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Law, Sex, and Anti-Semitism
in
Gonzalo de Berceo's *Milagros de Nuestra Señora*

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Law, Sex, and Anti-Semitism
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Dedication

To my husband, Leland Ball, whose armor never dulls.

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This study of the hierarchical aesthetic of the Virgin Mary as Holy Advocate contextualizes within a historical framework of Church reforms and canon law the ambiguity in relation to Christian doctrine of topics related to law, sex and anti-Semitism in Gonzalo de Berceo's *Milagros de Nuestra Señora*. The analysis of the Virgin's intermediary dynamic entails attention to Berceo's use of legalistic stylistic devices in the context of devotional poetry. The miracles studied here reveal three triadic orders of hierarchical mediation that characterize Berceo's scheme of Marian mediation within the context of the neo-platonic medieval logic. These triadic orders of mediation provide a model for perceiving the manner in which Berceo's text engages and participates in the discourses, both popular and orthodox, of the Gregorian and Lateran reform eras. Some of these discourses include, for example, debates between the cleric and the knight, and between the cleric and the Jew, faith and reason, the philosophy of Abelard, monastic reform rhetoric, the Bible, law, marriage vs. fornication, and the dogma of

transubstantiation, to name a few. The logic of the triadic hierarchy of mediation in the *Milagros* provides the means to link and fuse secular and religious concepts. The ascending order of ‘clergy-canon law-Virgin Mary,’ for example, belies the role of the clergy in this process of fusion as interpreters and implementers of canon law. The fusion of the secular belief in the ‘sinlessness’ of simple fornication and the sacred doctrine of the sacrament of confession is enabled by means of the triadic structural link of ‘clergy-confession-Virgin Mary.’ In the miracles about Jews and Christians, the fusion of secular and sacred law that enables the sanctioning of murder, the validation of the efficacy of religious images, the legitimacy of intermediary dogma, and the doctrinal orthodoxy of prefiguration, unfolds through the triadic order of mediation structured as ‘laity-Church-Virgin Mary.’ In the *Milagros*, the direction of the Virgin Mary’s intermediary activity serves to harmonize the contradictions inherent in the application of sacred concepts to secular circumstances.

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Introduction

The Riojan poet, Gonzalo de Berceo, who is also the first Spanish-language poet known to us by name, was born in the late twelfth century in the village of Berceo in northeastern Castile. The date of his death is uncertain, but was probably between 1252-1264. Berceo's *Milagros de Nuestra Señora* (1246)¹ represents the first collection in Castilian of the miracle tales of the Virgin. Such vernacular collections, modeled on Latin versions, flourished in the thirteenth century, the "Century of Mary."² Two well-known compilations include, for example, the *Cantigas de Santa María*, of Alfonso X (The Wise), and the *Miracles de Nostre Dame* of Gautier de Coincy. Until the twentieth century, scholars believed Gautier's collection, which was written more than a decade earlier than the *Milagros* and is similar in presentation, had been Berceo's source. In 1910, however, Richard Becker discovered a Latin manuscript in the Library of Copenhagen (MS Thott 128), which clearly could have "served [. . .] as a model for both Berceo and Gautier." In 1971, Richard Kinkade suggested the Latin MS 110 (Spanish National Library) as "a more direct source" for the *Milagros* (Mount and Cash 7). In addition to the *Milagros*, Berceo wrote two other works of Marian devotion (*Loores de Nuestra Señora* and *El duelo de la Virgen*), four works of hagiography (*Vida de Santo Domingo de Silos*, *Vida de San Millán de la Cogolla*, *Vida de Santa Oria* and *El martirio de San Lorenzo*),³ two doctrinal poems (*El sacrificio de la Misa* and *Los signos del Juicio Final*), and three short hymns translated from known Latin originals. All of the saints of

¹ I use Brian Dutton's edition (*Obras Completas II*, 2nd ed., London: Tamesis, 1980). Dutton's commentaries on the Latin versions refer to MS Thott 128. All verses quoted from the *Milagros* and all Latin citations are from Dutton's edition unless otherwise noted.

² Berceo's century is known as the "Century of Mary" because devotion to her, which became "universal in the West by the eighth century," reached its fullest flowering in the thirteenth (Mount and Cash 9).

³ Latin sources also served as models for the poems about the saints' lives.

Berceo's hagiographies had some connection to San Millán de la Cogolla, the monastery with which he was associated all his life. He was educated there as a child and in his adult life, as a secular priest and confessor, he probably served as notary to its abbot, Juan Sánchez (Dutton, "Profession" 143), and possibly as a teacher in the monastery school (Uría xiii).

Berceo wrote in the learned verse form of *cuaderna vía* (quatrains of fourteen syllables with a caesura in the middle and consonantal mono-rhyme), the poetic style of the *mester de clerecía*, the cleric's or scholar's art. Generally learned and/or religious, the *mester de clerecía* employs, however, many "well-proven techniques" of the minstrel's art, or the *mester de juglaría*, such as "oral presentation, direct address, picturesque details and digressions, and the use of popular speech and proverbs" (Mount and Cash 2).⁴ Some of the best examples of *mester de clerecía* from Berceo's day include the *Libro de Alexandre*, about the life and adventures of Alexander the Great, the *Libro de Apolonio*, an account of a Greek romance about Apollonius of Tyre, and the *Poema de Fernán González*, a narration of the heroic military accomplishments of the first count of Castile. The nature of the *mester de clerecía* reveals that its authors were knowledgeable in law, grammar and rhetoric, thus linking them to an urban world and an education in the universities or cathedral schools of the region. Berceo's works reveal that his rhetorical skills encompassed considerable musical, biblical, doctrinal and juridical knowledge. His abundant use of legal elements, in particular, has led to much speculation that he could have been educated at the Estudio General de Palencia (Dutton, "Profession" 144). He refers in the *Milagros* (325d) to one of its founders, don Tello Téllez Meneses, the bishop of Palencia, and to the university of Palencia itself in the *Vida de Santo Domingo de Silos* (462ab). The Estudio General de Palencia was well known

⁴ "Minstrel's art" and "scholar's art" are the translations for *mester de juglaría* and *mester de clerecía* provided by Mount and Cash (1-2).

for its famous professors of law, who were invited from Italy to teach there by the university's other founder and patron, Alfonso VIII, the king of Castile (Uría xi-xii). Berceo's name is referred to in two documents of notarial character: as "Maestro de Confesión" and executor of a will in one, and in the other, as a witness in a commercial transaction made by Juan Pérez, the bishop of Calahorra. Berceo's name appears as a witness in documents of San Millán throughout his lifetime. In 1221 he held the title of deacon and in 1237, that of priest (Gerli, "Introduction" 11).

Notwithstanding the cultured verse form and quantity of learned themes of the *mester de clerecía*, its employment of the popular poetic formulas and use of the vernacular language instead of Latin, suggest that its audience was not limited to clerics. In the Middle Ages, the *mester de clerecía* became a didactic instrument designed to instruct and attract followers of the Church, and entailed an effort toward establishing the authority of Church doctrine (Gerli, "Introduction" 17). The miracles communicate dogmas of the Church by means of playful, grotesque, poignant, and violent narratives that have broad audience appeal. For example, the Virgin Mary's interventions save a pregnant abbess from scandal, encourage mob violence against Jews, enable the repayment of debts, trap some thieves and rescue others, bring a self-castrated pilgrim back to life, retrieve contracts made with the devil, and chase away a drunken monk's frightening hallucinations. Ana Diz characterizes the miracles as pious literature whose objective is to promote "la religiosidad popular, enseñar devoción y perpetuar la tradición mariana" (21). In the Marian tradition, devotion to Mary, however minimal, always outweighs deeds when the Virgin bestows a favor. Joël Saugnieux illustrates this point that the moral deeds of the protagonists in the miracles do not take precedence: "[e]n los *Milagros* [. . .] Cristo y la Virgen no se muestran exigentes ni sobre la cantidad, ni sobre la calidad de las obras realizadas" (16).

Studies such as that of Saugnieux, who shows that “Berceo no innova, y [. . .] se contenta con beber del fondo común de la espiritualidad de su época” (43), often concern themselves to clarify the seemingly unorthodox portrayal of the Virgin, rather than Christ or God, as possessor of the final word on the salvation of her devotees. While it is true that Mary’s elevated status in the economy of salvation “may not adhere to strict Catholic theology, neither is it a strange aberration that makes Berceo’s perception of her role unique” (Mount and Cash 13). Saugnieux situates the epoch and place in which Berceo lived as “absolutamente privilegiados desde el punto de vista de la mariología,” and explains that the clergyman poet, the *juglar a lo divino*, was witness to two cultural phenomena of great importance:

La decadencia de la liturgia hispánica, prohibida en 1081, pero que sobrevivió hasta el comienzo de ese mismo siglo XIII; y la propagación en España de la reforma de Cîteaux que, a partir de finales del siglo XII difundió a través de la península el pensamiento de San Bernardo. (70)⁵

Berceo exhibits a conception of the universal mediation of Mary “que procede en línea recta de San Ildefonso y de la cual, sin duda, ha tenido conocimiento gracias a la liturgia hispánica” (49). San Ildefonso was the first great disseminator of Marian theology and of Hispanic liturgy (48), and the first miracle in Berceo’s collection pays homage to his contribution to the celebration of Mary. Saint Bernard of Clairvaux (d. 1153) was instrumental in the codification of Marian devotion: “Aunque la mariología parece ser un fenómeno de gran extensión en la devoción del siglo XII, se codifica gracias a la obra de San Bernardo y se da a conocer, sobre todo, en su famoso sermón titulado *De aquaeductu*” (Gerli, “Introduction” 21). From these two influences evolved the idea that Mary can save those whom God would condemn, and that, without her, no one may be reconciled with the Father. Even in cases where reconciliation might seem impossible,

⁵ “La liturgia hispánica [es] llamada también mozárabe, gótica, visigótica, romano-visigótica o toledana” (Saugnieux 47).

far from always following the opinion of Her Son, Mary often imposes Her own upon Him (Saugnieux 57).

An allegorical Introduction precedes the twenty-five miracle narratives that comprise Berceo's collection. The source for Berceo's Introduction remains a mystery and may be original to Berceo himself. A medieval audience,⁶ however, would have had familiarity with its metaphors, images and themes. The fundamental metaphor of the Virgin Mary as a "perpetually green meadow where the pilgrim can rest and enjoy spiritual delights" mirrors the *locus amoenus* motif of the Middle Ages (Mount and Cash 7). In this Introduction, Berceo alludes to the "Fall of Man":

El fructo de los árboles era dulz e sabrido,
si don Adam oviesse de tal fructo comido
de tan mala manera non serié decibido,
nin tomarién tal danno Eva nin so marido.
(15)

Ten verses later, Berceo glosses the meaning of these fruit trees as miracles of Mary:

Los árboles qe facen sombra dulz e donosa
son los santos miraclos qe faz Gloriosa,
ca son mucho más dulzes qe azúcar sabrosa,
la qe dan al enfermo en la cuita ravisosa.
(25)

Michael Gerli finds that Berceo's Introduction, as allegory, tells the story of humankind's Fall and Redemption "por medio de imágenes que evocan el Paraíso del Génesis, y a través de alusiones a las profecías del Antiguo Testamento que anunciaban a la Virgen María" ("Introduction" 47). Berceo's typological images and allusions evoke "la posibilidad de la restitución de la humanidad a la gracia perdida, la posibilidad de un retorno al Edén" (47). By viewing Berceo's Introduction in light of the story of 'Fall and Redemption,' we can visualize it as a narrative frame in which the miracles that follow

⁶ Allegory was intended for an adult audience.

“reflejan metonímicamente el mismo concepto en su plano individual. Estos últimos narran no el drama de la Caída y Salvación del hombre arquetípico, sino el de los hombres, los peregrinos, nuestros vecinos y nuestros contemporáneos” (47-8). This typology of ‘Fall and Redemption’ represented by a symbolic link of Eden and the Anunciation often formed the duality known in thirteenth-century Spain as Ave/ Eva, Eva/ Ave (Gerli, “Tipología” 8). Berceo’s illustration of the ‘Fall and Redemption’ paradigm by means of Old Testament events and figures that prophesy Mary, firmly establishes the Christian doctrine of prefiguration in which Mary (and Christ) appear as the fulfillment of what Marina Warner describes as “one unbroken chain of prophecy” (62).

This elaborate attention to the doctrine of prefiguration, a theme fundamental to Christianity, suggests the instructional and sermonic duties of a teacher and priest: “todos los poemas del maestro Berceo contienen aspectos fundamentales de la doctrina cristiana; responden, pues, a la actividad catequística y pastoral, propia del sacerdote y el maestro” (Uría xiii). In fact, as Isabel Uría points out, “la época en que vivió, su relación con el monasterio emilianense y su profesión de sacerdote y maestro son circunstancias que se reflejan en sus obras, a la vez que dan razón de los temas que trata” (xiii). In addition to doctrinal themes, Berceo’s poetry reflects his relationship to the monastery of San Millán. It is known, for example, that the devotional objective of hagiography generally encompassed a promotional motive as well: to attract financial support to often struggling monasteries. All of the saints’ lives that Berceo wrote about had some direct connection with San Millán. In the thirteenth century, a general state of monastery decline corresponds to the proliferation of hagiographic works. San Millán de la Cogolla was no exception to the tides of history. Early in the century, its bishopric, Calahorra, had fallen into debt and disarray. Disputes among the parishes and religious houses ensued over

claims to financial endowments. Thus, as Brian Dutton sustains, Berceo's poems about saints' lives can be viewed as propaganda, as publicity destined to attract pilgrims to his convent in order to increase the income of the San Millán monastery.

The miracle tales of the Virgin do not necessarily directly participate in this propagandistic aspect of hagiography production. Dutton's research, however, documents the existence of a shrine of the Virgin at the chapel of San Millán at least thirty-eight years before an altar even was dedicated to the chapel's patron saint ("The Virgin of Yuso" 83-4). He concludes that the *Milagros*, like the saints' lives, probably also served as publicity for San Millán:

Who are the people that God wishes to 'traer a est logar'? The *logar* must be San Millán de la Cogolla, and since the words quoted come almost in the middle of the *Milagros de Nuestra Señora*, is it not highly probable that the 'sennores e amigos' are pilgrims who have come to San Millán, to pay homage to the Virgin there? Could not Berceo's Marian works in fact be his contribution to the entertainment and enlightenment of the pilgrims who came to visit the shrine of the Virgin? ("The Virgin of Yuso" 86-7)

The lines Dutton refers to, which are part of the opening quatrain of "La abadesa preñada," do not appear in the Latin versions of this miracle (Dutton, *Obras* 174). I quote the verses here in order to convey the compelling effect of this miracle's introductory lines:

Sennores e amigos, compaña de prestar,
deqe Dios se vos quiso traer a est logar,
aún si me quissiéssedes un poco esperar,
en un otro miraclo vos querría fablar.
(500)

Even without knowing about Dutton's discovery, we cannot deny that the verses address an audience who has actively 'arrived' to the place of miracle recitation. The monastery of San Millán not only had its own local cult of the Virgin, but also was located near the famous pilgrimage route to Santiago de Compostela. In the eleventh century, San Millán

had acquired the inn of Azofra, located on the French road to Santiago close to Nájera, along with its church, where pilgrims who died on the route were buried. Nájera was not far from San Millán (Dutton, *Obras* 9). One can assume that pilgrims in route to Santiago, at least the ones who spoke Spanish, also could have been entertained and edified by the *Milagros*, and/ or encouraged to visit the shrine of the Virgin at San Millán. Certainly recitations of the miracles would have accrued fame, if not financial support as well, to Azofra.

In view of these propagandistic motives, Diz points out that since an ideology often becomes the vehicle of artistic expression, it is unclear whether or not the ideal of a supposed separation of art and politics even exists in practice. Even when an artist has political motives, or vested interests of any sort, it is improbable that these motives and/ or interests could dominate every aspect of the process of producing the work of art (36). We can differentiate, therefore, between propaganda for a church and that of an ideology of faith, even when the two motives coexist:

[E]l acto de propagar ideas, tanto más difuso y generalizado, se extiende, a veces, en el tiempo, hasta confundirse casi con la “naturaleza.” Diferente del esfuerzo esporádico y parcial de la propaganda, se trata de una actividad que orquesta gran número de medios y que se lleva a cabo con alta coherencia y continuidad. (Diz 41)

Thus we can visualize the propagandistic aspect of hagiographic creativity as converging with a larger worldview of faith and religion that art simultaneously identifies with and defines.

With this in mind we can clearly see why Saignieux cautions that we incur error if we identify the clergy as completely “bajo la influencia de la religión culta [. . .]. Hay que distinguir entre religión popular y religión culta en el mismo seno de la clase sacerdotal” (103). He argues that when studying the history of religion and Church power, a complicating element lies in the fact that the makers of Church policy are not

necessarily the same persons that interpret and implement it: “quienes encarnan la institución eclesiástica y definen el precepto no son necesariamente los mismos que tienen el poder cultural o político en la sociedad” (104). Furthermore, it is impossible to study separately “religión culta y religión popular,” that is, the ideal vs. the reality of its practice. Rather, we must study the tensions, “las relaciones dialécticas,” between the two (105). The clerics of the Middle Ages belonged to different levels of culture in terms of education, social class, and/ or that of the spiritual charges of their parishes. In the religious writings of the *mester de clerecía*, we have “un espacio privilegiado para el estudio de las relaciones dialécticas” in the mixture of popular and orthodox forms (107). Saugnieux defines what I consider to be the *je ne sais quoi* that Berceo’s *Milagros* possesses:

En el caso de Berceo nos encontramos con tesis heterodoxas sin ninguna pretensión subversiva; el poeta no pone en duda la autoridad de la Iglesia, no construye una doctrina coherente, únicamente antepone la convicción a la especulación, la práctica a la doctrina. (106)

This idea of placement and prioritization, rather than exclusion, describes well the object of my study: the *Milagros*’ hierarchical aesthetic of the Virgin Mary as Holy Advocate and intermediary par excellence for Christian souls. My approach is to attempt to contextualize within a historical framework of Church reforms and canon law the ambiguity in relation to Christian doctrine of topics in the miracles related to law, sex and anti-Semitism. The signpost I follow will be, in most cases, Berceo’s use of legalistic stylistic devices.

In Chapter One, “Mary as Holy Advocate of Canon Law,” I explore the role of legal formulas as a literary device in Berceo’s characterization of Mary. In the miracles “San Pedro y el monje lozano,” “Los dos hermanos,” “El labrador avaro,” and “El milagro de Teófilo,” the representation of Mary as Holy Advocate appears to fuse secular

and religious concepts. Celestial mediation of the laws of judgment becomes conceptualized in terms of a terrestrial court of appeals. Berceo's use of legalistic themes and embellishments emphasizes the relevance to canon law of issues in the miracles, such as confession, documents and Church properties. I situate Berceo historically in his clerical and notarial world of burgeoning canon law and locate his poetry within the context of devotional poetry of the Lateran reform era. In "La iglesia robada," "Milagro de la casulla de San Ildefonso," and "La iglesia profanada," I consider the role of Mary as an endorser of the authority of the law to prosecute offenses against the Church.

In Chapter Two, "Sex, Law and the Clergy," I evaluate the propaganda of the legal drama in "El sacristán fornicario" as it relates to the sin of fornication and the sacrament of confession. The juxtaposition of these two topics relates directly to canons of the Fourth Lateran Council regarding confession and the celibacy of the clergy. I show that a tone of ambivalence regarding sexual chastity in the miracles involving sex and the clergy, which also include "El monje lozano," "La abadesa preñada," "El romero engañado por el diablo," and "La boda y la Virgen," is common to other literatures and discourses of the clergy in Berceo's day. In "El romero engañado," I explore the notion of ritual purity as a moral justification for a celibate clergy and its roots in the rhetoric of the monastic reform movement. In "La abadesa preñada," "El monje lozano," and "La boda y la Virgen," I contemplate the pragmatic side of the argument for enforced celibacy of the clergy, problems involving Church property, that originally gave momentum to the Gregorian reforms. Here I also explore the ambivalent stance of the clergy itself in regard to clerical debates about the merits of marriage vs. fornication.

