somewhat different. In similar fashion, she discusses Blaquerna's great self-control in the presence of women but also includes the social importance of architecture and that Natana's name is a feminization of "Nathan," the biblical prophet.

<sup>70</sup> I am grateful to Dr. Piera for first suggesting to me the importance of gazing out the window in these episodes of the *Romanç d'Evast e Blaquerna* and the paramount importance of this gesture in Natana's understanding of the meaning of life and her subsequent conversion.

horse and is accompanied by benefits the world has to offer, “Many honourable men followed her and many noble ladies; jesters and tumblers who sang and played instruments of music and men who danced, did honour to the damsel” (99). “...[M]olts honrats homens la seguien a peu e moltes honrades dones, bornadors, juglars qui cantaven e e sonaven struments e homens qui ballaven fahien honor a aquella donzella” (148).

A moment later, what Natana observes out her window changes the mood dramatically; a widow is following behind her husband’s funeral cortege on the way to bury him. Natana begins to comprehend that, rather than bringing future joy as her financially ambitious mother, Nastasia, describes, human marriage will eventually lead to suffering. The mood now changes from sad to tragic, as yet another woman passes by Natana’s window. This one is a mother who weeps for her grown son who is walking to the gallows for having killed a man. Just then, a servant comes into the room to let Natana and her mother know that the neighbor’s wife has died in childbirth.

The circle of life and death is now complete. Natana is processing views of life’s stages and the possibilities a woman may encounter. She has observed, first-hand, that the momentary exhilaration of new beginnings signified by the passing bride and her exuberant entourage does not guarantee a future without pain. As in the case of the woman who has died giving birth, youth does not necessarily guarantee a long life.

The woman whose son is about to be executed, one imagines, has raised him to adulthood with love and hard work, but this does not preclude that he will make a wrong choice that results in his demise. The couple who is fortunate enough to have a long life together only puts sadness on hold. Earthly death is inevitable and after considering all of

this, Natana decides that Blaquerna was right; the better bridegroom is the ethereal, eternal, ever-perfect Christ.

Nastasia goes to help the family of the now motherless infant and Natana takes advantage of her mother's short absence, to send "...a secret message to the abbess of a convent of good fame" "...*tramés misatge secret a una abadessa de un honrat monestir de dones...*" (148), arranging her entry there (100). The next day, Natana, accompanied by two nuns who have come for her, leaves word with a household servant that she has left for the convent.<sup>71</sup> Once there, she immediately decides to wear the habit, not allowing herself a provisional stay which could be renounced if convent life did not suit her. Her mother, furious upon finding out what her daughter has done, gathers up relatives and friends and plans to storm the convent and kill her daughter and all inside if Natana will not return to the family home.

Another window has an important role. Natana addresses the angry mob and tosses the keys down through a high transom above the front door of the convent. She tells her mother and the crowd that she is not returning home. If they will not accept her decision and persist in storming the convent, she, her fellow nuns and the abbess will gladly die for the faith. Provoked by the encounter with Blaquerna, Natana has reconciled her former plans with a new idea for her future.

The metamorphosis triggered by conversation with Blaquerna also changes not only the reaction of the crowd which calms down but also causes Natana's mother, Nastasia, to make a complete turnaround. She is sorry for her actions, begs for her

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<sup>71</sup> Entering a convent in thirteenth century Western Europe was not an unusual occurrence. The enclosure of the convent provided safety and propriety, a refuge for women (Voaden 77).

daughter's forgiveness, which Natana extends, and makes satisfaction by asking if she can be admitted to the convent. Instead, Nastasia will become an anchoress:

But because she was old and of feeble health, the abbess and Natana and the sisters counseled her to build a house without the convent and before the door of the church, that there she might abide and eat and have a pittance for her body, which she could not have in the convent. (108-109)

*Mas, cor era dona vella e de ffeble complecció, la abadesa e Nathana e tots les altres dones consellaren a Nastasia que feés .i. casa fora lo monestir, denant la porta de l'esgleya, per ço que en aquella estegués e menjás e hagués alcuna pietança a son cors, la qual no puria haver en lo monestir. (155)*

Nastasia also reveals that when young she wanted to enter the convent but was dissuaded by nuns. She reconciles her former hard stance toward Natana's entering the convent with her own lately fulfilled hope of entering the convent through the indirect mediation of Blaquerne.

Blaquerne's reconciliation with self is again reinforced in the early days of his wandering through the forest to seek a place to make his hermitage, when he encounters a Jester who sings *sirventès*, satirical Occitan songs, and who has not been well-compensated by his employer. The two come upon the emperor who is on foot after a wild boar has killed his horse. Blaquerne is not the least impressed with the life that either of them leads because he does not see "valour," best understood in this context as "value" or "worth," in their activities.<sup>72</sup> The three men discuss the concept and conclude that most people do not recognize true "valour" which Blaquerne states:

'...consists in three things: the one is in earthly things which avail to sustain the body, the second, in the gaining of virtues and merits, and the third, in that all things are good in so far as by them God is served, known and loved, and is pleased to use His power in His creatures.' (178)

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<sup>72</sup> See E. Allison Peers discussion of the term "valour" (Footnote #1. p. 175).

*'... cor tota valor está en tres coses: la una es con les coses terrenals valen a sustentar lo cors, l'altra es con valen a guanyar virtuts e merit; terça es con totes coses son bones en quant Deus n'es servit, conegut, amat e vol usar de son poder en ses creatures.'* (228)

The emperor comes to realize that water to drink and grass to eat have more value than the power of ruling when he has not eaten for two days. During their short time together they happen upon the castle of Lady Valour, but only Blaquerna is permitted to enter. Before the three part company, the emperor determines he will revamp his kingdom according to worthwhile principles and then write a book about it. The emperor will hire jesters to go throughout the world to sing positive songs about his improved kingdom and they will not be allowed to accept remuneration from anyone but him, quelling changes in the "truth" often dependent on who's paying for the song.

Once again, Blaquerna has stayed true to the individual moral stance that separates him from the beliefs of much of society as he, by logical argument, causes both the emperor and the jester to readjust and change their behavior. In this way, both ruler and communicator will foment positive change in society.<sup>73</sup>

The saintly young man repeatedly puts aside his own desire, albeit a holy one, to become a solitary worshiper of God. In this way, with apparent irony, by the end of the novel he finds reconciliation with self, society, and divine precisely by giving up the right

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<sup>73</sup> These two figures surface again in Chapter LXXVIII near the end of the novel. The Jester of Valour comes to a Cardinal's court in Rome, recognizes Blaquerna as the man many years ago who wanted to become a hermit and corroborates the Cardinal's belief that Blaquerna would make a good pope. After Blaquerna is elected Pope, another character, Ramón the Fool, a thinly-veiled reference to Ramón Llull, who has also been trained at the reformed Emperor's court, comes to the Pope's palace in Rome and is foolish enough to tell the truth (317).

to himself and his preferences in order to stretch others to be “better.” Blaquerna is the character par excellence who exemplifies “[v]ery truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds” (John 12:24).

Lola Badia, speaking of Ramón Llull’s project which favors action over contemplation, as does the author’s fictional character, puts it another way: “The lofty requirement for love of God also explains why in, the *Romanç d’Evas e Blaquerna*, the protagonist, a hero destined to succeed, abandons the path of individual perfection as a hermit, becomes a monk and involves himself in community life” (15). By helping someone recognize and repent of his individual sin, Blaquerna helps rebuild an idealized society one person at a time. We are all connected and each reformed (repentant) person is, therefore, important in restoring the health of a fallen world.

As Blaquerna continues on his journey in the forest, he encounters a poorly-dressed squire who is crying. The mistreated servant’s former master, the wayward knight, Narpan, is pretending to do penance in a nearby monastery. Blaquerna immediately feels a need to go and bring Narpan to repentance. The squire tries to dissuade Blaquerna from going to the monastery and recounts a fable. “A crow said to the parrot that it was foolish to attempt the correction of those who would not receive teaching” (198). “*Un corp dehia al papagay que nol vogues treballar en correcció d’aquells que no reeben doctrina*” (245). Regardless of the warning, Blaquerna chooses to take on the task of reforming Narpan’s heart and therefore, his behavior, by going to the monastery and leading Narpan by his own good example to repentance because, “...I shall fight him with the aid of the Divine virtues and of the virtues created, while he will have nought but vices wherewith to fight against me,

the which vices have no power against God and His virtues” (199). “...yo combatré aquel ab la ajuda de les divinals virtuts e de les virtuts creades, e ell no porá combatre mi mas ab vicis tan solament, los quals vicis no han poder contra Deu ni virtuts” (245).

Narpan compounds his sin by pretending to do penance but in reality, he continues to serve his own needs. This twist in plot, connecting a mistreated squire met in the woods with a sinner in a monastery transfers the action from secular to ecclesiastical society. It sets in motion, against his wishes, the protagonist’s rise through the Church hierarchy to become first, sacristan, and soon after, monk, then abbot, later a bishop, and finally, Pope, only becoming a hermit in old age.

Blaquerna has already helped individuals each of whom come to repentance for sins we might consider minor. Now, his interface with the Church and own acquiescence to become part of its structure give further weight to his actions. Not only is he emulating St. Francis but he is also building the character of what is still in the thirteenth century the entity of the Church universal. He continues to exhibit moral behavior as he becomes a representative of that institution, not acting only as a good “Lone Ranger” for Christ.

The squire goes on his way, but Blaquerna goes to the abbey with the goal of becoming Narpan’s new servant, believing that with divine help he can reform this dishonest man. By means of a clever method, namely, preparing fox instead of goose for dinner, assembling an uncomfortable bed, and dressing Narpan in a penitent’s clothing for prayer with the monks, Blaquerna shames Narpan “...and with devotion and contrition of heart ...weeping,... [Narpan says] “... I desire to become the companion and servant of Blaquerna, and not his master according to our [initial] agreement” (203). “...ab devoció e contricció de cor en plorant dix [Narpan] ... [c]ompanyó e servidor vull esser de

*Blaquerna, e no senyor segons que era emprés*” (248-249). After Narpan’s public confession and plan to offer satisfaction, Blaquerna sums up the process of reconciliation.