"Christians and Jews of the Cities," Chapter Three, identifies motifs of Christian anxiety in issues relating to doctrinal hegemony and community authority in urban settings. A narrative mechanism by which the fusion of secular and sacred law can

validate collective justice against the Jews in “Los judíos de Toledo,” or unite Jews and Christians in “El judiezno,” is present in situations where legitimacy of Christian religious images and prefiguration dogma are at stake. Images of the Church validate intermediary dogma in issues involving money in “El mercader de Bizancio.” In these miracles, anti-Jewish stereotypes reflect Christian ambivalence regarding the Jewish basis of the Christian religion, and are often employed to undermine authority figures of urban communities that are Jewish: a rabbi, a father, and a moneylender.

In the “Conclusion,” I return to the medieval concept of hierarchy and multiplicity to propose what I consider to be the three triadic hierarchies of order that appear to structure the direction of Mary’s mediation in the miracles I study here.

Chapter 1: Mary as Holy Advocate of Canon Law

Gonzalo de Berceo's *Milagros de Nuestra Señora* contains difficult to ignore theological questions stemming from the seemingly unorthodox portrayal of the Virgin Mary, rather than Christ or God, as possessor of the final word on the salvation of her devotees. In fact, Berceo rarely mentions the role of Christ in his praise of Mary's miracles of salvation. Joël Saugnieux considers R. Ricard very close to the truth when Ricard "prudently" declares: "En sí misma esta creencia (en la omnipotente intercesión de María) es *generalmente* considerada como ortodoxa. Se puede solamente estimar que, en Berceo como en otros, María muestra una indulgencia *sorprendente* con pecadores a veces *escandalosos*" (Saugnieux 39).⁷ Often evincing a legalistic style of intercession, Mary argues on behalf of the sinful souls of her devotees who are in peril of judgment, while Satan and his devil cohorts justify their seemingly rightful claims on these souls by citing the laws of God. This juridical style of argumentation is characteristic of scenarios that present the Virgin in her role as the Holy Advocate whom even God and Jesus, much less the angels and saints, will not rebuke. Berceo's signature use of legal rhetoric constitutes one of the most studied amplifications of his Latin versions. Steven Kirby notes that "legal features are essential, not auxiliary, in Berceo's writings" (166) and José Luis Bermejo Cabrero asserts that his familiarity with the laws of his place and time cannot be denied (52).

⁷ Original emphasis.

It appears frequently in the *Milagros* that one can receive salvation without any recommendation of personal merit simply by invoking the Virgin, or by holding devotion for a saint who enlists the Virgin's intervention. Such is the case in the miracle of "San Pedro y el monje lozano,"⁸ in which the Virgin intercedes on behalf of the monk as a favor to St. Peter. This particular monk, an inveterate fornicator (the result of which is a son by a prostitute), dies without confession and does not even hold special devotion for the Virgin. Devils immediately take possession of his soul. Fortunately for the monk,

San Peidro el apóstol ovo d'él compassión,
ca en su monesterio fiziera profesión;
rogó a Jesu Christo con grand devoción
de su misericordia qe l ficiesse ración.
(164)

Christ, however, turns down Peter's request—

Dísso l Jesu Christo "Peidro, el mi amado,
bien sabes tú qué disso David en su dictado,
qe éssi folgarié en el monte sagrado⁹
qe entró sin manciella e quito de peccado.
(165)

—reminding him that "[e]ssi por qui tú ruegas, [. . .] / nin obrava justicia nin vivié sin manciella;/ por la su compannía non valió más la ciella" (166a, bc). Undaunted, Peter prays to the Heavenly Virtues,¹⁰ who also petition Christ for the monk's soul, but receive the same reply. Finally, Peter turns to the Virgin, and to "las otras vírgenes qe de su casa son" (168b). Together, they appear before Christ to pray for the soul of the monk. This time, with the Virgin's intercession, St. Peter's petition for his monk receives a favorable response:

⁸ Miracle VII.

⁹ Psalms 15:1: "Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill?" (qtd. in Mount and Cash 47).

¹⁰ The Heavenly Virtues are one of the orders of angels in the scheme of Pseudo-Dionysius.

Madre—dixo el Fijo— non serié derechura,
tal alma de tal omne entrar en tal folgura;
serié menoscabada toda la escriptura,
mas por el vuestro ruego faremos y mesura.
(171)

These verses, by referring back to *cuaderna* 165 and the Psalms of David, suggest that even at the risk of discrediting the Scriptures, Christ will not tell his mother no: “Como es la Gloriosa plena de bendición,/ [. . .] /no l serié denegada ninguna petición,/ no li diçrié tal Fijo a tal Madre de non” (181a, cd). Christ orders that the monk be brought back to life in order to have one more chance to repent and mend his ways. Delighted, St. Peter snatches the monk’s soul from the devils and entrusts it to two child angels who escort it back to its body. As they near their destination, the angels give the soul to one more intermediary, the spirit of an honored friar of the monk’s order, who will deliver the soul directly to its body. But before the delivery is complete, the friar, via the soul of the monk, requests two favors of the monk: daily prayers on his (the friar’s) behalf, and “[o]tra cosa te ruego, qe la mi sepultura/ qe yaz toda cubierta de suso de vasura/ tú la hagas varrer por tu buena mesura” (177a-c). These practical instructions to tidy up the friar’s grave colorfully amplify the brief words of the Latin “et persepe mundaret scopis sepulcrum eius” (see Dutton, *Obras* 80). The sudden intrusion of mundane practicality into the elaborate downward procession of the monk’s soul adds humor and earthiness to the image of intercession. The monk comes back to life, but before he can recall and recount the miracle, Berceo tells us that “por un grand día sovo fuert estordido” (178b). This dramatically realistic detail of the disorienting effects of resuscitation illustrates yet another of the many novelistic flourishes that Berceo adds to the Latin versions.

This miracle is one of only four in the *Milagros* that involves resuscitation, and these have in common the supreme advocacy of Mary in the drama of appeals regarding the fate of the protagonists’ souls. In “San Pedro y el monje lozano,” however, we find a

somewhat exaggerated illustration of the hierarchical conception of the action of intermediaries. In the other miracles, God or Christ merely authorizes the resuscitation and commands the soul be returned to its body. In these cases, the protagonists simply revive. Although it is not uncommon in the *Milagros* for a saint to intercede with Mary on behalf of a devotee,¹¹ in the case of “San Pedro y el monje lozano,” the network of intermediaries additionally involves the hierarchy of angels, and even a friar’s soul. The views of the Middle Ages about issues of hierarchy and authority were heavily influenced by the commentaries of Pseudo-Dionysius,¹² who, not ironically, “invented the word *hierarchy*, proposing a hierarchy of angels and a hierarchy in the church” ((Rorem, *Pseudo-Dionysius* 3). In his writings, the arrangement of the celestial hierarchy of angels brings to mind “a chain of neo-platonic emanations” forming a kind of “ladder bridging humankind to God” (Boenig).¹³ Seraphim, cherubim and thrones comprise the highest rung of the ladder, with dominions, powers and authorities the middle, and principalities, archangels and angels on the lowest rung (Rorem, *Pseudo-Dionysius* 67). In this scheme, only the seraphim, cherubim and thrones have direct access to the divine intelligence and wisdom of God, which they communicate to the next level of angels, who process what they receive according to their capacities and pass it on to principalities, and so forth down the chain to the lowest level, those who are called simply angels. These then communicate their mediated revelation directly to humans (67). In the pseudo-Areopagite’s ecclesiastical hierarchy, the direct receptors of angels’ revelations are

¹¹ Such is the case, for example, in “El romero engañado por el diablo” (Miracle VIII) and “Los dos hermanos” (Miracle X).

¹² For nearly fourteen hundred years, the only writings thought to be more ancient than those of Dionysius the Areopagite, the Athenian converted to Christianity by St. Paul (Acts 17), were the pages of the Bible itself. Not until the early part of the twentieth century did the independent scholarship of H. Koch and J. Stiglmayr reveal that the Dionysius in question was in fact a Syrian writing (in Greek) in the late fifth or early sixth century. Since then he is known as Pseudo-Dionysius or Dionysius the pseudo-Areopagite (See Rorem, “Symbols” 4).

¹³ “Plato [. . .] posited the Ideas or conceptual Forms as mediating between the supreme One and the perceptible many” (Rorem, *Pseudo-Dionysius* 51).

bishops, who communicate their enlightenment to priests, who illuminate deacons, and so on down the line through monks and the rest of the communion-partaking laity (Rorem, “Symbols” 31-7). At the end of the chain are catechumens, penitents and the possessed.

The importance of the schematic exactness of these hierarchies was less influential on medieval thought than the concept that hierarchy itself was divinely ordained. The concepts in Pseudo-Dionysius’s *Celestial Hierarchy* remained mostly intact, however, throughout the Middle Ages. Pope Gregory the Great (590-604) makes reference to these angelic hierarchies, giving them a slightly different order than Dionysius, and Thomas Aquinas discusses them “at length in his *Summa Theologica*” (Rorem, *Pseudo-Dionysius* 75, 77). Aquinas’s main source for the celestial order was Peter Lombard, whose *Sententiae* “show a familiarity with Gregory’s work but a clear preference for the Dionysian authority” (77). The hierarchy of angels appears referenced in Dante’s *Divine Comedy*, where Dante upholds the Dionysian triadic arrangement over that proposed by St. Gregory (74).

St. Gregory the Great also adduced a scheme of three moral orders, which can be seen as an extrapolation of the Dionysian ecclesiastical hierarchies. More directly, however, he adapted Augustine’s “ternary model of [. . .] the categories of the faithful,” in which the monks occupied a separate rung, which placed them above the laity and below the priesthood (Van Meter 150-51). St. Gregory’s scheme of ‘orders’ rather than ‘categories’ (*genera*), however, “suggested that the ternary division of Christians necessarily reflected the existence not only of an ecclesiastical hierarchy but also of relatively fixed religious orders within the church” (151). In the late tenth and early eleventh centuries, monastic rhetoric arguing for exemption from episcopal interference in abbatial administration manipulated these hierarchical schemes, placing the monks

above the priesthood by virtue of their sexual purity.¹⁴ The irony of the exaggerated portrayal of intermediary hierarchies in the miracle about the fornicating monk I will address later in my discussion of the fornicating clergy. For now, suffice it to say that the theologically and ideologically perceived need for an intermediary between humankind and God/ Christ becomes obvious when we consider the strong influence of the Dionysian concept of hierarchies on the medieval Christian perspective.

With this concept of hierarchies in mind, we can appreciate all the more fully Berceo's intermediary aesthetic. Devotion to Mary assured the most unmediated link to God since the Virgin herself needed no intermediary in order to communicate with the Lord of All. Furthermore, she could communicate directly with human beings, with saints, and with all celestial mediators. Her superiority becomes even more impressive when we realize that most of the angels' own communication with God was mediated by other angels. As documented by Pseudo-Dionysius and the Bible, the law was given to humankind by angels (Rorem, *Pseudo-Dionysius* 60).¹⁵ Mary's celestial legal authority as the Holy Advocate par excellence for Christian souls establishes her supreme knowledge of the law within the celestial order. Berceo's use of legal features in the miracle tales, particularly in scenes of celestial intermediary activity, serves to link canon law with divine authority.

Examples of Berceo's legal elements encompass technicalities involving documents and cases of restitution. The story of "Los dos hermanos," another example of how Mary can intercede on behalf of a deceased person as a favor to a saint, illustrates a case of restitution. In this miracle, the brothers Peidro, a cleric, "del papa cardenal" (237b), and Estevan, a magistrate, "muy poderoso en el pueblo romano" (238c), find

¹⁴ This time period pre-dates the Church's decrees for mandatory celibacy of the lower clergy.

¹⁵ In the New Testament see Acts 7:38 & 53, Galatians 3:19 and Hebrews 2:2 (on the law and the angels in Dionysius and the Bible, see Rorem, *Pseudo-Dionysius* 60-61).

themselves in trouble in purgatory as a result of their greed. Estevan in particular was a thief: “entre los senadores non avié más lozano; [. . .] avié en ‘prendo prendis’ bien usada la mano” (238b,d).¹⁶ His most damning theft involved Church properties:

Con sus juicios falsos de los sus paladares,
a Sant Laurent el mártir tollióli tres casares;
perdió Sancta Agnés por él bonos logares,
un uerto que valié de sueldos muchos pares.
(240)

This audacity does not serve him well upon his arrival in purgatory:

Víolo San Laurencio, católo feamientre,
primiólo en el brazo tres vezes duramientre;
qessóse don Estevan bien entro en el biente,
no`l primirién tenazas de fierro tan fuertmientre.

Vío`l Sancta Agnés a qui tollió el uerto,
tornóli las espaldas, cató`l con rostro tuerto;
estonz dixo Estevan: “Esto es mal confuerto,
toda nuestra ganancia ixiónos a mal puerto.”
(242-3)

Because of the fact that he “[d]eseredó a muchos por mala vozería” (245a), God, “el [. . .] alcalde derecho” (244a), condemns him to hell: “¡vaya yacer con Judas en essa fermería!” (245d). Fortunately, Estevan holds devotion for the martyr Proyecto, who manages an audience with the Virgin. She agrees to join Proyecto as he appeals to God for Estevan’s soul. Thus, with the Virgin’s help, God allows Estevan to return to earth for thirty days in order to improve his situation. The Virgin suggests to him that he will win his soul on the condition that he recite a certain prayer¹⁷ each day and right the wrongs he committed—“e tú a las iglesias los tuertos enmendares” (263b). Estevan does not waste his opportunity. He manages to improve the lot of his brother Peidro by convincing the Pope to sing a mass for him, and, following the Virgin’s instructions,

¹⁶ *prendo, prendis* (Latin): I take, you take, . . .

¹⁷ *Beati immaculati*.

“[e]ntregó ricamientre a los deseredados,/ a los que tuerto tovo fízolos bien pagados” (267ab). It is noteworthy that the greedy farmer of “El labrador avaro”¹⁸ who “cambiava los mojones por ganar eredat” (271b), escapes the devils’ clutches due to an angel’s testimony of his extreme devotion to the Virgin. While this dedication to the Virgin appears to save him the ‘trouble’ of resuscitation and restitution, another advantage he implicitly has is the fact that he did not rob from the churches. The devotion of both Estevan and the farmer seems all the more fortunate in light of the verses Berceo adds to his version of “La abadesa preñada.”¹⁹ At the end of his life, the Virgin takes the abbess’s son “a seguro logar/ do ladrón nin merino nunca puede entrar” (581cd).²⁰ The two thieves—the magistrate and the farmer—luckily avoid eternal punishment.

In “El milagro de Teófilo”²¹ a legal technicality requires Mary to retrieve a contractual document that Teófilo has signed with the devil. Having humbly turned down the bishopric offered to him upon the death of his bishop, Teófilo finds himself ousted as vicar as well, for the new bishop has his own vicar. Consumed by feelings of envy and resentment, Teófilo becomes the devil’s vassal in order to get his old job back. For the contract to become legally valid, however, the devil requires Teófilo to sign a document renouncing Christ. This he does, authenticating it with his personal seal:

¹⁸ Miracle XI.

¹⁹ Miracle XXI.

²⁰ It appears as if Berceo viewed judges and thieves in the same light.

²¹ Miracle XXV [XXIV]. The traditional verse numbers for this miracle appear in brackets. Since Berceo apparently inserted “La iglesia robada” after he had finished writing the rest of the miracles, subsequent manuscripts—and editions as well—placed it at the end of the work. The last stanza of “El milagro de Teófilo,” however, clearly is intended to end the collection, so Dutton has placed it last, with the inserted miracle preceding it; thus the double referencing. Here are the last verses of “El milagro de Teófilo”:

Madre del tu Golzalvo seï remembrador
que de los tos miraclos fue *enterpretador*;
tú fes por él, Sennora, prezes al Criador,
ca *el* tu privilegio vale a *peccador*,
tú li gana la gracia de Dios, Nuestro Sennor. (Amen).
(911 [866])

Díssoli el diablo: “Non serié buen derecho
a bassallo ageno yo buscar tal provecho;
mas deniegue a Christo que nos faz muy despecho,
fazerli *hé* que torne en todo so bienfecho.

Teófilo con gana de en / precio sobir,
al placer del diablo ovo a consintir;
fizo con él su carta e fízola guarnir
de su seyello mismo que no l podié mentir.
(784 [739]; 786 [741]).

Even though the devil fulfills his wish, Teófilo repents and calls upon the Virgin to extricate him from his disaster. After receiving much supplication, the Virgin finally decides to accept Teófilo’s repentance and informs him that in order to be forgiven, the only thing he needs to do is return to the faith. Teófilo, however, cannot rest until Mary herself retrieves the document and he sees it burned. The document is the important thing, and when Mary delivers it to Teófilo, he confesses to the bishop and tells him of the miraculous rescue by the Virgin, proffering the letter as proof.

Desent mandó el bispo fazer muy grand foguera,
veyéndolo el pueblo que en la glesia era;
echó aquesta carta dentro en la calera,
ardió, tornó cenisa pargamino e cera.
(893 [848])

This is a widely disseminated story, and medieval representations of the Virgin frequently depict her with Teófilo’s document in her hand (Bermejo Cabrero 49). The execution of the contractual document itself employs all the legal rules of legitimacy, and, as Bermejo Cabrero notes, not a detail is lacking: “[h]ay un pacto con el diablo y hay un documento probatorio; para más detalles, el documento es un pergamino con su sello de cera correspondiente” (50).

The representation of Mary’s defensive activity as similar to that of a representative in legal issues, or Holy Advocate, appears to fuse secular and religious concepts. In Berceo’s text the celestial mediation of the laws of judgment becomes

conceptualized in terms of a terrestrial court of appeals, saints maintain a watchful eye on the estates and orchards of their churches' endowments, and a signed and sealed document validates the turning of Teófilo's heart away from God and toward the devil.

This conception of celestial mediation in terms of terrestrial legal practices is not surprising in light of the fact that Berceo's world bustled with clerical and notarial activities; indeed these activities were burgeoning in his lifetime. By the eleventh and twelfth centuries, an intensified ordering of Christian concepts relating to secular practices and canon law began to inject massive changes into the legal systems of an increasingly urban society, especially in the area of laws that dealt with marriage and sex. The emergence of new disciplines of biblical studies, theology, and ecclesiastical jurisprudence ignited the work of assimilating and coordinating theological and legal texts from the early Christian writers, the accumulated canons of the Church, and the authorities of Roman law. The twelfth-century masters of theology and canon law accomplished the mind-boggling task of codifying and arranging into systems centuries of moral and theological tradition. By the middle of the twelfth century, these textual accomplishments resulted in three creations that immensely influenced subsequent centuries: the glossed Bible, the *Decretum* of Gratian,²² and the *Books of Sentences*, or *Sententiae*, of Peter Lombard. The Bible later "came to bear a gloss consisting of texts selected mainly from recognized patristic sources such as Jerome, Ambrose, and Augustine" (Payer 5). This version of biblical commentary, known as the *Glossa ordinaria*, was "used [. . .] as the standard textbook for biblical studies in the universities" (5). Gratian's *Decretum* received immediate recognition as the most thorough collection of law compiled up to that time, and included details from the canons of the Apocrypha up through the decisions of the Second Lateran Council (1139) and the

²² The translation of the full title of Gratian's *Decretum* is *The Concordance of Discordant Canons*.

most recent decretals of Pope Innocent II (reigned 1130-43) (“Canon Law”). In Berceo’s century, work on areas of theology and canon law continued; most noteworthy were the completion of the ordinary gloss on the *Decretum* of Gratian and the production and subsequent commentaries on and gloss of the *Decretals* of Gregory IX.