He preaches:

‘... Three things agree with penance: contrition of heart, confession with the mouth, and satisfaction for the sins which a man has committed. In contrition it is seemly to weep and repent, and to remember and grieve for the sins which a man has committed, and to trust in the mercy of God, and to fear and love His justice. In confession it is seemly that a man should confess his sins and desire nevermore to return to them. In satisfaction it is seemly that a man return that which he has wrongly held, that he afflict his body with vigils and prayers, coarse meats, a hard bed, rough garments of humility, and other things like unto these.’ (202)

*‘--A penitencia se covenanten .iii. coses: contricció de cor e confessió de bocha e satisfació dels falliments que hom ha fets. A contricció cové plorar e penedir e remembrar e airar lps peccats que hom ha fets, e cové que hom se confiy en la misericordia de Deu e que tema e am la justica de Deu. A confessió se cové que hom confés sos peccats e que no y vulla tornar null temps. A satisfació cové que hom reta ço que te de tort e que hom do aflicció a son cors de vigilies, oracions, aspres viandes, aspre lit, aspres vestiments e humils, e les altres coses semblants a aquestes.’ (248)<sup>74</sup>*

Throughout the five books of the novel: “Of Marriage,” “Of Religion,” “Of the Prelacy,” “Of the Apostolic State,” and “Of the Life of the Hermit,”<sup>75</sup> one cannot help but notice that the first step in the process of reconciliation, contrition, or repenting of one’s sins, is signaled, in this text much more than in the previous two, by the performance of weeping and references to tears, sometimes occurring in multiple instances per page.<sup>76</sup> Blanquerna’s copious tears play an important role in the process of his and other’s

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<sup>74</sup> Blaquerna, one imagines, would have done his best to lead through the “Zamora Nuns in the Oven” as well as the monks involved in that incident through the four steps of Reconciliation. See Linehan, Peter.

<sup>75</sup> “Of the Life of the Hermit” also includes the “Book of the Lover and the Beloved” as well as the “Art of Contemplation.”

<sup>76</sup> It is noteworthy that the text that features the male protagonist is the one in which an abundance of tears occurs. Blaquerna certainly cries a lot more than Santa María Egipcíaca or Santa Oria.

reconciliation with the divine. Today's reader may process these copious tears as melodrama, but "[t]hese strongly desired tears, termed the 'gift of tears' in the Middle Ages, were reputed to be granted by God as a sign of His presence and were seen as an efficacious means of His grace to wash away one's sins" (Nagy119). According to Nagy, these are tears of spiritual transformation which Gregory the Great divided these into two categories: "tears of spiritual sadness or regret for past sins and tears of spiritual joy or desiring to be with God," and that sometimes the first type can fade into the second (125). It has also been suggested that Christ himself gave a model for the positive nature of tears in the Sermon on the Mount, in Matthew 5:4 "Blessed are those who mourn" (Harvey 593).

Before going further, it must be recognized that weeping can be divided into two parts: first, the physical tears produced and secondly, the cause of the tears. In chemical terms, Giovanni Frazzetto explains in his recent book *Joy, Guilt, Anger, Love* that tears lubricate the eye and include lysozyme, a natural disinfectant (116). He reminds us that peeling onions or getting poked in the eye will produce tears as a physical response.

Tears, of course, are also provoked by emotion. People cry in varied situations – when they are frightened, relieved, happy and sad. Despite the different emotions which provoke tears, neuroscience experiments conclude that the emotion most associated with tears is sadness. That is, when people are shown pictures of faces with tears running down the cheeks, they do not hesitate identifying that the person in the picture is sad. When the

tears are digitally removed, participants in the experiment have trouble determining which emotion is depicted (117-18).<sup>77</sup>

This brings us to examine the cause of medieval tears associated with Christianity. The basic tenet of the faith is that man is a fallen creature as a result of giving in to temptation and that the lapse has caused an eternal separation between God and man. This gap can only be bridged by recognizing Jesus as God's son and atoning sacrifice (McCullough 28). In the early centuries after the Resurrection, church leaders, some known as the Desert Fathers, deprived themselves of food, shelter, and sleep, in order to mortify the flesh. Focusing on the human sufferings of Christ thus reminded Christians of the sacrifice which their doctrine says yields God's forgiveness, and results in eternal life.<sup>78</sup>

For this reason, the desert fathers hoped God would send them the "gift of tears" also known as compunction, from the Latin "*compungere*" to prick.<sup>79</sup> Just as tears clean the physical eye, tears were seen as metaphorically cleansing. In the *Anonymous Sayings of the Desert Fathers* who lived a few centuries after Christ we read: "So every deed a man will commit exterior to the body, but he who weeps cleanses his own soul and body; for since the tear comes down from above, it washes and sanctifies the entire body" (Wortley 369).<sup>80</sup> In his Rule, St. Benedict encouraged monks in to feel *compunctio lacrimarum*

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<sup>77</sup> When most people are shown pictures of someone with tears in his eyes, the emotion they associate with the picture is sadness. The same picture with the tears removed results in confusion as to the emotion being expressed.