Francisco Rico, in his study of the office of the clergy, illustrates how in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries the monks began to lose the cultural hegemony they had long enjoyed (8-9). Political and economic relations moved away from fragmentation toward centralization throughout most of Europe. Progressive urbanization and, particularly in Spain, the expense of the Reconquest and the fortification of the Spanish monarchies increasingly impinged upon the monasteries’ old monetary concessions or *privilegios*. The advances of the Reconquest did not benefit the monks, but rather kings and bishops. The support for the military drew on the same sources the monasteries depended on—middle nobility, or local/ regional nobility. The kings took the lion’s share of whatever spoils came from the military campaigns.²³ Even when the noblemen received some compensation, they were nonetheless left depleted overall. Also, the Fourth Lateran Council, in a concerted effort to combat heresy, provided impetus to the education of preachers and established the preaching orders (the Dominicans and the Franciscans). These mendicant orders of the cities rapidly developed cathedral schools and universities for the express purpose of pastoral education, and in the process directed toward themselves much of the generosity of the rich (Rico 127-129).²⁴

²³ The Cid sent great caches of booty to King Alfonso (VI), for example. He also sent money to don Sancho, the abbot of San Pedro of Cardeña, who took care of the Cid’s wife and daughters while the Cid was away.

²⁴ As a result of this stimulus, the thirteenth century witnessed the evolution of a learned pastoral literature for preaching and confession. This learned pastoral literature develops cumulatively “from the *Summa* of Raymond of Penyafort through the gloss on Raymond by William of Rennes, to the *Summa for Confessors* written by the Dominican John of Freidburg” in the late 1200s (Payer 10).

Due to these changing relations in political and economic structures, the monastery system began to become outmoded, and in order to ‘stay in business,’ so to speak, the monasteries had to be knowledgeable of both Roman and canonical law, and be able to litigate, open registers and compile archives (Rico 129). Established in an earlier era, they often found themselves deprived of their property titles and *privilegios* unless they could adequately prove their rights. Consequently, they needed to acquire the support of notaries, that is, secular clerics rather than monks from their own monastery, with specialized preparation (129). Given these circumstances, a class of clergy scholars emerged, adept at handling the notarial duties and legal research necessary to protect the monasteries’ old *privilegios* (8-9, 127). Rico describes these clerics as the ‘intellectuals in ascension’ exemplified, for example, in the *Poema de Roncesvalles* and the *Libro de Alexandre* (9).

Berceo himself participated in this activity of the cleric scholars to safeguard the monastery *privilegios* when he composed the *Poema de la vida de San Millán de la Cogolla*. The poem not only offers the hagiography of Saint Emilian, but also functions, in Dutton’s words, as “un acto de propaganda, concebida como una manera de restablecer las ofertas tradicionales haciendo constar la ‘obligación jurídica’ de pagar los Votos, según el *Privilegio*” (*San Millán* 173-4). In his poem, Berceo falsely documents the claim that in 934, Fernán González guaranteed donations to the monastery in honor of its patron saint (173-4).²⁵ Rico describes how the *Poema de Benevívere*, composed between 1202-1214, deals in part with the *privilegios* and properties of the monastery of Benevívere in a manner very similar to, although much better documented than, Berceo’s

²⁵ It is notable that Berceo’s actions in this regard effectively endorsed this practice of false documentation as long as it benefited his monastery, whereas the magistrate Estévan’s similar practices took property out of the Church.

poem of Saint Emilian (129-39). Rico considers this practice of asserting privileges a custom of the times both common and sanctioned (139-40).

Dutton believes that Berceo was a secular priest and notary of Juan Sánchez, abbot of San Millán de la Cogolla (“Profession” 137-45). In a letter published by Sánchez, explains Dutton, Fr. Plácido Romero refers to a document dated 1264 that contains portions of an earlier document of the years 1236-41:

E por nombre fueron los cabezaleros de don Garci Gil sobredicho el abat don Juanes de San Millan e el prior Rodrigui Enniguez des mismo logar et don Gonzalo de Berceo, so maestro de confesion e so cabezalero. (qtd. in “Profession” 143)

According to Dutton,

Garci Gil appears to have been an important land-owner, so Berceo’s selection as confessor and executor, together with his appearance with the abbot and prior of San Millán and the title “don” which he shares with the abbot, would lead us to accept, in the light of the foregoing evidence, that Berceo was the Abbot’s *notario*. (“Profession” 143)

In Dutton’s estimation, phrases in Berceo’s works—especially in the *Vida de Santo Domingo de Silos*, and in both the *Milagros* and the *Loores de Nuestra Señora*—provide substantial evidence of his legal knowledge (“Profession” 137-45). Bermejo Cabrero observes that the law on which Berceo bases his miracles and the forensic language he employs belong to his times (52). Contemporaries of Berceo who treated the same themes, however, did not feel so inclined as Berceo did toward the incorporation of juridical material; instead they made a summary disposition of the miracles (52). Such is the case in two works of moral and political intention: the *Libro de los Exemplos* and the *Castigos e Documentos del Rey Don Sancho*. Bermejo Cabrero observes that neither of the two works has the richness of juridical detail that we find in the *Milagros*. This could be due to the difference in the sources that were used, but still, we cannot overlook

Berceo's formation as a notary, a fact that must have had importance in the selection of themes and the addition of details (52).

Berceo's substantial use of juridical material in his religious verses demonstrates his notarial occupation and legal formation. His use of *cuaderna vía*, the verse form of the *mester de clerecía*, especially in combination with his legal knowledge, marks him as a member of the class of intellectual secular clerics whose rising star a context of increasing urbanization and burgeoning canon law favored. We could say that he was a man on the cutting edge of his times. As we have observed, he was most probably called upon to safeguard the *privilegios* of the monastery with which he was affiliated all his life, San Millán de la Cogolla, thus participating in an important endeavor common to the cleric scholars of his day. The protection of endangered *privilegios*, however, encompassed only a small part of the undertakings and accomplishments of these 'intellectuals in ascension.' As we have noted, these clerics achieved enormous study in the synthesis and codification of canon law. In Berceo's day, the classification, standardization, and incorporation into canon law of the decrees of Lateran IV fueled the continuation of this endeavor. The implementation of these Lateran canons involved the clergy in the enterprises of educating clerics and the laity about dogmas of the Church, fighting against heresies, and, in general, establishing Church hegemony on both religious and secular fronts.

Derek Lomax explains that the four types of poetry of thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Castile "correspond to the great developments in Castilian life in the period 1150-1250": the poetry of the Reconquest, which springs from the Christian campaign against the Spanish Arabs; courtly love poetry, which reflects the increased wealth and luxury of the upper nobility, and goliardic poetry, more important in France and England than in Spain, which emerges as a result of the growing numbers of learned clergy (299-

300). The fourth category of poetry, into which Berceo's poetry falls, reflects the movement of Church reforms that began in earnest in the twelfth century as part of the Gregorian reforms,²⁶ and received renewal and fresh impetus in 1215 from the canons promulgated by the Fourth Lateran Council (Lomax 299-300).²⁷ For the next one hundred years or so, the term 'Lateran Reforms' "refers to a whole movement of Church Reform and mass religious education which extended almost to every European country" (300). This movement was in progress during the rules of Fernando III (Castile, 1217-1252, and León, 1230-1252) and his son, Alfonso X (Castile and León, 1252-1282), and during this time, "in Castile as elsewhere," ecclesiastical "visitations of parishes," the "administration of the sacraments," including the dissemination of the concept of transubstantiation and the institution of annual confession (accompanied by the prolific production of confessional manuals), "the building-up of schools and universities and the spread of the new" mendicant orders "all took place" (301-2). Lomax notes that in the literature that reflects the Lateran reforms, "the Mass and sacraments and common prayers are the object of commentaries and explanations intended to equip laymen to derive more benefit from them. Thus Berceo puts into Spanish verse his explanatory commentary on the *Sacrificio de la Misa*" (306).

²⁶ "By the middle of the 11th century a movement to reform the church had gained great momentum in parts of France and Germany. Recognizing that lay investiture was not in accord with the ancient laws of the church, the reformers attributed to that practice the low morals of the clergy of their day, especially their indulgence in simony—the purchase and sale of church offices—and concubinage. The reform movement clearly took hold in Rome under Pope Leo IX, and the popes soon became the driving force behind reform[. . .]. When, in 1075, Pope Gregory VII expressly forbade all lay investiture, he provoked the wrath of Holy Roman Emperor Henry IV. Thus was unleashed the most violent episode in the whole controversy, as pope and emperor engaged in a series of mutual depositions and excommunications" (O'Malley).

²⁷ "Among its 70 decrees were a condemnation of two religious sects, the Cathari and the Waldenses; a confession of faith containing, for the first time, a definition of transubstantiation; an order forbidding the foundation of new monastic orders; a requirement that all members of the Western church confess and communicate at least once a year; and arrangements for the calling of a new Crusade" ("Lateran Councils").

I think it is quite possible that Berceo's *Sacrificio* also served as an instrument for the education of priests. This is plausible in light of the decree of Lateran IV that called for the education of ignorant priests, a concern that initially received attention as part of the Gregorian reforms.²⁸ It was not unusual for "explanatory commentary" to serve both parish-priests and parishioners as important sources of "religious and moral education," a function performed, as Lomax notes, by the confessional manuals and the act of annual confession (306). The sermon, a form of literature generally viewed as providing instruction for the laity, offered guidance to the clergy as well, since "[w]ritten sermons could be used as devotional reading, or as models for preachers" (303). In order to compose their sermons, the preachers also drew upon "three other types of works, the Bible, books of *exempla*, and an *Ars praedicandi*" (303). Although Berceo employed certain techniques mentioned in the *Ars praedicandi*, most notably the inclusion of both rustic and educated references that ensure broad audience appeal, his works have little in common with the moralizing style of the *exemplum*, which typically informed the sermonic mode.²⁹ Rather, Berceo's body of creative composition contains all the dimensions of the religious literature of the reform movement known as the devotional: the evocation of Christ's suffering, the miracles of the Virgin, and the lives of saints (see Lomax 306-7).³⁰

Forensic examples in Berceo's miracles of the Virgin underscore a conception of celestial mediation in terms of the courts and laws of the terrestrial world. This intermediary activity creates an impression of a holy network of celestial petitions in

²⁸ These educational decrees of Lateran IV reaffirmed Lateran III's mandates for the establishment of cathedral schools.

²⁹ Bernard Gicovate considers Berceo's educated references as evidence of an exclusively elite audience (13-15). Considering the prescriptions of the *Ars praedicandi*, I tend to see these references as evidence of a mixed audience.

³⁰ A few examples include the *Duelo de la Virgen*, the *Loores* and *Milagros de Nuestra Señora*, and the *Vida de San Millán de la Cogolla* and *Vida de Santo Domingo de Silos*, respectively.

which the various saints enlist the help of Mary and the angels on behalf of their devotees, and makes clear Mary's supreme position. Considering Berceo's affinity for forensic motifs in the context of devotional poetry, we might ask what relevance this legalistic stylistic device might have had for an audience of Berceo's day. Dutton believes that "Berceo could use legal formulae in his works and expect them to be as readily understood as epic ones" because "the general public would be familiar with legal documents at least aurally," and "as witnesses they were of almost all social stations, except for the serfs" ("Formulae" 15-16).³¹ It is clear that Berceo's use of legal formulas points to his notarial adroitness, and, considering that his devotional poetry falls into the category defined by Lomax as reflective of the Lateran reforms, his forensic flourishes indicate his familiarity with canon law as well.

LAW, HIERARCHICAL ORDER AND PEACE

As Lomax recognizes, the "use of literature for teaching doctrine and morality" is obvious, while canon law's relevance to religious literature is probably less apparent (310). He reminds us, therefore, that the "dependence of the first of the *Siete Partidas* on the *Decretum* is now well known," and that "canon law, especially those parts concerned with marriage, confession and clerical jurisdictions, is an important source of the *Libro de buen amor* and the *Arcipreste de Talavera*" (310). We find, in fact, all of these concerns in the *Milagros*, and Berceo's use of legalistic themes and embellishments emphasizes their relevance to canon law. The issue of jurisdiction appears in "La iglesia robada,"³² Berceo's only 'original' miracle, i.e., 'original' in that the Latin source is unknown. The subject matter—a concern with clerical jurisdictions—illustrates the

³¹ See also pp. 26-7 of this article.

³² Miracle XXIV [XXV].

preeminence of canon law and reflects, or purports to reflect, the legal authority of the Church.

“La iglesia robada” tells of two thieves, one a layman and the other a cleric, who commit the most serious sin in the *Milagros*, the profanation and robbery of a church. Their sacrilegious crime differs from the other characters’ sins because it exhibits willful calculation directed specifically against the Church rather than a sin of human weakness. John Esten Keller notes that the cleric in this miracle “differs from other clerical sinners in the *Milagros* because he commits premeditated felony and breaks one of the commandments” (“Enigma” 365). The other clerics “are led into sin by the devil or are caught offguard by lust or pride or some other human frailty” (365). Berceo makes clear that the cleric’s sin is worse than the layman’s since “assaz era el lego omne de mal sentido,/ mas de peor el clérigo qe más avié leído” (711 [875]cd). The two thieves ransack the church, taking everything that might be of value —altar cloths, vestments and songbooks. The cleric, in a final gesture of disrespect, snatches the *toca* (the wimple) from the statue of the Virgin. Due to his religious training, he has recognized its value. This is the only incident in the *Milagros* where the Virgin’s image is desecrated. As we must expect, the Virgin becomes extremely offended:

Tóvose la Gloriosa qe era afrontada,
qe tan villanamientre la avién despojada;
mostró qe del servicio non era muy pagada,
nunqa veyeron omnes toca tan querellada.
(718 [882])

The punishment that she has in mind is the miracle that enables the capture of the thieves. The cleric in particular bears the mark of the sacrilegious defacement of the Virgin’s image because the wimple has stuck itself so firmly to his fist that “con englut ninguno non serié tan travado,/ nin con clavo qe fuesse con martiello calcado” (719 [883] cd). Mary causes the iniquitous pair to lose their memory so that they are unable to find their

way out of the church. No matter how hard they try, they can do nothing but wander in circles. They even attempt to unburden themselves of the stolen items, hoping this might free them from their disorientation:

De lo qe avién preso non se podién quitar,
ya lo querrién de grado, si podiessen, dexar,
dexarlo ién de grado, no lo querrién levar,
mas do era la puerta no lo sabién asmar.
(721 [885])

Seeing their helplessness, the nun that maintains the church calls for help, summoning a crowd of people from the town to come to her aid. In the process of capturing the thieves, the mob gives them “grandes feridas con muy grandes bastones” (725 [889]d). Berceo elaborates a vivid description of the attack:

Dávanlis grandes palos e grandes carrelladas,
coces muchas sobejo e muchas palancadas;
levavan por los cuerpos tantas de las granadas
qe todas las menudas lis eran olvidadas.
(726 [890])

The thieves, forced to confess their crime, include in their account of events how Mary imprisoned them in the church. Soon they find themselves securely in jail. A council convenes to judge their fate and the next day hangs the layman. The cleric, however, is remanded to the bishop for judgment.

At this point in the tale, Berceo “breaks the miracle pattern one would expect him to follow” (Keller, “Enigma” 368). The general formula for the miracle tale, and indeed the one followed in the rest of Berceo’s *Milagros*, requires that the resolution of the story’s conflict involve a miracle in which the Virgin rewards the virtuous, pardons a sin, or punishes evildoers. While in “La iglesia robada” we receive this predictable satisfaction with regard to the resolution of the layman’s case, in that of the cleric we encounter eight quatrains “of clerical law and wonder why Berceo gave so much space to

it.” To be sure, “according to the formula of miracle lore,” the cleric ought to “have been put to death or killed by divine intervention, since he was a far greater sinner than his secular partner” (368). After all, in the two other miracles of Berceo’s collection that involve crimes inside the walls of a church, the protagonists/ perpetrators meet with excruciating consequences and meet with them quickly.

In the “Milagro de la casulla de San Ildefonso,”³³ the foolish archbishop Siagrio, “muy sovervioso e de seso liviano” (67b), angers the Virgin Mary when he dares to play the equal to his predecessor, San Ildefonso.³⁴ Especially pleased by Ildefonso’s devotion and service to her, Mary presents the then Archbishop of Toledo with a gift of great value, a chasuble, “preciosa de verdat” (62c). She informs Ildefonso that “de vestir esta alva a ti es otorgado,/ otro qe la vistiere non será bien hallado” (63 [64]cd),³⁵ thus consecrating the donning of the chasuble as Ildefonso’s privilege alone. When Ildefonso dies and Siagrio becomes archbishop, he demands to wear the chasuble, proclaiming that “[n]unqa fue Ildefonso de mayor dignidat,/ tan bien so consegrado como él por verdat,/ todos somos eguales enna umanidat” (69b-d). We are told that Siagrio’s words, in particular, cause his downfall: “disso palabras locas el torpe peccador,/ pesaron a la Madre de Dios Nuestro Sennor” (68cd); “si oviesse su lengua un poco retenido,/ non serié enna ira del Criador caído” (70bc). Siagrio’s words reveal that presumptuous pride, not mere ignorance, leads to his punishment for donning the chasuble. In spite of the vestment’s amplitude, on Siagrio it fits extremely tightly, to such an extent that “prísoli la

³³ Miracle I.

³⁴ “Saint Ildephonsus (606-667) became archbishop of Toledo in 657, unified the Spanish liturgy and is especially known for his devotion to the Blessed Virgin and his treatise on her perpetual virginity” (Mount and Cash 28). Berceo credits him with moving the Feast of the Annunciation from March 25, a somber time of year coinciding with Lent, to December 18, a more festive season corresponding to the celebration of the Nativity (quatrains 55-56). “In the year 656, the Tenth Council of Toledo officially moved” the feast day (Mount and Cash 30).

³⁵ Dutton comments on this verse annotation: “Estas dos coplas han sido invertidas, pues no hacen sentido si se mantiene el orden del código” (*Obras* 48).

garganta como cadena dura,/ fue luego enfogado por la su grand locura” (72cd). Berceo invokes the formula of miraculous divine intervention in this miracle when he plainly explains that the Glorious One “bien sabe a los buenos el bien gualardonar,/ a los qe la dessierven sábelos mal curar” (73cd). Mary’s authority becomes firmly established in this first miracle of the collection. It is striking that her authority is manifested in effect through murder. This circumstance illustrates a model of violence elaborated by René Girard in which “order *depends upon* difference” and the “loss of difference” engenders “violence and chaos” (Sutherland, “Mimetic Desire” 182).³⁶ In this vein, we can see that Siagrio’s willful pride does not respect Mary’s hierarchy of superiority with regard to Ildefonso’s dispensation. The new archbishop feels himself equal to the saint and his disregard for the sacred nature of articles within the church, Ildefonso’s chasuble specifically, meets with severe divine reprisal.

The Virgin executes immediate punishment in another case of church profanation when she inflicts extreme pain upon the knights in “La iglesia de Santa María profanada.”³⁷ The ill-fated knights chase down and kill a man who has sought shelter inside a church “de la Gloriosa, fecha en su honor” (381c). It is within this church, “de la Virgo sagrada,” that the knights kill and maul the man.³⁸ The Virgin, feeling angry, violated and offended, invokes a demonstration of her ire:

Embïó Dios en ellos un fuego infernal,
non ardié e qemava com el de san Marzal,³⁹

³⁶ Original emphasis.

³⁷ Miracle XVII.

³⁸ “[E]n el Concilio de Coyanza se establece el derecho de asilo e inmunidad en favor de la iglesia y se previene que nadie ose deshonrar al delincuente dentro de ella” (Serra Ruiz 60).

³⁹ “Saint Martial’s fire is the name of a disease also called Saint Anthony’s fire. It is a fever ergotism [i.e., a disease of rye and other grasses] caused by the fungus *claviceps purpurea* which forms on rye, from which the common bread of the poor was made in the Middle Ages. The disease is gangrenous and results in the mortification and loss of limbs. Victims sometimes survive after losing all four limbs” (Mount and Cash 82).

gemávalis los miembros de manera mortal,
dizién a grandes voces: “¡Sancta María, val!”

Con esta majadura eran mucho maltrechos,
perdién pieder e manos e fincavan contrechos,
las piernas e los brazos bien cerca de los pechos,
ivan sancta María prendiendo sus derechos.
(385-86)

Finally the knights turn to the Virgin Mary, who, after a lengthy interval of hearing their supplications (five quatrains worth), finally softens her wrath and allows their malady to subside. They must still pay dearly, however, for their profanation of the church. Although the pain of their symptoms disappears, “nunqua de los miembros non fueron bien sennores,/ siempre fueron contrechos, siempre mendigadores” (397bc). In addition to their permanent deformities, the bishop makes their absolution contingent on a harsh penance: “las armas con que fueron la glesia qebrantar,/ mandógelas por siempre a sus cuestras levar” (400cd). The knights, now deformed beggars, must become permanent penitents, going their separate ways to wander from place to place telling of their evil deeds, their punishment and the Virgin’s miracle. One such account is recorded by a witness who hears the story from one of the knights who, thin and miserable, turns up at an inn in France. As proof of his tale, the knight reveals the sword he carries strapped to his flesh beneath his garments. Those gathered to hear his story see that the sword is about a half-palm in width, and that around it “la carne [era] muy inchada;/ la qe yazié de yuso era toda qemada” (408bc). Needless to say, upon hearing the story of the knights’ relentless suffering, “cogieron muchos miedo de facer tal peccado,/ de qebrantar eglesia e logar consegrado” (410cd). As we can see from these two examples of the almost immediate consequences for acts of sacrilege within the sanctuary of a church, the resolution of “La iglesia robada,” in which the cleric is remanded to his bishopric for

judgment, defies audience expectations of the swift and violent punishment of divine intervention.

Returning to “La iglesia robada,” the judgment process of the cleric, described at length by Berceo, relies on a variety of judicial details. First of all, the bishop transports the criminal to the city of Leon with his hands tied behind his back “a lei de ladrón” (734 [898]). Second, rather than judge the case by himself, the bishop summons all the clergy of the bishopric to council (736 [900]ab). This is in keeping with the laws of Berceo’s day: when a bishop was “faced with a particularly critical or complex case,” he “might summon all the clergy of his diocese to meet with him as a synod and to help him to untangle the difficulties” (Brundage, “Sin” 304). After presenting the case to the members of the council, the bishop asks for their advice, but they are unable to respond. Nevertheless, “sabié bien el obispo derecho conocer,/ quísolo por su boca al clérigo vencer” (737 [901]cd). This desire of the bishop proves expedient since in Berceo’s time the highest standard of proof needed in order to “achieve a conviction” required that “the accused person [. . .] confess” his crimes (Brundage, “Sin” 299). Once before the council, the cleric thief indeed submits a full confession of his crimes (738 [902]cd-739 [903]). Audience expectations for swift punishment are again thwarted, however, because the bishop discerns an underlying problem of jurisdiction:

“Amigos—diz el bispo— esto es aguisado,
non es nuestro el clérigo nin de nuestro bispado;
por nos non es derecho qe sea condenado:
júdguelo su obispo su mercet, su peccado.

Por del bispo de Ávila se es él aclamado,
clámase por su clérigo e de su obispado;
judgar ageno clérigo por lei es vedado,
podría yo por ello después seer reptado.
(740-41 [904-5])

With regard to the cleric's appropriate jurisdiction for judgment, Bermejo Cabrero notes that "Berceo es fiel al llamado 'privilegio del fuero,'" which states that clerics "sean yudgados por su obispo o por su arciprest" (39-40).

Keller observes that this particular miracle lacks some of the polish of the other miracles in the collection, perhaps because Berceo felt bound to an oral or written account that in itself fell short of the traditional miracle formula and left little room for creative embellishments and excision of unnecessary details. He considers the verses on the legal process of the cleric somewhat superfluous:

It may be that the entire sequence of the legal rights of the criminal was included by the poet because he actually considered it as part of what happened in the aftermath of the miracle. Had he rewritten the miracle later, I believe that he would have omitted these nine quatrains [*sic*]. ("Enigma" 368)

I think that Berceo may have included so many stanzas of jurisdiction law for two reasons: first, to explain the departure from the typical miracle pattern and second, to fill the gap caused by the lack of a miracle in which the cleric is punished more thoroughly and/ or immediately. The bishop's pronouncement of the fate facing the cleric should he ever again be found in the diocese of Leon satisfies to some extent the punishment expectation: "qe si trovado fuere en todo est bispado,/ sea luego pendudo, en un árbol colgado;/ el qui lo perdonare sea descomulgado" (742 [906]c-d). Also, just before the end of the miracle, Berceo devotes a quatrain to recapping it, lauding the Virgin's ability to trap the criminals within the church. This review serves the purpose of concluding the miracle with the expected theme of the retribution.

Berceo's inclusion of the quatrains of legal commentary certainly draws attention to the concept of law itself and its administration. Mary's miracle enables the capture and imprisonment of the thieves. This miraculous act of facilitation serves to sanction the law's authority to determine their fates. The law thwarts audience expectations of

instant retribution for the layman and the cleric by removing the execution of justice from the hands of the mob. Unlike the Jews in “Cristo y los judíos de Toledo,”⁴⁰ the thieves are not bludgeoned to death by the crowd that captures them, but instead are turned over to the courts. In this tale, the law structures the influence of judgment for the layman and the cleric. Clearly the premeditated pillaging and profanation of a church must find no forgiveness, but, in this miracle, mob justice does not constitute an alternative to the divine punishments of tightening chasubles or debilitating diseases. That Mary’s miracle enables the legal process to take place reflects her endorsement of the law’s authority to establish and enforce the inviolability of the Church.

We can consider the function of the legal elements in these three miracles as examples that convey both a concept of and a lesson on the law against the profanation of churches. It is not startling that knights as well as clerics should be used to illustrate these notions. In the case of clerics, we find that “[u]nbeneficed clergy were the bane of the medieval Church” (Lawrence 656). According to canon law, a cleric could not be ordained as a deacon or priest without “a named church that he was going to serve and which would guarantee his financial support, unless he could guarantee his future subsistence from his own patrimony.” But poor men without patrons often were able to meet this requirement by providing “spurious guarantors, among whom were some nunneries,” who would provide a “title for numerous ordinands, presumably in return for payment.” The result of such practices was an enlarged contingent of unbeneficed clergy, who “[t]ogether with numerous clerks in minor orders, [. . .] formed an underpaid and unstable clerical proletariat.” Many of these clerics fell in with bad crowds and “figure from time to time on the rolls of the itinerant royal justices in the company of

⁴⁰ Miracle XVIII.

robbers and men of violence” (656). Perhaps the bishop of Leon speaks for Berceo himself when he expresses the judgment that, if left to him, the cleric thief should hang.

In the case of the knights, we find that Berceo greatly embellishes the knights’ misery (quatrains 397-408), amplifying the Latin versions with details of their penance, expanding and adding comments about their hardships ((Dutton, *Obras* 138). In these amplifications, Berceo seems to project an intense degree of disdain for knightly offenses against the Church. Apparently, transgressions by the warrior class such as “murders, despoilings of churches, [and] sexual offenses” had created problems for the Church for hundreds of years (Barthélemy 224). A reading of the *Cid* clearly indicates “that knights were the power brokers of society” (Bailey 255). Especially in Spain, the rise of urbanization and agricultural production enabled by monarchical consolidations and stabilizations developed alongside the continued war efforts of the Reconquest.⁴¹ As elsewhere in Europe, however, the lifestyles of the nobility and the expense of territorial expansion became increasingly dependent on peasant labor and the exploitation of its surplus, rather than on an existence primarily of “war and booty” (Haidu 184). This economic “shift [. . .] contextualized the knightly character and practices in new ways” (184). In the “economy of war and booty,” the most important function of the chieftain as feudal lord was “to spread the wealth among his vassals” (56). The *Cid*’s honor, for example, derives from his fairness in the distribution of booty among his men and provides a literary representation of this valued characteristic of the warrior lord. As monarchies consolidated and booty became a less efficacious source of income than the productivity of peasants, the knights increasingly became enforcers of tax collection, and hence, oppressors of the peasants. Ironically, the economic base of the Church was the same as that of lay manors, due to the Church’s dependence on the *diezmos*, or tithes,

⁴¹ Tithes from lands under agricultural production became a greater source of Church income than that from the production of its own lands (Goody 125).

collected by the kings via the knights (201).⁴² Nonetheless, the “Church’s holdings were a main target of the knights’ depredations,” while at the same time, “those members of society who were helpless looked to the Church for protection” (64). Literary models such as the chivalrous Amadís de Gaula (1340s for earliest versions) or the Moor-conquering Cid (c. 1140), perhaps reflect influences Gábor Klaniczay describes as efforts “to contribute to [. . .] [the] civilising of knightly elites” that originated with the monks and the clerics of the monasteries and schools (674). The fact that the Cid’s illustrious victory of vengeance against the *infantes* of Carrión takes place within the juridical combat zone of courtroom procedure (vv. 3060-3570) can be seen as an example of the civilizing influences of the law.

In Berceo, legal elements tend to favor aspects of divine justice dispensed by Mary as its Holy Advocate. The lusty monk, whose devotion to St. Peter makes possible Mary’s advocacy, is permitted a second chance for confession and penance. Estevan’s devotion to St. Proyecto leads to Mary’s granting him the opportunity to make restitution for church properties he had appropriated for himself. Teófilo’s remorse and pleas to the Virgin result in her retrieval of his contract with the devil. For those who profane the sacredness of churches, however, no possibility for restitution exists and punishment appears irrevocable. Berceo’s use of legalistic themes and embellishments emphasizes the relevance to canon law of these issues involving confession, documents, and church properties. In “La iglesia robada,” Mary’s miracle endorses the authority of the legal process to judge offenses against the Church.

Reflecting upon the use of legal elements in the *Milagros*, Kirby notes that of the “numerous passages which reveal Berceo’s legal knowledge [. . .] none is more detailed

⁴² In twelfth- and thirteenth-century Spain, the administrators of taxes were usually Jews, who answered directly to the king. Also, the tithes of the Spanish Jews comprised a significant percentage of the overall tithe income of the Church.

or complete in a procedural sense than the miracle of the fornicating sexton,” in which a “full-scale, otherworldly lawsuit is empaneled [*sic*] over who gets possession of his soul” (165). Indeed, the intermediary theme, which is emblematic of the work as a whole, is introduced in this second miracle of Berceo’s collection, “El sacristán fornicario,” in the format of a courtroom-like debate, with Mary and Satan arguing the technicalities of Old and New Testament law in terms of *el dictamen revocado*.⁴³ This miracle also sets the tone for a recurring theme of sex and the law. As we shall see, Mary overrules the devil’s arguments for rightful claim to the sexton’s soul by appealing to a higher court, Christ’s Court.

⁴³ *El dictamen revocado*, or the revoked dictum, refers to the salvation of humankind from the initial sin of Eve through Mary, the mother of Christ, also known as the Fall/ Redemption, Eva/ Ave paradigm.

Chapter 2: Sex, Law, and the Clergy

The sexton of “El sacristán fornicario,” albeit a worthy monk devoted to the Virgin, falls into the habit of fornication, and on his return from one of his nightly trysts, he tumbles into the river that borders the monastery and drowns. A band of devils immediately descends upon his soul “por llevarla al váratro, de deleit bien vazío” (85d).⁴⁴ At this point, the soul becomes the object of a dispute (“pleito”) between the devils and the angels who also claim it:

Mientras qe los diablos la trayén com a pella,
vidiéronla los ángeles, descendieron a ella,
ficeron los diablos luego muy grand qerella,
qe suya era quita, qe se partiessen d’ella.
(86)⁴⁵

Since no doubt exists that the sexton met a bad end, the angels remain without “razón de vozealla” (87a), and withdraw from the battle. Fortunately, “la Gloriosa, reina general” (88a), comes to the soul’s rescue and, detaining the devils, initiates the case against them: “moviólis pletesía firme e muy cabdal” (88d). The ‘trial’ of the sexton’s soul that ensues is replete with forensic vocabulary commonly used in the courts of Berceo’s day. The *vozero*, or lawyer, initiates and/ or defends *querellas* and *pleitesías* (complaints and cases). *Tuertos*, or wrongs, are appealed to the *alcalde*, or judge, for the final *sentencia* regarding the *decreto*, or law, in question.

⁴⁴ *Váratro* is “hell”, from the Latin *baratrum* (or *barathrum*): “an abyss, chasm, a deep pit, the Lower World [. . .] a pit made by art, a deep dungeon, a pit, abyss; esp. of the lower world” (“barathrum,” Lewis and Short, *A Latin Dictionary*). It is provocative that Berceo apparently embellishes the description of hell as a place empty of pleasure. Does this mean that fornication is allowed in Heaven? The Latin versions of the miracle simply state that “Cuius animam mox rapuit multitudo demonum cupiens eam deferre in baratrum” (from Thott 128, qtd. in Dutton, *Obras* 57). Ms. 110 (Biblioteca Nacional de Madrid) says the same thing: see Gonzalo de Berceo, *Milagros de Nuestra Señora*, ed. Fernando Baños. (Barcelona: Crítica, 1997) 349.

⁴⁵ Here, *pleito* and *qerella* come into play as words from forensic vocabulary.

The Virgin puts forward an eloquent argument (“palabra colorada”) to the “foolish” devils: “Con esta alma, foles,—diz—non avedes nada;/ mientras fue en el cuerpo fue mi acomendada,/ agora prendrié tuerto por ir desamparada” (89b-d).⁴⁶ A wise devil, the “vozero” or speaker on behalf of “la otra partida,” addresses Mary as the mother of the “alcalde derecho” (righteous judge) (90c).⁴⁷ Invoking divine authority, the devil proceeds to rebut Mary’s defense of the sexton by pointing out that:

Escripto es que ſomne allí do es fallado
o en bien o en mal, por ello es juzgado;
si esti tal decreto por ti fuere falssado,
el pleit del Evangelio todo es descuajado.
(91)⁴⁸

This quatrain evokes ambiguity regarding judgment and salvation. Lines *a* and *b*, with their reference to judgment in terms of good and bad, provoke the question of *what* is so considered. In this miracle, fornication is the transgression landing the sexton’s soul in the clutches of the devil, the reason for which Mary’s intervention is required. Line *c* alludes to the possibility of the sexton’s eluding judgment after all with Mary’s help, but this would uproot the whole Gospel (line *d*). The devil shrewdly utilizes the new law of the Gospels, without which Mary would not have appeared in Sacred Scripture, as his defense. In response to the devil’s defense of the law Mary confidently rebukes him: “Fablas—diz la Gloriosa—a guis de cosa nescia,/ non te riepto, ca eres una cativa bestia” (92ab),⁴⁹ and, referring to the fact that the sexton never failed to genuflect before her

⁴⁶ Again, juridical vocabulary: *vozealla*, *pletesía*, *tuerto*.

⁴⁷ More legal vocabulary.: *vozero*, *otra partida*, *alcalde* (i.e., judge).

⁴⁸ According to Mount and Cash, “pleit del Evangelio” means “the Gospel” (34). Note that again we have the juridical word *pleit*, so we might think of the meaning also as the Gospel’s contract and theme. According to Baro, *pleit*, *pleito*, *pleitos* can mean “asunto, negocio” “pacto, convenio,” or “querella, contienda, disputa, pendencia” (161). In verse 91d, the meaning of *pleit* seems to encompass both “asunto” and “pacto.” Hence my interpretation of theme (asunto)/ contract (pacto). Also, *decreto* is another forensic word.

⁴⁹ In a general description of the legal base of the *Milagros* and Berceo’s concern for the law, Bermejo Cabrero states, “[y] a cada paso las mismas palabras: pleitos y sentencias, rieptos y alzadas” (33). Emphasis mine.

image on his way to and from his trysts, Mary asserts that: “quando ixió de casa, de mí priso licencia” (92c). Therefore, the Virgin declares, “del peccado qe fizo yo l daré penitencia” (92d). In spite of her confidence that her Son will back her up, she declares: “apello a Christo, a la su audiencia [. . .] de la su boca quiero oír esta sentencia” (93 b, d).⁵⁰ Indeed Christ, the “alcalde savior,” orders the monk’s soul returned to its body so that “dessent qual mereciesse, recibí tal onor” (94d). The monk, of course, reports the miracle to his companions upon reviving:

Fablólis el buen omne, díssolis: “Companeros,
Muerto fui e so vivo, d’esto seet / certeros,
grado a la Gloriosa qe salva sos obreros,
que me libró de manos de los malos guerreros.
(96)

His story provides a strong incentive for devotion to the Virgin, especially for those prone to fornication. From a didactic perspective, the story of “El sacristán fornicario” teaches that the sexton’s fornication, which breaks his vow of celibacy,⁵¹ is a sin that requires Mary’s intermediary action in order to defeat Satan’s claim. More importantly, however, the miracle announces that in spite of his misstep, the sexton’s devotion to Mary saves him from a bad end.

Despite the Virgin’s leniency, the sexton’s soul finds itself in trouble more from the failure to confess and do penance than from the fornication itself. Indeed the sexton has asked Mary’s permission prior to each tryst, and she apparently has received well these petitions. Due to his untimely death he lost the opportunity to repent and confess,

⁵⁰ More words from the courts: *apello, audiencia, sentencia*.

⁵¹ Celibacy in the Catholic Church carries with it the implication not only of being unmarried, but also of abstinence from sexual activity. “Celibacy is the renunciation of marriage implicitly or explicitly made, for the more perfect observance of chastity, by all those who receive the Sacrament of Orders in any of the higher grades. [. . .] the candidate for orders binds himself to the service of God “by a vow of chastity,” is thenceforth “unable to contract a valid marriage, and any serious transgression in the matter of this vow is not only a grievous sin in itself but incurs the additional guilt of sacrilege” (“Celibacy of the Clergy”).

do penance and mend his ways. Fortunately, he has the opportunity to rectify this situation, for when he is brought back to life,

Confessóse el monge e fizo penitencia,
mejoróse de toda su mala contendencia,
sirvió a la Gloriosa mientras ovo potencia,
finó quando Dios quiso sin mala rependencia,
requiescat in pace cum divina clemencia.
(99)

No doubt the humor of the play on words—the double meanings of “contendencia” and “potencia”—did not escape Berceo’s audiences.⁵² This injection of humor in a context that recalls the sexton’s propensity to fornicate attenuates the seriousness of the ‘sin,’ and at the same time draws more attention to repentance and reform.

In “El sacristán fornicario,” the legal procedure of the courtroom-like debate structures the style of the intermediary theme as well as the argument for the miracle itself. Devotion to Mary enables the forgiveness of fornication through confession and penance. Mary’s solution to the sexton’s plight establishes the importance of confession, which became an annual requirement in 1215, decreed by the twenty-first canon of the Fourth Lateran Council. The sexton’s transgression itself reflects key Lateran reforms regarding clerical celibacy and the sin of fornication initiated and/ or strengthened by the Council of 1215. From this perspective, the legal passages in “El sacristán fornicario” seem to propagandize at least two important issues: 1) the information that fornication is a sin, and 2) the importance of confession. Of these two issues, confession appears as the most essential one, thus creating an aura of ambivalence around the issue of fornication.