<sup>78</sup> It is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss the variations of Christian views on eternal life and heaven.

<sup>79</sup> "The word comes via Old French *componction* from late Latin *compunctiō*, a derivative of *compungere* 'prick hard', a compound verb formed from the intensive prefix *com-* and *pungere* 'prick'." Definition according to CREDO online etymology resource May 31, 2015. Temple Univ. Library.

<sup>80</sup> "Sayings of the holy elders" N.540 (cf. 15.134).

and *compunctioni cordis*, the pricking of tears and of the heart (Hurst 45).<sup>81</sup> In addition to cleansing the eye in physiological terms as mentioned above, these special tears from God served not only as a means for cleansing the person of earthly sins, but encouraged a search for and reliance on God (Hurst 87). This pricking led to a feeling of remorse and then, ideally to repentance for the wrong, big or small, that one had committed. These God-given tears were to be valued and used effectively and in a timely manner so as not to be wasted.

Also, in the *Anonymous Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, we read,

Greatly edified by the elder's story, we asked him about tears: why do they sometimes come of their own volition, whereas at other times they do not come, even with an effort; and the elder said: 'Tears are like winter and the rain; the monk who is the gardener must come and strive to ensure that none of [the rain] is lost, but that all of it enters the garden and waters it. For I tell you my sons that there is one day of rain preceding a whole year and saving all the crops. For this reason, when we notice that it has come, let us strive and be on our guard and devote ourselves to praying continually to God; for we do not know whether we will find that rain another day. (Wortley 367)

Blaquerna constantly seeks this divine presence or cries for man's sins. For example, as Blaquerna says farewell forever to his parents, they feel the parental pain of separation, but Blaquerna "...kneeled, and looked up to Heaven, weeping and raising his hands to God..." (75). "...s'ageno[llá] e en plorant sguardá en lo cel; sa pensa, ses [mans] levá a Deu..." (122).

The gift of tears is demonstrated when Blaquerna has not eaten for a significant three days and "...the eyes of Blaquerna were in tears and his heart was in charity and

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<sup>81</sup> John Chrysostom, born in 349 c. e., in Homily 7 "On Repentance and Compunction" only uses the latter word in the title but does use a word in the text which includes the idea of puncturing the body. His homily says, "The forgiveness of sins is a source of salvation and a prize of repentance, because repentance is a surgical procedure that excises sin; it is a heavenly gift and a marvelous power that by grace defeats the consequence of the laws" (87).

devotion; and so highly was Blanquerna enraptured in his prayer, that he felt neither hunger nor thirst nor suffering...” (196). “...*los hulls de Blaquerna foren en plors e son cor en devoció e en caritat; e tan altament fo rabit Blaquerna en sa oració, que no sentí fam ni set ni passió...*” (243).

After miraculous provision of grain during a famine,

a lay brother and the Abbot Blanquerna ...wept ..., and each regarded the other with looks of love, yet neither could speak to the other, for their love was too great; but each by signs made significance to the other concerning the image of our Lady, and the Passion of her Son... . (244)

*Plorá lo frare e plorá Blaquerna e la .i. sguardava l'altre ab semblant amorós. La .i. no poch parlar a l'altre cor amor los sobrava, mas cascú signava per signes e l'altre la ymage de Nostra Dona e la passió de son Fill... . (286)*

The Bishop Blaquerna who appoints a Canon of Tears to weep for the wrongs of society, one day “...sat beside him and they both wept for a great space,...and all the people knew the reason of their tears,... (284). “...*plorava e assech-se costa ell e ploraren longament amdós, e totes les gentes... saberen la rahó per que ploraven*” (320). Finally, in the “Book of the Lover and the Beloved,” which is inserted within *Romanç d’Evast e Blaquerna*, the second entry reads: “Long and perilous are the paths whereby the Lover seeks the Beloved. They are peopled by considerations, sighs and tears. They are lit up by love” (412). “*Les carreres per les quals l’amich encercha son amat son longues, perilloses, poblades de consideracions, de sospirs e de plors, he enluminades d’amors*” (429).

This is just a small sampling in the novel of compunction or the “gift of tears.” In addition to these tears of repentance which desire the presence of God, I suggest that another reason Lull employs tears is to create empathy. Once again, modern neuroscience and biblical teaching could be seen to coincide. Frazetto suggests that crying can indicate

weakness and that this vulnerability is actually an advantage that forces us to reach out to others through a kind of opening of the soul (118). The Biblical Jesus exhibits this lachrymose vulnerability in the description found in John 11:35 of Christ's reaction to the death of his friend Lazarus: "Jesus wept." (Harvey 605). Lull offers abundant examples of crying empathetic tears.<sup>82</sup>

Furthermore, I believe Lull avails himself of a rhetoric of tears which falls outside the realm of God-given tears, but rides the "coat-tails" of this convention. In this way, he is able to make pointed criticism of lay society and the church hierarchy of his time, while remaining within the bounds of orthodoxy. The protagonist, Blaquerna, weeps when he observes vices in those around him and not unlike Ramon Lull, is concerned with three issues: first, with encouraging the Christian laity to correct misbehavior and follow the moral tenets of Christianity; second, with reforming the Catholic church as it stood during his lifetime; and finally, with converting non-believers (Peers 22-24).

Empathetic tears reflect the "cares of this world" often taking the form of parental grief provoked by death or separation. Some of the following scenarios were mentioned earlier in this chapter, but are brought to the fore again in the context of tears. In the first book of the *Romanç d'Evast e Blaquerna*, entitled "Of Matrimony," Natana, a young woman, initially breaks her mother's heart because Blaquerna persuades her it is more honorable to become a nun instead of his wife. "Nastasia wept bitterly and uttered many threats when she saw her daughter thus attired..." (104). "*Nastasia plorá e meneçá molt fortment con viu sa filla vestida e torná-se-en a son alberch e tramés misatge a tots sos*

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<sup>82</sup> Patrick Hogan in the *Mind and its Stories and Emotion in Literature* discusses the role of empathy in literature.

*parents e als parents del pare de Natana*” (151). While her mother goes with their weeping servant to help a neighbor whose wife has died in childbirth, Natana observes other familial sorrows from her window. A widow is crying; “The grief and the tears of the wife of the dead man, who could express them?” (99). “*Lo dol ni·l plor que sal muller fahia, qui·l vos puria dir?*” (148). Parents also walk by her window crying because their son is about to be hung; “The lamentation they made, who could recount it?” (100). “*Lo dol que menaven, qui·l vos puria recomptar?*” (148). Tears come full circle when Natana observes her mother returning from the neighbor’s house as she empathetically “...wept for the sorrow of the woman that was bewailing her son.” (100). “*Nastasia plora por la pietat de la dona qui planyia son fill*” (148-49).

When Blaquerna leaves home planning to become a hermit, his father blesses him and is “... weeping with great suffering of mind” (73) “*...en plorant ab gran passió de coratge*” (120).and his mother faints. When their son finally enters the forest the couple “...with great weeping...return to the city” (77). “*...ab grans plors... s·en retornaren...a la ciutat...*” (124). Empathetic tears continue in Book 2, “Of Religion.” Blaquerna is walking in the forest and hears “...the cries and the complaints and the weeping of the shepherd...” (183) “*...los crits e·ls plants e·ls plors que·l pastor gitava...*” (233) as his seven-year old son had been killed by a wolf. To calm the shepherd’s inconsolable grief, Blaquerna mimics the father’s actions. In essence, he fakes his tears. He “... took the child, and began to kiss and embrace it, and to weep and lament according as its father had done” (185). “*...pres l’infant e començá·l a besar e abraçar, e plorá e feu dol segons que son pare fahia*” (234). Blaquerna temporarily lies to the shepherd and says his wife is also dead in order to shock him back to rational thought. The future hermit uses the tragedy to

teach that "...utility even of hurt received as touching these earthly things, puts man in opposition to bodily and spiritual death, and in accord with that heavenly life which is everlasting even to the end of time" (187). "*...utilitat reebent dampnatge d'aquestes coses terrenals, es hom contra mort corporal e contra mort speritual, e concorda·s hom ab vida celestial qui per totstemps es perdurable*" (236).

As mentioned above, Lull uses weeping as a thread to provide cautionary tales in order to right a societal wrong. Blaquerna comes upon a damsel who "...wept and lamented bitterly..." (188) "*...plorava e cridava molt fortiment*" (237) because she has been stolen from her mother's castle by an aggressive knight. Blaquerna changes the knight's viewpoint by comparing the knight's superior might to that of a Saracen king whose mind is evil. The Christian knight does not want to be put in the same category as the Saracen relying on might, rather than on a logical mind to win a contest, so he releases the damsel to Blaquerna. "Now, as Blanquerna was at prayer, he heard a voice that lamented and wept and gave signs of great distress and sorrow" (194). "*Estant Blaquerna en oració ell ohií .i. veu que planyia e plorava e donava semblant de tristicia gran e deconsolació*" (241). It conveniently turns out to be the squire who initially tried and failed to save the damsel from the evil knight. Blaquerna entrusts the damsel to the responsible squire thus reinstating the squire's well-merited self-esteem. Now the squire will not only restore the girl to her mother, but also preserve the girl's reputation and rescue Blaquerna from the lust he and the young woman resisted while travelling alone together in the forest.

In some vignettes, the characters do not cry, indicating, I suggest, a lack of spiritual awareness of the error of their ways. In these instances, Blaquerna criticizes actions by the rising middle class who are exclusively concerned with the warning spoken of in Matthew

13:22, the "...worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth" which choke out the New Testament message of peace. In chapter XLVI "Of Diligence," we see four short episodes in which Blaquerna crosses paths with other members of society.