This ambivalence concerning the transgression of fornication undoubtedly contrasts with the decisive tone against the profanation of churches, and unlike Teófilo, the vicar, or Estevan, the magistrate, for example, we encounter no quatrains of remorse

⁵² In Spanish, “contendencia” can mean ‘bearing, mien, and continence’; “potencia” can mean ‘ability, potential, and virility.’

or reflection on the sexton's part to indicate personal acknowledgement of the fact that his fornication has caused his troubles with the devil. In fact, his genuflections before the Virgin's image in route to his trysts would indicate that he was not particularly plagued with conflict about his non-celibate habits. Although he is described as more worthy than the lusty monk, their cases, in fact, are similar: their miraculous resuscitation for the purpose of confession overshadows the essential sinfulness of their fornications, especially in view of the fact that, had they confessed prior to death, the devils would not have had any claim on their souls in the first place.

While the topic of fornicating clerics might seem incongruous in the context of devotional literature of the reform movement, we not only find it frequently in the *Milagros*, but also discover that the topic, together with the ambivalence surrounding it, was ubiquitous in Berceo's day. During the first half of the twelfth century, the clerics in the schools appear to have countered the Church's ever-expanding celibacy requirements by creating literary genres that spotlighted the sex lives of clerics. In one such genre titled 'debates between the cleric and the knight,' these school clerics created dialogues of "potential antagonism between the *clericus*, to whom love was denied, and the *miles* [knight], who was celebrated as the exemplary lover" (Baldwin, *Language of Sex* 58). These 'debates' of course supported the view that the best lover was actually the cleric. In the beginning part of his autobiography, Abelard foreshadowed this antagonism when he contrasted the "belting of knighthood and the pomp of military glory inherited from his father through primogeniture with his own heroic choice of the vocation of learning. He had, in effect, forsaken arms for letters [. . .]" (58).⁵³ Despite his "heroic choice," however, Abelard proceeded to narrate "[i]n the Ovidian tradition [. . .] a tale of love and

⁵³ The clergy was a more common occupation among the sons who would *not* inherit from their parents. The practice of primogeniture helped to maintain intact the estates of families. In Spain, this practice of *mayorazgo* was not firmly fixed until the fourteenth century (Lagunas 144).

seduction in which he embellished his amatory prowess despite its tragic and cautionary dénouement” (58).⁵⁴

As contradictory as it might seem to a modern reader, love and seduction were not alien to the monastery schools.⁵⁵ For example, “often collected with other school texts,” Ovid’s *Ars amatoria*, which provides detailed instructions on how to seduce women, was a “widely used [. . .] [school text] during the second half of the Middle Ages” (Woods 58). In his *De amore* (1182-1186), André the Chaplain sought to accommodate Church restrictions on “clerical sexuality with the love doctrines of the schools” (Baldwin, *Language of Sex* 59-60). Drawing heavily upon Ovid, and utilizing other traditions as well, the Chaplain’s *De amore* “achieved the most differentiated and elaborated taxonomy of the social world of sexuality in its time” (51). While André as narrator emphasizes that sexual dalliance is forbidden to the clergy and unequivocally denounces the seduction of nuns, in the dialogue between the cleric and the noblewoman, the cleric seeks to counter his interlocutor’s objections to having a clergyman for a lover by pointing out all the positive aspects (58-9). Although the lady ultimately rejects the cleric’s suit, André ambiguously concludes that “if a cleric persists in entering love’s warfare, he should enlist at the order and rank of his birth and adopt the appropriate discourse” of seduction, for which each dialogue in the work serves as an example (59). The result of the Chaplain’s efforts to combine celibacy with Ovid is that his *De amore* appears self-contradictory and ambiguous, at least to a modern audience.

⁵⁴ Peter Abelard (1079-c. 1142), French philosopher and theologian, whose fame as a teacher dialectician made him one of the most renowned figures of the 12th century. He became the tutor of Heloise, whose uncle, Fulbert, was a canon of the Cathedral of Notre-Dame in Paris. The couple fell in love and Heloise gave birth to a son. The two married in secret, and Abelard persuaded Heloise to take holy vows at the Benedictine Abbey of Saint-Argenteuil. Fulbert became convinced that Abelard had abandoned Heloise there, and “had ruffians attack and emasculate him” (“Abelard, Peter”).

⁵⁵ See Marjorie Woods’ discussion on the sexual content and glosses of the medieval schoolroom texts, p. 66.

While André the Chaplain affirmed the clerical lover, “even to the point of rationalizing his need for sexual outlet,” the creators of the popular vernacular genre of fabliaux, the fableors, recounted with ribald delight “the amatory adventures of the young and predatory cleric as well as the mature parish priest” (228). Although this vernacular genre flourished mostly in Northern France, from the middle of the twelfth to the middle of the fourteenth century it strongly influenced writers from England to Italy. Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*, for example, contain six fabliaux, notably “The Miller’s Tale,” and in “later times, [. . .] Boccaccio, Shakespeare, and Moliere made use of material from the fabliaux in their works” (“Fabliaux”). Although the young clerics of these tales commit fornication or adultery, they do not violate “sacred vows because celibacy was not required of simple clerics below holy orders.” Appearing in the fabliaux even more frequently than the wandering cleric, however, is the local priest, “[m]ature and well established in the community,” and the fact that upon ordination he would have taken a vow of celibacy “amplifies the scandal.” The priest sometimes “keeps a concubine at the rectory [. . .] but most often he is the adulterous lover of someone’s wife.”⁵⁶ Monks, since they are cloistered, rarely appear in sexually active roles in the fabliaux or in any other genre (Baldwin, *Language of Sex* 60). They do, however, appear in the miracle tales with more frequency than fornicating clerics.

The Latin versions of the miracles predate Berceo by at least one hundred years, and thus exist more closely in time to the era of monastic reforms. In the *Milagros*, monks, not priests or even simple clerics, appear as fornicators. The fact that monks appear as fornicators in the Latin tales could indicate that priests or other secular clerics

⁵⁶ In the *Vilain* by Jean Bodel, a husband walks in on his wife and the priest who are together making love. The priest convinces him that he isn’t seeing what he sees. In some cases, the husband returns to surprise the lovers and is “punished for his intrusion”; sometimes the priest “does not escape unscathed”—he might leave behind his genitals, for example (Baldwin, *Language of Sex* 60). This last consequence reminds us of Abelard, or of Berceo’s pilgrim. Jean Bodel (d. 1210), one of the few fableors who signed his name to his compositions, is considered one of the principal innovators of the genre (37).

composed and disseminated them in response to monastic claims to moral superiority. The “reforming monks of the late tenth and early eleventh century argued that their superior moral status within Christendom necessitated their exemption from episcopal oversight” (Van Meter 159). We will recall from the discussion of “El monje lozano” that a component of this argument for exemption entailed a hierarchical rearrangement of the ecclesiastical orders suggested by Gregory the Great, with the placement of the monks above the priesthood by virtue of their sexual purity. Not surprisingly, in “some quarters, the episcopacy responded to this campaign for the moral high ground within the ecclesiastical hierarchy with scorn and vicious slanders.” A “famous satiric poem” by Adalbero of Laon provides a “fine example of just such a reflexive response” (159). In the poem, Adalbero derides the monks for pretending to moral superiority, and makes fun of the “lay nobility for thinking too highly of the virtues of sexual purity” (160). In other words, he questions the validity of sexual purity as a criterion of moral superiority. In light of the ongoing contentions between the secular and monastic contingents of the Church, the irony of the exaggerated portrayal of intermediary hierarchies in “El monje lozano” appears all the more amusing, especially from a priest’s point of view. The story appears to make a point that the monastic audacity to place monks above priests in the ecclesiastical hierarchy does not have any merit based on the criterion of sexual purity.

Although papal privileges that exempted specific monasteries from episcopal oversight date from the late ninth century, by the latter part of the tenth century the monastic reformers had gained considerably more momentum. Abbot Odilo of Cluny’s winning of “papal exemption for the entire Cluniac order” at the beginning of the eleventh century illustrates this impetus. The engagement of monastic efforts in the process of achieving papal exemptions “contributed mightily to the papacy’s case for primacy within the Church” (156). In fact, the monastic reform movement became a

handy vehicle for the centralization of Church power. The momentum of this tide of reform ultimately swept the clergy into its current, and by the latter half of the same century, Gregory the VII was able to flex his muscle of papal supremacy in the cause for the clerical reforms now known as ‘Gregorian.’ By the time Hildebrand had become Pope Gregory VII, the authority of the priesthood had come under attack from not just the exemptionist monks, but also from reformers within the clergy’s own ranks and from critical voices among the laity as well. For close to a century, expressions of disquiet about the diminishing differentiation between the clergy and the laity resonated in the rhetorics of reform. In the face of eroding confidence in the priesthood, the “reforming episcopacy adopted the cause of clerical purity as its own” (160). These episcopal reformers were “quick to grasp that [. . .] the ability to draw such moral distinctions between laity and cleric might readily be translated into a compelling argument for sacerdotal authority” (166). From the Church’s point of view this implied the exercise of ‘sacerdotal authority’ over the affairs of the laity and in the interests of the Church. The Church’s control of its clergy, and the credibility of the priesthood in the eyes of the laity, became central to the resolution of key issues involved in the Gregorian reforms: nicolaitism, simony and investiture. These problems will be discussed in more detail later. In and of themselves, they lent much fuel to the fire in favor of central control of the Church and sparked the episcopacy’s appropriation of the celibacy issue as its own.

A different kind of appropriation—that of parish revenues by monasteries—produced another matter of contention between the monastic and episcopal orders of the Church. Although the state of many of the more impoverished monasteries certainly must have justified such practices, “the plea of poverty and the demands of hospitality became legal clichés” incessantly summoned by the “great and wealthy religious houses” to lay claim to parish revenues (Lawrence 651). Bishops also were guilty of annexing

parish churches in order to “endow prebends for their canons in secular cathedrals” (652). The monastery abuses, however, became so unrestrained that voices of opposition to the practice issued from the monastic world itself: “[i]t was one of the reproaches with which St Bernard had lambasted Cluny” (651). One of the canons of the Fourth Lateran Council “lamented that some greedy appropriators had left priests with less than enough for subsistence” (652). As a result of these financial mishandlings, many parish churches were left with uneducated and incompetent priests, if any at all, while an excessive number of ordinands remained unbeneficed. The primacy of the papacy, a particular triumph for the monastic reformers, facilitated the reform of the clergy, but, as history shows, the secular clergy ultimately prevailed over the monastic with regard to Church administration.

In Berceo’s day, as we have already noted, the monasteries had become more dependent on secular clerics, rather than monks from their own monastery, with specialized preparation in canon law and the validation of property titles and *privilegio* rights. Considering Berceo’s lifelong connections with and involvement on behalf of San Millán de la Cogolla, we receive an impression of an epoch of somewhat harmonious interdependence between the secular and the monastic clergy, at least in Berceo’s geographical region. The abbeys of northern Spain in fact maintained considerable independence from the interference of bishops in their financial and liturgical practices until the late fifteenth century. Imbedded in the miracle tales of fornicating monks, however, are two essential points, both of which seem fairly playful. One, of course, is the idea of a fornicating monk (or nun), when the stereotype in the other genres appears to have been ‘the fornicating cleric.’ The other point is that the issue of impurity with regard to the fornications becomes attenuated by the primacy of confession, and priests generally heard confession.

Ordained monks were not very common in Berceo's day, so the revived monks of the miracles, who do not appear superior to priests when it comes to fornication, implicitly are absolved by priests. This irony in itself appears humorous in light of any moral high ground taken by the monks. At the same time, however, the concept of sexually incontinent monks tends to level the playing field of moral superiority considering that in the rhetoric of monastic reform the perception of the superior virtue of monks hinged to a large degree upon the historic non-celibacy of priests. The effect of this leveling creates ambiguity with regard to the sinfulness of fornication, an issue that was extremely relevant to and hotly debated by the secular clerics of Berceo's day. Many of these points are directly addressed in "El romero engañado por el diablo."⁵⁷ In this story we find not only the suggestion that the pilgrim's simple fornication⁵⁸ might not be universally acknowledged as a sin, but also an allusion to the idea of ritual purity. This idea underpins a component of the argument for the moralistic superiority of sexual purity proposed by the reforming monks. Although the pilgrim does not actually become a monk until the end of the miracle tale, the provenance of the story—the Benedictine abbey at Cluny—and its parallels to the story of Abelard nonetheless draw attention to these issues concerning the clergy and sex.

Just prior to his departure for Santiago de Compostela, the pilgrim Guiralt, protagonist of "El romero engañado por el diablo," lies with his mistress rather than keep a prayer vigil, and then fails to confess and do penance.⁵⁹ The devil, posing as Saint

⁵⁷ Miracle VIII.

⁵⁸ i.e., consensual sex between two unmarried people.

⁵⁹Re "fails to confess and do penance": "non tomó penitencia como la ley prediga" (185c). In Spanish, *penitencia* can mean both the sacrament of confession and the prescribed penance. Mount and Cash translate this verse as "[h]e did not do penance" (49); Baro quotes the same line as an example of "el sacramento de la penitencia," i.e., confession (156). In Baro, *penitencia* is more likely to mean 'penance' when it is used with verbs like *dar* ("diolis su penitencia"), or *fazer* ("confesóse el monge e fizo penitencia") (156). I think that in verse 185c, penance is implied (thus so is confession), since later in the story Guiralt himself associates the devil's reference to "penitencia" with "castigo."

James, tricks Guiralt into cutting off his penis and slashing his throat as penance for this failure.⁶⁰ The Virgin, summoned by Saint James himself, seeks to rescue the pilgrim's soul from the clutches of Satan. In the style of a courtroom drama, Satan argues that his rights to the soul are indisputable on the grounds that the deceased pilgrim is an unconfessed suicide. The Virgin disregards the accusation since Guiralt's intention had been to obey Saint James, and easily overturns the judgment. Although the Virgin sees fit to give him a chance to live a good life and restores his soul to his body, he nevertheless remains 'penisless':

Era de lo ál todo sano e mejorado,
 fuera de un filiello que tenié travesado;
 mas lo de la natura quanto que fo cortado,
 non li creció un punto, fincó en su estado.
 (212)

It appears certain that he will not fornicate again. As in the other two miracles of similar courtroom-like dramatic structure, "El sacristán fornicario" and "El monje lozano," the focus of the transgression in "El romero engañado por el diablo" highlights the failure to confess and do penance, and the solution of resuscitation provides the opportunity to do so. In this miracle, however, the pilgrim's failure to confess his fornication before beginning his pilgrimage becomes the vulnerability that the devil disguised as St. James seizes upon in order to trick him, although technically, Guiralt's soul finds itself in route to hell due to the fact that "matóse con su mano," and therefore "deve seer judgado por de Judas ermano" (201ab).⁶¹

⁶⁰ The appearance of the devil disguised as a messenger of God is an Islamic motif in the exegesis of dreams.

⁶¹ Much legal vocabulary appears in this miracle as well. The devil dictates a sentence: "Esti es el juicio" (192a). When St. James appears on the scene, "se entabla una discusión a la manera jurídica" as St. James stands before the devil, saying "tenedla a derecho [. . .]" (199c) (Bermejo Cabrero 35). The devils have on their side the "razón derecha" (200c); the pilgrim (due to his suicide) should be "judgado por de Judas ermano"; St. James makes an appointment with the devil to appear before the Virgin: "Seedme a juicio de la Virgo María:/ yo a ella me clamo en esta pleitesia" (205ab). Each side makes its allegations: "Propusieron sus voces ante la Gloriosa" (206a); the Virgin pronounces the sentence: "mando e dólo por

Some of the miracle's similarities to the story of Abelard include the fact that both Guiralt and Abelard became monks post-castration.⁶² Although Abelard believed that his hideous fate ultimately saved and sanctified him, he never consented to the idea of inherent evil residing in sexual urges and relations and considered them normal and healthy. This guiltless way of thinking with regard to fornication reflects both the pilgrim Guiralt's musings on his fate—"cómo lo quitó Dios de maleitos dientes" (217b)—and his rescue by the Virgin—not because he had to be saved from the sin of fornication, but because he was unfairly tricked by the devil and thought he was obeying St. James. Guiralt's decision to become a monk calls to mind Abelard's retirement to monastic life and place of death:

desemparó el mundo, amigos e parientes,
metióse en Grunniego, vistió pannos punientes.

Don Ugo, omne bueno, de Grunniego abbat
varón religioso, de muy grand sanctidat,
contava est miraclo qe cuntió en verdat,
metiólo en escripto, fizo grand onestat.
(217cd-218)⁶³

After Abelard's tragedy, he initially retired to the Abbey of Saint-Denis-en-France, in Paris, and subsequently founded a chapel and oratory, called the Paraclete, at Nogent-sur-Seine. In 1125 he was elected abbot of Saint-Gildas-de-Rhuis. In 1140, he was censured by Bernard of Clairvaux for his theological philosophy, and therefore set out for Rome to clear his name. Along the way (on the road to Santiago de Compostela), he stayed with Peter the Venerable, abbot of the Abbey of Cluny, and died several months later at a Clunist priory near Chalon-sur-Saône ("Abelard, Peter"). Although Saint Hugh, who became abbot of Cluny in 1049, was already dead by 1109, the dates of the time that

sentencia [. . .] faga su penitencia [. . .] avrá tal audiencia" (208a,cd). God confirms the sentence "Valió esta sentencia, fue de Dios otorgada" (209a) (see Bermejo Cabrero 35).

⁶² Guiralt actually did more than simply castrate himself: "cortó sus genitales, el fol malventurado" (193c).

⁶³ Grunniego translates as Cluny (Mount and Cash 49).

Abelard spent at the Abbey of Cluny correspond to when the Latin versions of the miracles might have been written. The associations with Abelard evoked in the miracle by the castration incident, monastic retirement and Cluny, receive reinforcement in the scene of Mary's decision regarding the fate of Guiralt. In the courtroom-like argument between St. James and the devil, each side makes its allegations and Mary responds to them:

Propusieron sus voces ante la Gloriosa,
fo bien de cada parte afincada la cosa;
entendió las razones la reína preciosa,
terminó la varaja de manera sabrosa:

“El enganno qe priso, pro li devié tener,
elli a Sanctiágo cuidó obedecer,
ca tenié qe por esso podrié salvo seer;
más el engannador lo devié padecer.”
(206-207)

Mary's proclamation that the pilgrim's intention to obey St. James must count in his favor reflects Abelard's "greatest contribution" to the development of ethics, which was "to maintain that an act is to be judged by the intention of the doer" ("Abelard, Peter").

These evocations of the story of Abelard draw attention to issues concerning sex and the clergy because the demands of the Church reformers for a celibate secular clergy complicated Abelard's marriage to Heloise. The misunderstandings that ensued from the couple's strategies to keep the marriage secret led to Abelard's castration. In the miracle tale, however, the pilgrim Guiralt, in obedience to whom he thinks is St. James, castrates himself to atone for fornication. The fact that the devil—not St. James—appropriates the premise of the sinfulness of fornication in order to trick Guiralt into acting out such severe penance tends to challenge the seriousness of this sin.