A king's minister flies by on horseback on his way to make preparations for the king to hold court and impress those invited. The subtle critique is of the sin of pride, the lack of humility, and the lack of "valour" involved in this sort of spectacle which is not planned to lift the mood of the populace, but to exalt the ego of the king. A squire hurries by on his way to announce to a town that one of its own citizens has become a bishop. Again, this announcement has nothing to do with the spiritual merit of the man elected nor does it serve as a pretext to call the town to a renewed spirituality, but merely to massage the ego of the townspeople upon finding out that one of their own has received social recognition. A merchant goes by "...weeping and lamenting bitterly..." (170) "*...lo qual plorava e planyia fortment...*" (221) because he has lost all his monetary worth, robbed by a knight. This scenario is one for which a twenty-first century reader most likely has empathy, and Blaquerna recognized the need for sufficient material sustenance in order to thrive, but in this case probably laments the lack of faith in God to provide. The fourth man has borrowed money at exorbitant interest to bribe a judge and win a lawsuit against his brother. This scene criticizes on three fronts: it condemns usury, it censures the legal system which is self-serving rather than fair, and it castigates lack of forgiveness. As it turns out, the chapter's title, "Of Diligence" is totally ironic. The men are focused entirely on mundane, rather than spiritual diligence.

No group in society evades Blaquerna's critical eye. There are many episodes which dissect corruption among the clergy. One theme often illustrated is the abandonment

of the Christian and later Franciscan ideal of poverty. Blaqueria rails against bishops who squander their resources on large retinues or rich food rather than on alms for the poor and to convert non-believers. “Blanqueria ...reproved the Bishop straightly for the superfluity of meats and the garments... and the ornaments of the table... (221) “*Blaqueria... représ molt fortment lo bisbe de les viandes des superflues e dels vestiments e les companyes que tenia de les ornaments de la taula...*” (267). Blaqueria wept, and great was the shame of the bishop and all the rest...” (222) “*Plora Blaqueria. Molt agren gran vergonya lo bisbe e tots los alters...*” (267).

Whereas the very human characters who cry may be from another time and place, today’s reader can identify with their grief, anger, fear, mistreatment, and dishonesty. In stark contrast stand the allegorical, personified figures who cry allegorical tears. The Ten Commandments, the sisters Faith, Truth, Devotion, their brother, Understanding and the Lady Valour all wear clothing, talk and live in palaces in the middle of the forest and are very elitist about who they let into their homes. In fact, only the perfect Blaqueria is worthy enough. The weeping of the personified Ten Commandments criticizes, reminds, and encourages those who already call themselves Christians to follow the guidelines inherited from the Old Testament tradition of Israel. Soon after Blaqueria enters the forest to begin looking for his hermitage, he happens on to the palace where the Ten Commandments live. Each of the commandments is written above the door along with the reason for their living there. It is because,

‘[t]hey have been exiled in this forest; they are despised, disobeyed and forgotten by those that are in the world. In this palace, they weep and lament and bewail the honour that they were wont to have in the world that God might have the glory and men come to everlasting salvation (155-6)’

*'Exillats son e nest boscatge; menyspreats, desobeits, ublidats son en lo mon per les gents. En est palau plore, es desconsolen e planyen la honor que solien haver en lo mon per tal que Deus fos onrat e que les gents venguesen a salut perdurable'* (205-06).

All ten speak to Blanquerna and I believe the enumeration helps give the feel for how importantly this selective vocabulary is used by Lull. “Each one held upon his knees a book, and wept and bewailed very bitterly” (156). “*Cascú tenia en sa falda un libre; cascú plorava e planyia molt fortment*” (206). The vocabulary is repetitious. The first commandment “wept... bewailed himself and was sorrowful and full of grief” (157). “*En plorant ... se desconsolava e s’entristava*” (207). “The second ...wept and lamented so bitterly” (157). “*...lo Segon Manament planyia e plorava*” (207). “The third ... [did] weep and lament” (158). “*Per semblant manera planyia e plorava lo Terç Manament...*” (207). “The fourth likewise lifted up his voice and wept ...” (158). “*En altes veus en plorant dix lo Quart Manament...*” (208). The fifth said “Sad is in my soul...” (158). “*... [T]rista es mi anima*” (208). The sixth is “...dishonored, sad and disconsolate...” (159). “*...desonrat, trist, desconsolat...*” (208). The seventh was “...weeping...” (159). “*...en plorant...*” (208). “The eighth “spake with suffering heart...” (159). “*...ab compassion de coratge...*” (209). [T]he ninth... “lamented the harm...done to him,..” (159). “*...clama....de la injuria que li han feta...*” (209). The tenth “lamented,” as well (160). “*...qui:s complanyia...*” (209). These tales of woe resulted in Blanquerna’s empathetic reaction and he, also “...could not refrain from tears” (160). “*... no:s podia abstenir de plorar*” (209).