Guiralt's transgression, which provides the base upon which the devil structures his trick, appears somewhat more complicated than simple fornication. The verses

describing Guiralt's misstep explain that before beginning his journey, "en lugar de vigilia yogo con su amiga./ Non tomó penitencia como la ley prediga,/ metióse al camino con su mala hortiga" (185b-d). "Vigilia" is defined as "véspera de una festividad religiosa importante; oficio que se reza en esos días" (García-Pelayo 618); in other words, a "prayer" vigil (Mount and Cash 49). Ambiguity surrounds the need for penance since we do not know if the fornication itself would have been sinful if Guiralt had not been preparing for the religious pilgrimage. The combination within the same verse of fornication and a religious observance elicits the notion of ritual impurity. This idea of sexual activity as capable of contaminating the purity of a religious celebration forms part of the monastic rationale for the moral superiority of chastity, and, having both pagan and Jewish roots, even predates Augustine's conceptualization of concupiscence as being a consequence of original sin. In many ancient religions "[s]exual intercourse was a source of ritual impurity," and even though the "religious teachings of Jesus" only marginally treat law on ritual purity, "Christian thinkers [. . .] carried over into their religious system the belief that sex was a source of impurity" (Brundage, *Law* 2). With regard to the laity and the topic of ritual purity, we find in the penitentials numerous expressions of concern about "the need to cleanse oneself from sexual defilement as a condition for participation in the sacred mysteries of the Church" (174). The Jewish roots for this custom of washing as a form of sexual purification have sources in the Pentateuch. Leviticus 15:16-27, in particular, addresses this subject.

Since Guiralt commits fornication in lieu of observing the required prayer vigil, the failure to perform the act of confession and penance prior to his journey contaminates the ritualistic aspect of the religious pilgrimage. The act of penance, a cleansing activity, in this case suggests the cleansing of a sexual transgression. The fact that "la ley" demands confession and penance suggests that canon law may have required sexual

abstinence in preparation for the religious pilgrimage. The source for this prohibition on sexual activity most probably would have come from the abstinence prescriptions in the penitentials, a source implied by the reference to penance and law (“non tomó penitencia como la ley prediga”).⁶⁴ Guiralt’s encounter with the devil on the road to Santiago reinforces the suggestion of ritual purity as proper preparation for pilgrimage by again drawing attention to the lack of penance. The devil disguised as St. James admonishes Guiralt for embarking on the pilgrimage without performing penance for the fornication:

Essisti de tu casa por venir a la mía,
quando essir quisisti fizist una follía;
cuidas sin penitencia complir tal romería,
non te lo gradirá esto sancta María.”
(189)

Guiralt’s response (to whom he believes is St. James) suggests once more the idea of ritual purity by referring to the cleansing act of atonement, highlighting its provenance as a monastic value: “Complirlo quiero todo, qequier qe me digades,/ ca veo yo qe fizi grandes iniquidades,/ non prisi el castigo qe dicen los abbades” (191b-d). A central component of “monastic spirituality was that anything that gives pleasure must be a trick to lure the soul from God. Under such circumstances, an active sexual life *must* be sinful” (Jestice 106). The medieval monks assumed that “anything so powerful must surely be a lure by the devil” (Jestice 107). One notion that followed from the doctrine of original sin and that was popular in Berceo’s day “identified the source of sexual desire not as ‘nature’ but as diabolical suggestions, originating in the testicles” (Brundage, *Law* 348-9). Gratian mentions this belief in his *Decretum*. Indeed, the monk of “El sacristán fornicario” is a good man—“el abbat de la casa [. . .] teniélo por cuerdo y quito de follía” (77cd)—but the devil made him fornicate: “tanto pudo bullir el sotil aversario/ que corrompió al monge, fizolo fornicario” (78cd). Not surprisingly, “sexuality became a

⁶⁴ The penitentials were the precursors to the thirteenth-century confessional manuals.

focus for those seeding ritual purity, and the two together became an extremely potent combination” (Jestice 107).

Clerical reformers appropriated from the monks the theme of sexual purity along with the concept of the moral superiority of chastity in their campaign for a celibate priesthood. Innocent II provided an overtone of religious sanction to a decree of the Second Lateran Council that nullified the marriages of priests when he issued “an edict requiring all priests to practice celibacy, arguing that since priests ‘ought to be in fact and in name temples of God [. . .] it is unbecoming that they give themselves up to marriage and impurity’” (Keneally 65). From the sixth to the ninth century, enactments to persuade married clerics to abstain from sex with their wives imposed sanctions such as penances or even excommunication (Brundage, *Law* 150). The beliefs that underlay these enactments concerned the inappropriateness of officiating at the sacred rites immediately following a passionate sexual encounter with one’s wife (150). This tone of piety regarding the inappropriateness of sexual pleasure—even between married couples—reflects a monastic point of view firmly established in the doctrines of the early Christian writers. By the eleventh century, however, the principal intentions of the reforming decrees that called for a celibate clergy were aimed at limiting the alienation of Church property rather than focusing on the theological argument of ritual purity. When Innocent II refers to the notion of priests as ‘temples of God’ uncontaminated by ‘marriage and impurity,’ he is recruiting the old theme of ritual defilement resulting from clerics’ sexual intercourse with their wives in order to support the canon nullifying the marriages of priests. For those priests who obediently separated from their wives or concubines, however, the canon prescribed penance before they could return to their priestly duties.

Returning to “El romero engañado por el diablo,” we find in the second quatrain an attention-grabbing verse regarding this theme of inappropriate sex.⁶⁵ This verse states that before Guiralt became a monk, he unwisely “facié a las debeces follía e peccado, / como omne soltero qe non es apremiado” (183cd). In other words, Guiralt committed simple fornication from time to time. This information seems redundant, considering that only two quatrains later we learn of Guiralt’s lying with his mistress in lieu of keeping the required prayer vigil. The Latin versions do not contain this redundancy, mentioning the fornication only in the context of the prayer vigil. Given Berceo’s epigrammatic style, largely free of meaningless repetitions, this redundancy appears unusual. I would suggest that the apparent redundancy was not an oversight on Berceo’s part and that he may have added the verses in order to make the point that simple fornication was, in fact, a sin, thereby assuring his audience’s full attention. According to the canonists, fornication was a canonical crime, even though it was not an offense in civil law; however, “this distinction was not widely understood or accepted among the laity who refused to believe that so commonplace an activity could possibly be a serious sin” (Brundage, *Law* 381). Naturally, the laity and the clergy did not exist in hermetically sealed worlds, so the inclinations of the clergy, and especially of the secular clerics, often intersected with those of the laity, despite theological dogma to the contrary. The view that simple fornication (i.e., unmarried participants) was acceptable, or at least not a bad sin, indeed persisted among the clergy of Berceo’s day. James Brundage points out that “Johannes Teutonicus observed almost wistfully that nearly everyone commits fornication, and people are more prone to this offense than to any other failing” (*Law* 380). Johannes speculated that for “this reason [. . .] canon law punishes fornication less

⁶⁵ “La copla 182 corresponde a la primera frase del latín [con el cambio que San Hugo ‘lo escripso’ en vez de ‘solet narrare’] pero la copla 183 es un comentario anticipado, basado en lo que se trata en la copla 185, aparte del primer verso que deriva de la segunda frase latina” (Dutton, *Obras* 88).

severely than other offenses” (qtd. in Brundage, *Law* 381). Pierre Payer observes that while people in the later Middle Ages were given a strict choice between marriage and sexual abstinence, it seems that they “had their own rules for the game of simple fornication,” believing it to be sinless, and in essence rejecting the “official rules” decreed by canon law (Payer 182). This widespread rejection, says Payer, indicates “*belief* in another set of rules that did not hold fornication to be a sin” (182).⁶⁶ As Thomas Aquinas noted, “although some believe adultery is a sin, nonetheless they do not believe that simple fornication is a sin” (qtd. in Payer 182).

The consensus that the only proper place for sex was within a legitimate marriage, and then only for the purposes of procreation, developed early in Christianity. Chastity, and even more, virginity, were considered superior to marriage in the sense of being more conducive to undistracted service to God and access to His charity. In “El romero engañado por el diablo,” allusions to ritual impurity that converge with the emphasis on penance evoke prescriptions for sexual abstinence from both the penitentials and the monasteries. The propriety of ritual purity for the ministry of the sacraments supported the moral argument for requiring celibacy of priests and prelates. In Christianity, this notion of ritual purity is a pagan carry-over, but it also finds religious sanction in the Old Law of the Jews. Ironically, in the story of the pilgrim Guiralt, we find evidence—planted by Berceo himself—of an opposing argument to the morality of celibacy: persisting secular beliefs that viewed simple fornication as sinless. Apparently, Berceo was not unaware of the fact that the laity found it difficult to take seriously Church laws that offered them only a choice of either marriage or sexual abstinence. In Berceo’s lifetime, priests, undoubtedly influenced by this secular belief regarding simple fornication, as well as by the fact that until the new decrees of the Church they had

⁶⁶ Original emphasis.

enjoyed legitimate marriages for centuries, met the Church's celibacy mandate with violent protests at worst and at best with ambivalence.

In "El romero engañado por el diablo," we see a moral justification for the celibacy of the secular clergy reflected in the allusions to ritual purity. Berceo's specific emphasis on simple fornication as a sin appears warranted in view of the fact that the perception of its sinfulness was not widely accepted or even taken for granted. The insertion of the ostensibly redundant verse must have seemed necessary so that the requirement for Guiralt to do penance would make sense and his failure to do so be perceived as a case of ritual impurity. Despite Berceo's added verse of clarification, however, the dynamic of the story nonetheless surrounds with ambiguity the essential sinfulness of simple fornication. Guiralt's sexual fling in lieu of the required prayer vigil effectively becomes a violation of prescribed abstinence. His failure to confess this violation and do the recommended penance contaminates the pilgrimage, while the prayer vigil itself remains uncontaminated since he missed it. The sin of simple fornication becomes attached to the improper pilgrimage preparation, and the failure to rectify this impropriety through confession and penance creates Guiralt's essential vulnerability to Satan. Had he confessed and done penance, the devil would have had no basis for the trick, and Guiralt no reason to castrate himself with good intentions.

Although there are individual variations in the narratives, the basic storyline of "El romero engañado por el diablo" closely follows that of "El sacristán fornicario" and "El monje lozano," which present us with fornicators who die without confession and have their souls snatched by the devil and taken to hell. The miracles suggest that fornication is a taboo or sin that must somehow be accounted for since Mary's intervention is necessary in order to rescue these souls from the devil's clutches. Nevertheless, the seriousness of the plight of the protagonists, as well as Satan's

justification for taking their souls, derives more from their failure to confess and do penance than from the fornication itself. The final word that resolves the argument rests with Mary and is authorized by Christ or God who seek to fulfill Mary's will by ordering the disputed souls returned to their bodies. All who witness the resuscitation of the deceased protagonists proclaim the miracle, including the revived ones themselves who do penance and reform their ways until the end of their days. Particularly in these miracles, the courtroom-like atmosphere permeating the interactions between Mary, Satan, and Christ seems to stand out. Within this juridical framework, while Berceo conveys the Church's stance on simple fornication, he more directly addresses the dogma of confession and penance. The legal dramas reflect the environment of proliferating canon law in his day, and draw particular attention to the Lateran canons concerning annual confession and clerical celibacy. Mary's juridical supremacy establishes the legitimacy of the forgiveness of fornication through confession and penance. This solution to the breaking of celibacy vows coincidentally mirrors that prescribed, since the decrees of Innocent II, and even of Gregory VII, for unchaste priests. (Together with penance, of course, when relevant, priests were required to separate from their wives and concubines.) Thus we can see that in Berceo's day, these miracles of fornicating monks also spoke directly to issues concerning the increasingly enforced chastity of priests. Reforming clerics had appropriated the cause of sexual purity from the rhetoric of monastic reform in an effort to make the priesthood somehow superior to and separate from the laity. There can be no doubt that once the requirement for annual confession became established, much power inevitably rested with the priests in matters concerning the dissemination, interpretation and enactment of Church policy. By establishing the legitimacy of the dogma of confession, particularly in these cases of fornication, Mary simultaneously establishes the authority of priests to hear confession and attenuates the

seriousness of sexual dalliances. After all, in the stories, even monks fornicate, but Mary always gives them a second chance.

PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS OF CLERICAL REFORM

The Virgin grants miracles of forgiveness and salvation to fornicating clergy, most of whom have taken vows of celibacy, in five of the *Milagros*.⁶⁷ Already we have seen in three of these miracles that the Virgin Mary saves from the devils' clutches a regularly fornicating sexton, an incorrigibly lusty monk with a child by a prostitute, and a pilgrim who ignores the rule of prayer and sexual continence the night before his departure for the shrine of Saint James. In two other miracles, a pregnant abbess about to give birth and a wealthy canon engaged to be married each receive special attention from the Virgin. In the context of Mary's intermediary drama, all these stories impart representations of the religious ideal of sexual continence vs. the reality of sexual behavior in the lives of the clergy of the High Middle Ages. The motif of celibacy, presented in these stories as the lack thereof, reflects a long history of tensions surrounding the ideal of celibacy in the Christian tradition and the Church's control over the bodies of its members. In these tales, various legal procedures are both directly and indirectly addressed, while the question of impiety in relation to breaking celibacy vows remains ambiguous. The unresolved contradiction between fornicating monks, celibacy requirements, confession, and the law reflects ongoing currents of tension in Berceo's day that relate to the Church's expanded celibacy requirements initiated by the Gregorian reforms and reinforced by the Fourth Lateran Council. We can learn much about—and from—Berceo by exploring how he represents and resolves the tensions in the secular and religious relationships that appear in these miracles.

⁶⁷ “El sacristán fornicario,” “San Pedro y el monje lozano,” “El romero engañado por el diablo,” “La boda y la Virgen,” and “La abadesa preñada” (II, VII, VIII, XV, and XXI respectively).

The vow of chastity had prohibited sexual relations to regular clergy like Berceo's monks and nuns since antiquity, but the Catholic priesthood did not begin with a celibacy requirement. From the eleventh century, much controversy and resistance existed among the clergy over the Church's redoubled efforts, as part of the Gregorian reforms, to extend celibacy requirements to encompass the secular clergy, including not only the priests, but deacons and subdeacons as well. Although Berceo's miracles do not involve clerics of the lower orders for whom the rule of chastity was a new and unwelcome imposition, the practice of celibacy appears problematic nonetheless for the monks, the canon and the abbess. Given the ongoing controversy in Berceo's day over the Church's extension of the rule of chastity, the theme of the problematic celibacy of the clergy most probably would have resonated strongly with any audience, lay and clerical alike. Additionally, the Church's efforts to extend this monastic ideal among the clergy overlap its concern to define and enforce 'acceptable' sexual relations among the laity as well.

In the early Middle Ages, not only priests married, but bishops had wives as well. These bishops, who came from wealthy and influential families, conducted themselves according to the ancient codes of the Roman aristocracy: they "brought their rhetorical skills into the pulpit, their experience of Roman administration to the bishop's court and their wives, as 'sisters in Christ,' into the bishop's palace" (Brown 431). Through marriage, of course, they were allied to other great aristocratic families. The growth of the early Christian church depended upon the effectiveness and efficiency of membership recruitment through the "[t]ies of family, marriages, and loyalties to heads of households" (90). Both Paul and St. Augustine encountered opposition from their strongest supporters for their insistence on the superiority of celibacy for undistracted service to God. Each modified their monastic pronouncements to include a place of honor in the scheme of Christianity for the sanctity of marriage. In many places, dynasties of longtime

Christians had held positions of leadership for several generations. For example, “[i]n the 190s, bishop Polycrates of Ephesus could claim that seven of his kinsmen had already been bishops of the city!” (90). As the Church began to take on more and more administrative responsibilities that increasingly involved caring for its widows and fellow Christians in distress, kinship interests of the aristocracy did not always coincide with the mission of the Church. Ideally, celibate bishops, free of the ties and concerns of marriage and family, were best equipped to serve most exclusively the interests of the Church as it grew. The wives were not completely absent from the households of the bishops, however, until the late sixth century. With this change, the “ancient style of Christian leadership vanished from the West,” in theory, at least, and “the clerical celibacy associated with the Middle Ages proper” began (431-2). Nonetheless, even though the ‘official’ date for the celibacy of the bishops appears in the late sixth century, they openly continued to have wives and concubines for another five hundred years.⁶⁸

In spite of the celibacy vows of the higher offices of the clergy from the late sixth century on, the influence of the aristocracy upon these offices, and thus upon the Church, did not come to an end entirely. By the late twelfth century we find that the persistence of ecclesiastical dynasties and aristocratic influences within and upon the clergy became increasingly problematic for the Church. As a result clerical nicolaitism⁶⁹ and nepotism, secular intervention in the administration of the Church became more of a hindrance than a benefit. A growing number of reformers began to see that the Church’s “freedom to use its property for religious purposes” had become seriously hampered by feudal

⁶⁸ Brundage notes that bishops “who were married or who lived in open concubinage [. . .] were becoming rare in many places by the mid-twelfth century” (*Law* 226).

⁶⁹ The term “nicolaitism” generally refers to married clerics, or to those in concubinous relationships like St. Augustine’s, for example. In the twelfth century, Peter Damian first appropriated the term “Nicolaitism” to refer to noncelibate clerics as heretics. The term comes from the name of a first century Christian sect, the Nicolaites, who believed in and practiced communal sex and love (see Brundage, *Law* 66, 216). Their views did not become very popular, losing out in favor of the trendiness of chastity and the glitzy desert ascetics.

monarchs who “reached out to take control of lands and other assets that belonged to monasteries, dioceses, and parish churches” (Brundage, *Law* 179). Not only did the Church find itself losing control of its assets, but also by the tenth and eleventh centuries, “monarchs and noblemen were intervening in the selection of bishops, abbots, and other ecclesiastical officials” (179). These issues became central to the momentum of the Gregorian reforms in the early part of the twelfth century. Church reformers mounted a campaign to convince Christians that the ideal organization of the Church should be “free from secular interference.” According to the reformers, to be once and for all “[i]ndependent of political ties to monarchs, the Church [. . .] ought somehow to be economically self-supporting, relying on the income from its own properties, Church taxes, and contributions from the faithful” (180). Indeed one way to empower itself had entailed, since the first half of the eleventh century, the consolidation of its wealth by curtailing the outflow of its money and lands into the secular feudal domain.

Brundage notes that an “essential precondition for the liberation of Church property from lay control” resonated in the rising demand in the eleventh century for the eviction of the wives and concubines of the clergy from the realm of legitimate and legally protected relationships (*Law* 214). While ideally the celibacy of the prelates protected the Church’s stake in their estates, the secular clergy were usually married, supporting wives and children with the help of Church funds. A major goal of the reformers was to

abolish clerical marriage, to eliminate clerical concubinage, and to establish once for all the principle that clerical celibacy was not just a heroic ideal to be pursued by a few, but an absolute requirement to be imposed, by force if necessary, on every cleric in the Western Church. (183)

These reform efforts had teeth, and at first primarily focused upon establishing the illegitimacy of clerical marriages rather than upon chastity per se. For example, in 1022,

we will recall that the synod at Pavia “decreed that the children of priests were slaves, never to be enfranchised” (Keneally 65). Despite these devastating consequences of the Church’s decrees for reform, social realities did not change overnight. The changes imposed by the Church proved difficult to effect, particularly since the members of the clergy themselves did not cooperate. Since most of the lower clergy had married as a matter of course for centuries, and “many had passed on their clerical positions and preferments to their children,” it is not surprising that they responded vigorously, and sometimes with violence, to the imposed reforms (Brundage, *Law* 220-21). In Paris, angry clergymen drove the bishop from his church with “jeers and blows,” forcing him to take refuge with the royal family. The archbishop John of Rouen was stoned, and, in northern Italy, bishops declined to pass along the news for fear of their lives: “in a letter to Bishop Josphed of Paris, Gregory VII reported in 1077 that a proponent of clerical celibacy had been burnt alive by outraged clergy of Cambrai” (221). In Toledo in 1203, efforts of the bishop and archbishop to enforce the requirement that unchaste priests separate from their wives or concubines sparked a widespread clerical revolt (Linehan 2). We have not only records of “assaults, demonstrations, and riots,” but also a copious archive of sustained written objections (Brundage, *Law* 221). Eloquent protests “denounced the policy as improvident, uncanonical, and unjust.” These protests forcefully defended the right of priests to marry and affirmed that “both natural justice and canon law required that the sons of priests be accorded the full protection of the law and all the rights of legitimacy.” Furthermore, they “attacked the reformers’ celibacy program as madness and added that it ran counter to the Scriptures as well” (221).

One hundred years of protests, however, did not alter the Church’s position. Berceo’s tale of “La abadesa preñada” speaks in many ways to the different aspects of the reform movement of the thirteenth century that had its roots in the Gregorian reforms.

Also, the story serves to highlight the aura of ambiguity surrounding the issue of fornication and clerical celibacy. The miracle presents us with a very pregnant abbess whose nuns seek to expose her embarrassing and scandalous situation by inviting their bishop for a visit to the convent. As the abbess nervously awaits the bishop's arrival, she cloisters herself in her private chambers and prays to the Virgin Mary. Her anxiety about the impending scandal is so great that she begs the Virgin to let her die rather than face the ridicule and disgrace that are sure to come. Finally, just as the bishop reaches the convent, the Virgin hears the abbess's prayers and bestows upon her the miracle of a painless birth and the removal of all signs of her pregnancy. Angels whisk the new baby boy to a nearby hermitage where the hermit, a friend of the Virgin, will care for the child. After administering a thorough physical examination, the bishop finds the abbess innocent of the nuns' accusations. But when the abbess sees the bishop sentence her nuns to exile for their treachery, she confesses the miracle out of compassion for them. In the resolution of the story, the bishop arranges for the little boy to be reared by the hermit until the age of seven, at which time the bishop sends his most honored clerics to fetch the child and orders the most learned teachers to educate him. The boy turns out well, all the townspeople are pleased and when the bishop dies, the child, now grown, receives the bishopric.

To this resolution, Berceo adds an epilogue not found in the Latin versions that stresses the young man's succession as the people's choice, proclaims the excellence of his governance of the bishopric, and declares the great love for him held by the people, his clergy, the canons and all the nuns ("[a]mávanlo los pueblos e las sus clerezías,/ amávanlo calonges e todas las mongías") (580ab). The miracle of "El monje lozano" suggests that the monk's child by a prostitute receives nothing from the Church. The lucky fate of the abbess's child is provocative in the context of the *Milagros* as a whole,

which, as we know, generally reflect key Lateran reforms—particularly those regarding clerical celibacy and the sin of fornication—initiated and/ or strengthened by the Council of 1215. The social and historical plausibility of Berceo’s epilogue leads us to consider the niggling question of the child’s paternity, but it will also prove fruitful to bear in mind the unique autonomy of Spanish abbesses in the High Middle Ages.

The canons of the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 represent in many ways a culmination of the Gregorian reforms initiated in the first quarter of the twelfth century. Some key issues that the Church sought to address through this twelfth-century reform movement revolved around the investiture controversy, that is, the debate over the exclusive right of lay princes to invest bishops and abbots with both spiritual and secular authority. Even though the controversy became resolved in the Church’s favor in 1122,⁷⁰ the Church realized that in order to wrest itself free from secular authority other measures were necessary, such as the elimination of simony (the purchase of ecclesiastical offices), and the extension of celibacy requirements to encompass the secular clergy, including not only the priests, but deacons and subdeacons as well.⁷¹

The situation of the monk’s child by a prostitute in “El monje lozano” reflects that of many children caught in the transition from legitimacy to illegitimacy. Echoing

⁷⁰ “The Concordat of Worms in 1122 between Pope Callistus II and Holy Roman Emperor Henry V [. . .] is sometimes said to have settled the Investiture Controversy. According to the concordat, the church was to have the right to elect bishops, and investiture by ring and staff was to be done by the clergy. Elections were to take place, however, in the presence of the emperor, who also would confer whatever lands and revenues were attached to the bishopric by investiture with a scepter, a symbol without spiritual connotations. Despite the concordat, the church in the Middle Ages never obtained complete control over the nomination of bishops, and the problem recurred in many forms. Investiture was a key issue in the Gallican controversies of the 17th century in France, and it was a controversial issue in Spain until recently” (O’Malley).

⁷¹ The celibacy of clerics was actually fourth (following investiture and simony) on Pope Gregory VII’s list of priorities for reform; his top priority was the supremacy of the papacy. He had greater concerns regarding Henry IV and the question of investiture, as well as the problems of simony that involved the alienation of large amounts of ecclesiastical property. In a letter to William the Conqueror, Gregory calls for the expelling of “Bishop Juhel from the see of Dol in Brittany” because Juhel had gained the bishopric by simony, gotten married, had children, and then “crowned a most frightful crime by adding an abominable sacrilege[. . .] . bestowing and alienating church lands and revenues by way of [. . .] dowries” for his daughters (qtd in Blumenthal 241-2).

decrees of the First Lateran Council (1123), the Second Lateran Council (1139), held under Pope Innocent II, declared the marriages of priests null and void (Keneally 65). At this time, most priests were married or in stable relationships of legitimate concubinage. Thus, as Brundage notes, the wives and children of priests at this time suffered greatly: “Women who had been the wives of priests saw their status changed to that of concubines, and some reformers classed them with prostitutes,” while “their [children’s] legitimacy was suspect, their capacity to inherit denied, their futures clouded, and their very existence deplored by public authorities and spiritual leaders” (*Law* 226, 217). If the children of priests found themselves in such deplorable circumstances, it is doubtful that the children of friars would have fared any better. Hence it is not without good reason that Berceo considers the fact of the monk’s child a great misfortune—“muy gran desventura” (161c).

The Fourth Lateran Council, held under Innocent III and attended by all bishops within Latin Christendom, further strengthened with sanctions the requirements for celibacy upon holy orders through the subdeaconate that previous councils had called for (Baldwin, *Language of Sex* 62). As early as the eleventh century, “[p]ractical considerations, mainly economic, supported the drive for an unmarried clergy,” since “married priests, bishops, and others would be tempted to treat their ecclesiastical offices as family property and to convert their sacred dignity into the family heritage” (Brundage, *Law* 215). We clearly can surmise from the Council of 1215’s increased sanctions for violation of the celibacy requirement that clerical marriage and concubinage were far from disappearing by the early thirteenth century (315). Furthermore, the spiritual charges of parishes continued to pass from father to son as they had for centuries. Given these historical circumstances, Berceo’s miracle of the pregnant abbess

does not seem to make sense if the bishop is not the father, especially considering Berceo's added emphasis on the son's reign as bishop.

Neither the question of who the abbess's paramour is, nor the conjecture that it is the bishop have escaped critical attention. In her study of Berceo's *Milagros*, Diz notes that at least three plays on the word "visitation," all of which refer to the bishop, could lead one to interpret the paternity of the bishop in literal terms (64-5, n. 7). The nuns' letter to the bishop states that he had not visited them and ought to: "non las visitava e deviélo" (511d). The imperfect form of the verb "visitar" suggests a continuing action in the past. The bishop's resolve to carry out his duty [and] visit the convent ("vino fer su officio, visitar la mongía") (512c),⁷² and the narrator's conclusion that the bishop's visit was good for everyone ("fo bona para todos essa visitación") (574d), both follow and therefore highlight the implication of previous visits in the nuns' letter to the bishop. Nonetheless, maintains Diz, "[l]a paternidad literal del obispo no me parece, sin embargo, una interpretación satisfactoria, porque los motivos que existen para apoyarla son demasiado tenues" (65). She later states, however, that in regard to the education of the abbess's son in care of the bishop, "Berceo repite ideas heredadas: en el derecho canónico, el cuidado paterno de los hijos es parte del derecho natural" (169). So far we can see that the ambiguity of the relationship between the bishop and the abbess is not lost on Berceo and that perhaps he is deliberately exploiting it for the sake of audience entertainment.

In this miracle, Berceo liberally amplified, novelized, and added to or altered the Latin versions. As we have seen, the account of the son's fortunate reign as bishop does not appear in any of the Latin versions. Berceo also substitutes a folkloric image to tell us that the abbess's 'slip,' rather than being inspired by the devil, occurred as a result of

⁷² Diz indicates that the use of "visitar" in the context of the bishop's duty also evokes the legal term *visitatio* (65).

having stepped on a contaminated weed (“pisó por su ventura yerva fuert enconada”) (507c).⁷³ This image, more playful and less condemning than the Latin, lends a tone of good humor to the story. After all, if the Virgin Mary sees fit to rescue the abbess, how can the story dare to carry a judgmental tone? Berceo takes full advantage of this fact in the scenes involving the judgment process and the bishop’s methods of obtaining proofs against the abbess. As soon as the abbess presents herself to the bishop, he immediately begins to rebuke her (548a). Berceo embellishes this encounter with at least two quatrains of dialogue between the two protagonists:

“Toda monja qe face tan grand desonestat,
que non guarda so cuerpo nin tiene castidat,
devié seer echada de la sociedad,
allá por do quisiere faga tal suciedat.”

“Sennor—díssoli ella— ¿por qué me maltraedes?
Non só por aventura tal como vos tenedes.”
“Duenna—disso el bispo— ¿por qué vos lo neguedes?
Non seredes creída ca a provar seredes.”

“Duenna—disso el bispo— essit vos al ostal,
nos avremos consejo, después faremos ál.”
(549-551ab)

The bishop’s tirade is humorous in itself simply because one might expect a religious person in a position of authority to have a more gentle and judicious approach, heeding, for example, the admonition to ‘judge not that thee be not judged.’ His confidence of the abbess’s ‘guilt’ seems to incriminate him. Assuming that an audience has caught on to the possibility that the bishop himself might be the father, the angry outburst appears even more amusing as bluster perfunctorily executed for show in front of the nuns; after all, the bishop plans to have a private counsel with the abbess later (“essit vos al ostal, nos avremos consejo, después faremos ál”). The bishop performs his role as harsh judge

⁷³ The Latin versions reflect the monastic view of sexual desire as “diabolical suggestions” rather than as natural. Berceo chooses a more ‘natural’ view of his abbess’s motivations.

once more for the nuns, this time in the guise of appearing fair in regard to the procedure of proofs. When the nuns question the need for further proofs, the bishop explains to them that “[q]uando fuere vencida,/ vos seredes más salvas, ella más confondida,/ si non, nuestra sentencia serié mal retraída,/ no li puede en cabo prestar nulla guarida.” (554a-d). Of course, all these amplifications and additions serve to add dramatic tension and lead to greater spectacle when the abbess’s innocence is discovered, and increased wonderment at the miracle of the Virgin.

Although the Latin versions contain the information that the abbess’s innocence is discovered, the process of this discovery in Berceo’s version is all his own. As Keller puts it, “Berceo arouses his audience’s more prurient interests as he describes how the abbess is stripped for the clinical examination of the [bishop’s] representatives, none of which is in the Latin version” (*Pious Brief Narrative* 43). In fact, the abbess is stripped not just once, but twice. The first time involves only the removal of her skirts, and this distresses her (“li pesava”) (555c). The clerics that examine her “falláronla tan secca qe tabla semejava./ Non trovaron en ella signo de prennedat” (555d-556a). They inform the bishop of the abbess’s innocence, telling him that “quiquier qe ál vos diga, [. . .] dizvos tan grand mentira qe non podrié mayor” (557cd). The bishop becomes furious, insisting that his clerics have been deceived, are too embarrassed or have taken money, and proceeds to have a look for himself. This time the whole habit must come off—against the abbess’s will, of course—and, as we know, he finds that the nuns have denounced her falsely.⁷⁴ He turns his anger on the nuns, now protective of the abbess. In these verses,

⁷⁴ I would also suggest that in this miracle Berceo also parodies the bishop as judge in the abbess’s case. Innocent III had changed the accusatory system of *plena probatio* to the reform known as *Tua nos duxit*. This change made it easier to prosecute non-celibate clergy. The decretal “drastically modified the law concerning criminal procedure. ‘[I]f the crime is so public that it can properly be called notorious,’ the pope declared, ‘then neither an accuser nor witnesses are required, since a crime of this sort cannot be concealed by any subterfuge.’ Innocent also cautioned, however, that he was using the term ‘notorious’ in a technical sense” (Brundage “Sin,” 300). That is, knowledge had to be generally known, not merely suspected, and the knowledge had to come from eyewitnesses, not from rumor. However, if the rumor was

the stripping of the abbess is not the only thing that arouses the “prurient interests” of an audience. The bishop’s anger does also. For the third time in the miracle tale we are confronted with his certainty that the abbess must be pregnant—he’s even angry to find that she is not. When he does see for himself, he becomes protective of her and lashes out at the nuns, almost as if he blames them for leading him on or for his having revealed himself through his assured anger at the abbess.

Once the abbess has confessed the miracle, the bishop states that if all she has said can be proven, then “yo mientras fuero vivo faré vuestro mandado” (567d). Although we are meant to understand that this pledge of devotion stems from the evidence that Christ is pleased with the abbess (“veré don Jesu Christo qe es vuestro pagado”) (567c), the pledge itself has a courtly ring to it. The bishop sends two canons to the hermitage to verify the baby boy’s existence and the hermit’s account of events. This done, the bishop, in a gesture that mirrors a courtly love scene where the knight humbles himself to his lady, falls to the floor at the abbess’s feet, begging for mercy and pardon (571b-d). The abbess will have none of the bishop’s humility and orders him to his feet. They conclude their exchange in good accord, and “Jamás [i.e., Ya más⁷⁵] ovieron ambos amor e bienquerencia,/ encerraron su vida en buena paciencia.” (573cd). This description of the abbess’s and bishop’s relationship, with its courtly motifs of accord, good will, love and patience, reflects a well-known formula in medieval literature for alluding to the affections between nuns and prelates. We are reminded of the famous nun of the *Libro de buen amor*, la monja Garoza. G. B. Gybbon-Monypenny describes her as “la monja

causing a public scandal, “the pope empowered judges to demand that the suspect clear his name by *canonica purgatio*, that is by publicly swearing a solemn oath that he was innocent of the offence of which he was suspected. A clerical suspect who refused to take the oath, the pope declared, effectively confessed his guilt and the judge could forthwith proceed to punish him” (Brundage “Sin,” 300-01). This laid the groundwork for inquisitorial procedure, and we know the extreme expression of that. Thank you to Cathryn Meyer for the reference to this article for this context.

⁷⁵ “*I Iamas, F Ya mas*” (Dutton, *Obras* 168); “*jamás*: ‘siempre’ (< *iam magis*: ‘ya más’)” (Baños 129).

esquiva” who succeeds in containing the passionate priest within the bounds of the kind of lover “que los trovadores provenzales llamaban entendor (‘pretendiente acreditado’), persuadiéndole a aceptar la participación en actividades piadosas como sustituto de las sexuales” (Gybbon-Monypenny 58).

With these selective examples I have desired not so much to prove that the bishop is the father of the abbess’s son, but rather to point out that Berceo deliberately invites his audience to speculate that he might be. Given the historical context of persistent ecclesiastical dynasties and continued resistance on the part of the clergy to the expanded celibacy requirements, an audience would have had little trouble recognizing the innuendos. Berceo’s humorous tone regarding the fornication of the clergy undoubtedly reflects influences from popular and more ribald genres, such as the *fabliaux*, that often recounted the sexual adventures of clerics. I think, however, that we cannot ignore one more facet of Berceo’s humor. In his day, as his audiences would have known, many abbesses were wealthy widows who had founded the abbey, or they were members of the founding family and succeeded a mother, grandmother or aunt. In some cases they were sponsored by one of these wealthy families. David Herlihy points out that

especially in Spain and southern France women held land and were widely admitted to feudal fiefs from the tenth century. They are recorded as principal donors, sellers and otherwise alienators of property in the charters, and ‘in most instances’ it is churches that are receiving their land.
(108)

In Castile and León, in particular, abbesses exercised centuries of autonomous power and during Berceo’s lifetime this eminence of the abbesses reached its apex.⁷⁶ Most of them came from noble lineage, and in many cases queens, princesses, or their cousins presided over the abbeys. As abbesses, these noblewomen arranged for the education of the daughters in their extended families and of those of the nobility to which they had

⁷⁶ See the study of Cecilia Lagunas, esp. 115-163.

advantageous connections. In addition to their religious objectives, they exercised power over the disposition of family lands, possessions, rents and persons (Lagunas 154). These abbesses also served as patrons to the male members of their families, guiding them in the augmentation of the family estate. Cecilia Lagunas observes with curiosity the fact that the major part of today's historiography, like that of the thirteenth century, "sigue destacando como 'buenas' o 'grandes' abadesas a aquellas que supieron, por sagacidad o 'relaciones,' acrecentar sus patrimonios y administrarlos bien" (157). Lagunas also notes that over time the big monasteries, like, coincidentally, Berceo's San Millán de la Cogolla, took in many of the smaller abbeys via transfers of rents and/ or properties, while the abbesses who donated or transferred these assets continued on in their positions with greater assurance of protection and survival (81, 92). It is quite possible that Berceo had in mind all along that his abbess did not need the bishop in order to arrange for her son's 'patrimony.' The playful allusions to the bishop as father appear all the more humorous considering that the listeners to the story would know that most probably the abbess was the one with the power.

Of special interest in this story, beyond the fornication of the abbess or the paternity of her son, is the fact that the child remains under the protection of the Church. Thus the abbess (as well as her property, and/ or the bishop's) remains within the Church also. This perhaps explains why the miracle of the lusty monk excludes any mention of a patrimony for his child by the prostitute. Anything of material value that the monk might have had to offer the child and its mother effectively would have had to exit the domain of the Church. The monk's penance conveniently relieves him of these family responsibilities. The abbess, on the other hand, not once mentions any remorse for the act that obviously occurred in order for her to become pregnant; rather, her pleas to the Virgin concern her desperation in the face of impending scandal. While Berceo describes

the fact of the monk's child as a great misfortune, he appears almost celebratory about the birth of the abbess's son:

Al sabor del solaz de la Virgo preciosa,
non sintiendo la madre de dolor nulla cosa,
nació la creatura cosiella muy fermosa,
mandóla a dos ángeles prender la Gloriosa.
(533)

It is perhaps telling that in the five miracles involving sex and the clergy, the only character who does *not* fornicate, the canon who decides to marry, finds himself in more trouble than the fornicators when Mary says to him: “Don fol malastrugado, torpe e enloquido,/ ¿en qué roídos andas? ¿en qué eres caído?” (340ab). In “La boda y la Virgen,”⁷⁷ this canon, who upon the death of his parents receives a large and valuable inheritance, yields to pressure from his relatives to marry and produce an heir to his fortune. The Virgin intervenes on the day of the wedding to scold and bully the canon for breaking his vow to her. The outcome of Mary's intervention is that somehow—either miraculously or intentionally—the canon manages to slip away from his new bride as she waits for him to join her in the marriage bed, thus narrowly averting the sexual consummation of his marriage. No one ever hears from him again, but the narrator believes he cloisters himself in “algún lugar de grand relijón” (350b), and dedicates the rest of his life to Mary.

The verses that describe the context of the canon's decision to marry contain a curious change made by Berceo that tends to draw focus toward the issue of property and inheritance that accompanies the decision to marry and leave the Church:

vinieron los parientes tristes e desarrados,
diziénli qe fiziesse algunos engendrados,
qe non fincassen yermos logares tan preciados.

⁷⁷ Miracle XV.