One of these allegorical figures, “Faith” who is accompanied by her sister “Truth” as they are on their way to meet their brother, “Understanding,” points us toward Blanquerna’s and one could say, Ramon Lull’s preoccupation with converting Muslims. Faith laments for the unconverted “Saracens” and for “...the merit which is lost in those

that will not present to them my brother [Understanding] and my sister [Truth]” (12) “...*lo merit qui-s pert en aquells qui no-ls van mostrar mon frare e ma ssor* (212). “... In other words, the fault, in her estimation lies not only with those who have neither heard nor accepted Christianity, but also with those who are well-versed in the religion, but have not shared “...by necessary reasons the fourteen articles of faith...” (162). “... *per rahons necessaries mostre a ells los .xiiii. articles*” (212).

Another, Lady Valour, “...weep[s] and bewail[s] her wrongs and she awaits trusty helpers who shall restore her to the world, that the honor of God may be multiplied throughout all lands” (178). “*Valor plora e plany tots jorns sos dampnatges e desira a recobrar sa honor e spera valedors qui la retornen en lo mon per ço que la honor de Deu sia multiplicada per tots les terres*” (229). Part of Blaquerna’s elaborate plan to foster conversion, involves cultural exchanges in which members of the clergy would learn Arabic and other languages from native speakers, and these speakers of other languages, it was hoped, would convert to Christianity. In Book 5 “Of the Apostolic State” Chapter 80, *Gloria in Excelsis Deo*, Blaquerna, as Pope, puts forth an elaborate plan of proselytization, especially in view of the fact that he has received a letter from the Soldan (Sultan) of Babylon saying basically that Christians at that moment are having bad luck with conversion because they are using violent tactics and not those of “Jesus Christ and the Apostles who through preaching and martyrdom converted the world” (323). “... *Jesucrist e dels apostols, qui per preycació e per martire convertiren lo mon.*” (352).

Ramón the Fool, a thinly veiled reference, one supposes, to Lull himself, in response to a gathering of many Church leaders at Blanquerna’s court, reduces or expands depending on how one looks at it, the following message: “The Lover and the Beloved met,

and kept silence with their tongues; and their eyes, wherever they made signs of love, were in tears, and the love of the one, spake with the love of the other” (324). ““*Encontraren – se l’amich e l’amat e callaren lurs boques e lurs hulls, ab los quals se fahien senyals d’amor. Ploraren e lurs amors se parlaren*”” (353).

In conclusion, I would suggest that all the tears cried in Blaquerna are an expression of man’s longing for an eternal perfection exemplified by behaving in ways in which we do not harm ourselves or others and additionally, in which we sense and coexist with a divine omnipresence who encompasses infinite understanding which can be called love. This love is that designated by *caritas*, a love which gives without expectation of benefit to oneself in return. According to Christian belief, Ramon Llull through the mouthpiece of Blaquerna might sum up his advice in the following biblical verses: From 1 John 2:1-3:

My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense –Jesus Christ the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world. (New Open Bible)

In addition, in 1 John 2, verses 15 and 17, respectively we read, “Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him...The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.” Finally, according to Llull’s utopia espoused in the *Romanç d’Evast e Blaquerna*, when it is all said and done, tears won’t exist. In the book of Revelation 21:4, speaking of God, we read: “and He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be any death; there shall no longer be any mourning or crying or pain.”

If only mankind followed Blaquerna and Llull’s example, suffering would disappear from the world and man would once and for all reconcile with God. This was always Llull’s dream and he relentlessly uttered his message to anyone who would listen.

He illustrates this repeatedly in his entire opus as we see here in his *Romanç d'Evast e Blaquerna*. This reconciliation is not only performed by the character Blaquerna, but is also narratively dramatized with the appearance of a book written by Blaquerna that illustrates the surrendering to and reconciliation of the Christian with God. In the "Book of the Lover and the Beloved" (*Llibre d'Amic e Amat*) which the hermit Blaquerna writes at the end of his life, we read: "The Lover beat upon the door of his Beloved with blows of love and hope. The Beloved heard the blows of His Lover, with humility, pity, charity and patience. Deity and Humanity opened the doors, and the Lover went in to his Beloved" (417-18).<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> *Tocava l'amich a la porta de son amat ab colp d'amor, sperança. Ohia l'amat lo colp de son amich ab humilitat, pietat, pasciencia, caritat. Obriren les portes deytat e humanitat; e entrava l'amich veer son amat* (438).

**EPILOGUE:**  
**POLITICAL ADAPTATIONS OF RECONCILIATION:**  
**POSSIBILITIES AND PROBLEMS**

This doctoral dissertation has examined the manifestation of Christian reconciliation in three thirteenth century literary works from the Iberian Peninsula and the island of Mallorca. The study discussed interpretations of the term “reconciliation” and applied the term to each work with regard to three aspects: reconciliation of self with self, of self with society, and of self with the divine.

Chapter 1 discussed the various connotations of the term “reconciliation.” It outlined reconciliation as a synonym of penance, as in the four-steps in the Catholic Sacrament of Penance, now referred to as the Sacrament of Reconciliation. It also discussed the related Pauline concept of reconciliation and Paul’s possible sources.

Chapter 2 analyzed these three aspects of reconciliation in an anonymous thirteenth century Castilian work in verse: *La Vida de Santa María Egipciaca*, or the Life of Santa María, the Egyptian. The nubile Alexandrian prostitute experienced an epiphany outside a church in Jerusalem, regarded with horror the life she had been living, and repented at that moment of intersection between human activity and divine intervention. Divine intervention arrived in the guise of the Virgin Mary who sent her to the harsh desert to strip away fleeting physical loveliness in order to find eternal spiritual beauty. This encounter changed how she viewed herself, interacted with society, and regarded the connection between earthly life and divinity. She found new self-respect and reconciled with herself. She came to terms with society by avoiding it entirely. She found peace with the divinity as she lived a purer life which to the world would have manifested itself as ugliness, but to

spiritually-minded clergy served as an example of inner beauty brought about by discipline of the divine.

Chapter 3 examined Gonzalo de Berceo's *cuaderna vía* poem, the *Vida de Santa Oria*, written in Castilian in the mid thirteenth century through the same three lenses of reconciliation. This time the female figure was the Egyptian's polar opposite, Oria, a young anchoress who appeared never to have sinned. It might have seemed that she had no need of reconciliation with herself because her virtue exceeded that of other people, even that of her mother, also an anchoress. Her inner conflict stemmed from remaining on earth longer than she desired. She came to terms with her worthiness with herself and the divine after her supernatural trip to heaven where she learns that she soon will be worthy to become a bride of Christ. Oria did not reconcile with earthly society as she has already distanced herself from earthly pursuits and human contact. She finds people, including her mother, to be an annoyance. Her society is now formed of the holy dead, resurrected beings she meets in heaven and in her earthly cell.

Chapter 4 studied the *Romanç d'Evast e Blanquerna*, a prose work in Catalan from the late thirteenth century. Blaquerna, the protagonist, whose greatest desire is to become a solitary hermit, finds reconciliation with self, ironically, by serving others. This form of penance helps him grow in compassion which enables him to help others reconcile with difficulties in their own lives, whether with family or other members of society. By the end of the novel, Blaquerna is rewarded by the divine for his efforts. He is permitted to step down from the Papacy and retreat to a hermit's life of prayer and contemplation.

The protagonists of all three works demonstrate that reconciliation is possible with self, with society even if this means leaving it, and with the divine. The idealistic notion of

reconciliation is a practical one for solving personal disagreements as well as large-scale conflicts if mankind will extend a hand outward instead of hoarding emotion and resources for self.

As a starting point, this doctoral dissertation has thus examined the manifestation of Christian reconciliation in three thirteenth century Iberian literary works. All three stand on the foundation of Christianity, believing that man is sinful by nature, and can only cross the bridge back to God by believing that Jesus Christ is the Son of God as well as the atoning sacrificial lamb of the world. Even so, if one thinks a bit more deeply about *La Vida de Santa María Egipciaca*, the *Vida de Santa Oria*, and the *Romanç d'Evast e Blaquerna*, all three were written within the same system of belief but represent variations on a tradition.

The *vita* of a reformed prostitute was a retelling of many retellings of a story that probably originated in Greece. The direct ancestor of the Iberian poem was a French version and this story was a cross cultural one and universal. A person on the very lowest rung of society's ladder could be redeemed by embracing a spiritual life based on Christ's forgiveness. The message: Christ is for all, no matter who we are or what we've done.

The *life* of Santa Oria also tells of Christ's redeeming qualities, but hers is a much more insular story. One of the reasons Berceo may have written the poem was to attract pilgrims to San Millán de la Cogolla, and pilgrims brought economic resources with them. Here, pure spirituality subtly combines with practical economic concerns which exist in the ecclesiastic as well as lay worlds. The ethereally-directed also exist on a concrete earth.

Blaquerna's intensity, perhaps a mirror of that of his creator, Ramón Llull, represents both the best and worst of Christianity. On the positive side, Blaquerna reaches

out to help solve real problems: he prevents a knight from forcing himself on a fair damsel by means of the weapon of logic; he resolves squabbles between brothers over material goods, preventing rancor created by things that have no transcendence; and he reorganizes Church hierarchy in such a way as to stem the spread of pride and corruption. On the negative side, perhaps caused by the accident of geography which meant living in an area with followers of Islam, Blaquerna and Ramón Llull, although sincere in wanting to share their faith with the “non-saved,” forget the gentle and kind spirit of Christ along the path.

In the same way, the basic concept of Christian reconciliation, of the coexistence of differences, has been brought to grave modern-day conflicts like those which have occurred in South Africa during apartheid, in Northern Ireland, during the “Troubles,” and in the post – Pinochet era in Chile. These reconciliation efforts to find healing and peace for the victims of grave atrocities have met with mixed success. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to explore, but an important topic related to reconciliation is the confluence of accountability, justice and forgiveness -- not forgiveness of the “cheap” variety, but the kind truly fomented by imitating Blaquerna’s best quality: he took care of others before he took care of himself.

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