Cambióse del propósito, del qe ante tenié,
movio l la ley del siglo, dixo qe lo farié;
buscáronli esposa qual a él convenié,
(334b-335a-c)

In verse 334c, Berceo “cambia el latín, que sólo habla de *ducere uxorem*, en ‘hacer algunos engendrados’ para heredar esta propiedad” (Dutton, *Obras* 124): “Venientes autem amici eius ad eum insistebant ut rediret ad domum quam parentes ei reliquerant et ducens uxorem gubernaret suam hereditatem” (123). Berceo’s view of the canon’s dilemma regarding his inheritance centers more attention on his duty to produce legitimate heirs than to govern and manage his estate. The heirs, of course, never are born because the canon does not consummate the marriage. Bermejo Cabrero considers the juridical scheme of this miracle clearly to be based on that of ‘the unconsummated matrimony,’ noting that “[p]or las fechas en que escribe Berceo, la doctrina está extendida ya en el Derecho canónico” (44). Of specific relevance to the canon is the fact that the “Decretales admiten la disolución del matrimonio no consumado si uno de los cónyuges quiere entrar en religión” (Bermejo Cabrero 44).⁷⁸ While the canon has already entered the religious life, both Berceo’s miracle and the Latin versions express hope for the canon to find solace in a religious refuge after he has fled the wedding bed. The added emphasis on the life of religion in the context of the unconsummated marriage draws attention to this prescription of canon law.

It is difficult to know exactly what happens to the canon’s inheritance since he is praised for leaving not only a beautiful wife, but also “muy grand posesión,/ lo qe farién bien poccus de los qe oï son;/ [. . .] qui por Dios tanto faze, aya su bendición” (349b, d). The canon’s family, however, wants him to produce heirs so that the land he inherits will not remain uninhabited (‘yermo’). The law of the world moves the canon to comply with

⁷⁸ We find the same position in the *Fuero Real* and in the *Siete Partidas* (Bermejo Cabrero 44, n.12).

their wishes and take a wife. The phrase ‘movio l la ley del siglo’ is an expression that refers to the law of the world *as opposed to* the life of religion.⁷⁹ By adding the verses about producing heirs, Berceo appears to deliberately highlight the argument for keeping property in the family as a position hostile to the Church. This argument calls to mind medieval laws forbidding property to fall into the “manos muertas” of the Church. These mortmain laws made it illegal for heirs to become disinherited by a parent who, at the vulnerable moment of facing death, might be persuaded by an attending priest to bequeath everything to the Church. These laws also called for limits to the number of years that bequests to the Church could endure. In Spain, this “struggle between Church and State” over the alienation of property to the Church stands out as particularly active (Goody 130). From the early part of the twelfth century,

until the middle of the sixteenth, [. . .] with occasional intermissions, almost every assembly of the cortés of Castile petitioned the monarchs for their enforcement or adopted some plan to mitigate the evil [of mortmain], and every code of Spanish medieval law has provisions on the subject. (Goody 130)

In any event, it appears that the canon would have had less trouble from Mary had he decided from the outset to eschew marriage and fornicate instead. His rejection of marriage need not have entailed one of offspring also, since, like the abbess, he could have provided a good patrimony for them within the Church. It seems curious that Mary is willing to tolerate fornication among her devoted clerics provided they remain committed to the Church. What might characterize the nature of this commitment? If the

⁷⁹ “Sieglo. m. Siglo: 1) Mundo: Mentre el *sieglo* fuere non será olvidada (65d). 2) Comercio y trato de los hombres en quanto toca y mira a la vida civil y política, en oposición a la vida religiosa: Moviólo la ley del *sieglo*, dixo que lo farie (335b)” (Baro 197). Also, “from *Teresa de Cartagena, Arboleda de los enfermos*, trans. Dayle Seidenspinner Nuñez: “[. . .] que no es su voluntad que yo hable en las cosas del syglo [. . .]’ [it is not His will that I speak of things of this world] (41); ‘¡O marauillosa caridat del Señor soberano, que tan manifiestas señales me muestras para que escuche lo que a mi salud es neçesario, que no solamente es quita del oyr e faltar mio en las conversaciones del syglo [. . .]’ [[. . .] you removed my hearing and speaking from worldly conversations] (43)” (qtd. in Sutherland “e-mail”).

canon initially displays a certain ambivalence regarding legitimate entrance into secular life vs. continued commitment to the religious, at least he is torn between two alternatives sanctioned by the Church theologically, if not theoretically (i.e., he would break his promise to serve the Church). Mary's attitude, however, appears to reflect an ambivalent attitude within the Church as a whole regarding its own doctrines. Let us investigate the historical underpinnings that might explain some of these ambiguities.

We will recall that André the Chaplain's *De amore* echoed the voices of Abelard and the clerics in the schools whose tales of amatory prowess seemed to counter Church reforms demanding the celibacy of clerics through the level of subdeacon. Pierre the Chanter, a contemporary of André the Chaplain, along with many of his Paris colleagues, questioned the consequences of the Church's program of sexual restrictions. Fearing that "the restrictions might be unenforceable among the numerous lower clergy and encourage more undesirable abuses," they implemented efforts "to limit the celibacy requirement to the rank of deacon, allowing subdeacons and clerics in minor orders to marry legitimately and raise families" (Baldwin, *Language of Sex* 228). Pope Alexander III (1159-81) dealt with the rising tide of protests among the clergy by "granting dispensations or 'dissimulations' which allowed subdeacons to marry under special occasions and difficult circumstances" (62). The general disagreement about celibacy engendered debates about the relative sinfulness of clerical marriage vs. fornication. Thomas of Chobham, one of the colleagues in Pierre the Chanter's circle, condoned the practice of clerics in minor orders having secret marriages on the grounds that "it was less sinful to deceive one's bishop than to commit fornication and violate the divine commandment" (62). Furthermore, he encouraged confessors to "counsel minor clerics" to keep these marriages secret even "if called to major orders" (Brundage, *Law* 402-3). Johannes Teutonicus, on the other hand, thought it was less of a sin for a cleric to

fornicate than to marry (402-3). André accepted celibacy as a clerical ideal, but “in practice he was willing to condone the activities of the clerical lover because of fleshly weakness” (Baldwin, *Language of Sex* 60). Notwithstanding differences in style and tone, André’s dialogues *de amore*, along with Berceo’s *milagros* and, another century later, Juan Ruiz’s *ensienplos*, reflect a literary effort directed more toward compromise than opposition, while the Chanter’s group declared that the interests of the Church were best “served by married ministers than those tempted to fornication, adultery, sodomy, and incest” (62).

Even though the Church remained unmovable regarding the celibacy requirement, a certain degree of tolerance in favor of fornication over marriage began to develop. Clerical concubinage was commonplace in Spain, England, France, Norway, Germany and Italy, for example, but “unless the situation was scandalous, authorities usually preferred not to make an issue of the matter” (Brundage, *Law* 404). If a cleric ordered to give up his mistress disobeyed, then he would wind up in trouble for disobedience rather than for a sexual offense, and with regard to the “concubines themselves, Thomas of Chobham observed that the harsh punishments prescribed in the old canons—notably enslavement—were no longer enforced and that bishops usually ignored the problem so far as they could” (Brundage, *Law* 404-405). Even in cases of the illegitimate children of clergymen, “thirteenth-century writers moderated the disabilities that previous generations had imposed” (409). When the Fourth Lateran Council further strengthened with sanctions the requirements for celibacy upon holy orders through the subdeaconate, bishops were ordered to increase their efforts to impose compliance with the celibacy policy. The Council even called for clerics in the minor orders who took wives to be penalized by being ousted from their parishes (402). Once again, the clergy met these increased efforts to enforce celibacy with renewed outbreaks of violent protest. Even

though by the thirteenth century the mandatory celibacy of priests was firmly entrenched as Church policy, its practice was far from being securely established. Berceo composed his miracles in the environment of Lateran reforms, which encompassed redoubled efforts to enforce it.

We can see that each of these stories—about the fornicating monks, the pregnant abbess, and the canon that decides to marry—both highlights the discourses of Church reform pertaining to celibacy requirements for the clergy and reflects the ambiguity inherent in those discourses. In the miracles of the monks, the emphasis on confession and penance attenuates, yet simultaneously affirms, the notion of the ‘sinfulness’ of fornication. Although the stories are about monks, they speak directly to the circumstances of priests confronted with the enforcement of celibacy requirements. On one level, these miracles debunk the concept of sexual purity as a criterion of moral superiority. Thus, they undermine those rhetorics of moral justification recruited to support the rationale for clerical celibacy. On another level, the confession solution to the breaking of celibacy vows reflects the power of priests, as authorized confessors, to implement Church policy. In the miracles, the Virgin Mary’s endorsement of confession in cases of fornication provides an example for policy interpretation. From yet another perspective relevant to clerics, the solution of confession for the breaking of celibacy vows coincidentally mirrors that prescribed for unchaste priests by the Gregorian reforms.

The pragmatic motives of the Gregorian reforms, the consolidation of Church property, are addressed in the stories of the abbess, the canon, and the lusty monk. A comparison of these miracles allows the dynamics of these motives to become clearer. The story of the abbess suggests a historical reality: the source of Church endowments often came from aristocratic families. Because of mortmain laws, these endowments and

bequests could expire. If the endowments could continue to provide a living for future sons and daughters who were not in line for inheritance, however, if sustained by the family, they could effectively remain in the estates of both Church and family. This arrangement could be of benefit to everyone involved: to the Church, it maintained a source of income, and to the family, it provided a method of ‘estate planning’ that allowed for its assets to remain intact and for its offspring and siblings not selected for inheritance to receive a good life in the Church.⁸⁰ Thus, in the example of Gregory VII’s bishop who acquired his office by means of simony and then divided up its estate in the form of dowries for his daughters, we can perceive a scandal of concern not only to the Church, but also to the family that had sold the office. The basis for the bishopric’s income, which theoretically the Church was supposed to protect, probably was not intended to convey with the purchase of the office. From these examples, we can see that the control of heirship, not of offspring per se, appears to assert itself as a theme in these miracles of inheritance.

This said, we must note, nonetheless, that it “was against the inheritance of churches [. . .] that the reformers directed their most concentrated fire.” Certainly, “the local community connived at the marriage of their priest and in some cases helped to conceal the facts from the ecclesiastical authorities” (Lawrence 660). In the happy epilogue to “La abadesa preñada,” we encounter verses that express the townspeople’s approval of the abbess’s son. The first verse in this regard, which also appears in the Latin versions, says that when the boy grew up, “[e]ra el pueblo todo d’elli mucho pagado,/ quando murió el bispo, diéronli el bispado” (578cd). The son as bishop is the people’s choice. The second verse on this theme of approval, an addition of Berceo,

⁸⁰ Benefits to a life in the Church might include an education, an opportunity not to become a knight or to have to give birth (i.e., a longer life), a significant role in the administration and management of family interests, and, of course, access to a spiritual life.

claims that along with the clergy, the canons and all the nuns, “amávanlo los pueblos.” Significantly, the story seems to highlight as a reason for the townspeople’s approval of the abbess’s son the fact that he was well educated and well instructed. When the boy leaves the hermitage, the bishop is pleased to find that “era bien ensennado” (577b), and therefore, “mandó l poner a letras con maestro letrado” (577d). The townspeople are pleased because the boy “[i]ssió mucho bon omne en todo mesurado,/ pareció bien qe fuera de bon amo criado” (578ab). These verses are striking because they emphasize the status of the child’s upbringing, and inversely reflect a significant problem that Lateran IV sought to address: ignorant priests. These were the parish clergy who generally inherited the churches generation after generation. Their “illiteracy and ignorance were a favourite butt for contemporary satirists including the friars, and the object of much professed concern by the rulers of the Church” (Lawrence 661). Certainly Berceo had more in common with the abbess’s son in terms of education! In all fairness, however, we must note that in another miracle of the collection, “El clérigo simple,” the Virgin intervenes to reinstate a parish priest who has been relieved of his duties due to his ignorance:

Fo est missacantano al bispo acusado,
 qe era idiota, mal clérigo provado;
 El “Salve Santa Parens” sólo tenié usado,
 non sabié otra missa el torpe embargado.
 (221)

How does Berceo compare with this tradition of ambivalence about clerical celibacy? He generally avoids adopting a moralizing tone when he narrates the sexual slips of his characters. While the fact that the protagonists are fornicating members of the clergy who have taken vows of celibacy suggests ambivalence with regard to this ideal, Berceo’s stories nonetheless reveal no ironic suggestion of a double meaning. The protagonists have sinned, but the happy ending is that Mary helps them atone and

continue with their lives of service to God. Their dilemmas do not invite ridicule, but instead impart an affectionate reflection of humor. In a sense, Berceo's way of accommodating the ideal of the celibacy dogma to the realities of daily life is through confession and the forgiveness of fornication, with a premium on remaining committed to the Church. The miracles seem to support keeping the peace and negotiating the tensions between celibacy requirements and sexual desire without rebelling against the papacy. This attitude reflects a stance within the Church to strive for discretion in sexual matters involving the clergy (i.e., if the fact of the parish priest's concubinary relationship did not become a local scandal or a problem for the Church, then the bishops would not seek reprimands), to take care of things internally (i.e., within the Church, via confession, dispensations or dissimulations), and to preserve the continuance of the clergy.

It is plausible to consider that this ambiguous attitude of tolerance regarding clerical concubinage and fornication was not purely hypocritical in the pragmatic sense, i.e., that as long as the Church protected its patrimony it was willing to look the other way. Rather, the policy of acceptance in cases of discreet fornication undoubtedly had its origins in older secular laws that recognized the legitimacy of concubinary relationships (such was the case with Augustine), and that did not recognize fornication as a sin. Thus we can recognize that Berceo understood well that art could accommodate religious dogma to the realities of daily life and secular beliefs, while simultaneously appropriating the same dogma to justify them.

Chapter 3: Christians and Jews of the City: Toledo, Constantinople, and Bourges

In Berceo's miracles involving Christians and Jews, loyalty to Mary and the Church can justify the slander of Jews. To this end, anti-Semitism emerges as the motive for a Christian domination in which the Marian solution, experienced simultaneously as both a religious and a community event, demands either the murder of the Jews or their conversion to Christianity. In "Cristo y los judíos de Toledo," a Christian congregation turns into a violent mob when an archbishop confirms that they have heard the voice of the Virgin complaining against the Jews and singles out the chief rabbi as a target. Her intermediary presence is implicit in scenes that unite both Jews and Christians as witnesses of divine interventions. In "El judiezno," a mixed crowd recognizes the Virgin's presence in a Jewish child's salvation from the flames of the oven into which he is cast by his anguished father; and in "El mercader de Bizancio," a Christian merchant's supplication to sacred images is proven successful when one of these images, informing against a wealthy Jewish moneylender, speaks to a gathering of both Jewish and Christian witnesses. These miracles are set in urban communities and present Jewish characters who traditionally possess social influence—a rabbi, a prominent wealthy citizen, a father—and whose dominion or prestige both Christian and Jewish members of the community implicitly recognize and acknowledge. As the tales unfold, Berceo uses these Jewish characters to turn his audience against loci of influence external to the Church: the synagogue, the family, the patronage of the prosperous. As the Jewish figures of authority become undermined or destroyed, the distinction between Church authority and that of the community disappears. The miracles certify the ultimate authority of the Church by proving or validating the legitimacy of both divine and clerical intermediaries

in scenarios where witnesses attest to the efficacy of this Christian dogma. The narrative tensions between the Old and New Testaments that Berceo establishes in these miracles often resolve in a fusion of secular and sacred law. In the context of miracles about Christians and Jews, these tensions and fusions provoke the exploration of many questions regarding the relationship between the Church and the Jews in twelfth and thirteenth century Spain.

“CHRISTO Y LOS JUDÍOS DE TOLEDO”

In miracle XVIII, “Cristo y los judíos de Toledo,” Mary interrupts the Mass of the Assumption to complain about the pain that the Jews are causing her. Her invectives are harsh. Besides stating “qe mala nazieron, falssos e traïdores” (419a) and that “Otra vez crucifigan al mi caro Fijuelo” (420a), she claims that the Jewish people are “sorda e cegajosa,” (416c), that they “fizieron en don Christo muy grandes travesuras” (417b), “Nin se dolién del Fijo que mal non merecié,/ nin de la madre suya qe tal cuita vidié” (418ab), and that “ál tal li fiziesse nul tuerto non farié” (418d). She likens the Jews to “un amargo majuelo” (420c) growing in Toledo—“non se crió tan malo nunca en esti suelo” (420d). The archbishop, who is celebrating the mass, speaks, clarifying the Virgin’s message so there can be no doubt that the Jews are doing something against Christ. He orders everyone to go at once to the homes of the chief rabbis to seek out the offense. The Christian faithful quickly mobilize themselves to search the house of the most honorable rabbi. There they find a wax effigy of Christ upon which the crucifixion has been re-enacted. Berceo’s description of the discovery provides the gruesome details of the nails and the wound:

Fallaron enna casa del raví más onrado
un grand cuerpo de cera como omne formado,

como don Christo sovo, sedié crucifigado,
con grandes clavos preso, grand plaga al costado.
(427)

The two quatrains that follow recount the fate of the Jews of Toledo:

Quanta fonta fizieron en el nuestro Sennor
allí la fazién toda por nuestra deshonor,
recabdáronlos luego, mas non con grand savor,
qual fazién tal prisieron, ¡grado al Criador!

Fueron bien recabdados los que prender podieron,
diéronlis yantar mala qual ellos merecieron,
y fizieron “Tu átem”, mala muerte prisieron,
depués lo entendieron qe mal seso ficieron.
(428-429)

At the moment of the discovery of the wax Jesus in the house of the chief rabbi, the Christian mob descends upon the Jewish population with a vengeance. Berceo’s account of the killing of the Jews, however, justifies the gruesome act but does not describe it. A large portion of this tale (quatrains 416-423, or 44%) tells of the Virgin Mary (the Holy Advocate) ‘building the case’ against the Jews. An account of the archbishop generating a religious fervor to propel retaliatory action follows (vs. 424-425). Considering this momentum from accusation to retaliation, when the Christians find the wax image (426-427), we might expect a dramatic revenge with an exposition of visual amplification. We know that Berceo does not shy away from providing his audience with coarse details. The simulated crucifixion is clearly described in this miracle. The graphic description of the castrated pilgrim’s urinary duct in Miracle VIII is another example:

Era de lo ál todo sano e mejorado,
fuera de un filiello qe tenié travesado;
mas lo de la natura quanto qe fo cortado,
no li creció un punto, fincó en su estado.

De todo era sano, todo bien encorado,
pora verter su agua fincóli el forado;
(212-213ab)

But in “Cristo y los judíos de Toledo,” Berceo does not satisfy expectations of dramatic or visual amplification, for the executions are summarily reported with emphasis not on *how* the Jews were murdered, but on the assertion that they got what they deserved: “qual fazién tal prisieron”; “diéronlis yantar mala qual ellos merecieron.” The final quatrain of the miracle repeats the idea of ‘just deserts’ and uses it to create a threatening tone to honor Mary:

Qui a sancta María quisiere afontar,
*como estos ganaron assín deve ganar,*⁸¹
mas pensémosla nos de servir e onrrar,
ca nos *ha* el su ruego en cabo a prestar.
(430)

The summary report of the killings and the abrupt ending leave many readers with an eerie feeling of dead calm. The customary three or four quatrains in praise of Mary as well as the biblical references found at the end of most of the other miracles are completely absent. In spite of the executions, the narrative does not fulfill the fever pitch of violence awakened over the course of the tale. The momentum of the violence itself remains unsatisfied, swallowed up in the unemotional tone of the killings. Berceo could have added a detail or two in order to create a heightened dramatic effect. In fact, he often does add striking elements to the Latin versions for many of the miracles. In “El judiezno,” for example, Berceo amplifies the Latin version with the information that the crowd, upon seizing the father, tied his hands with a strong rope (371 c) before throwing him into the fire; in “La iglesia profanada,” he embellishes the details of the knights’ excruciating suffering. Alan Deyermond notes that Berceo employs “recursos

⁸¹ Emphasis here is mine. The admonition appears to encompass anyone, not just Jews, who do not serve Mary.

juglarescos y, a través de su vida poética, hace uso del estilo formulario que los poetas narrativos [. . .] heredaran de un desaparecido estadio de composición oral de la épica” (115-16). Given that “en la mayor parte de la épica hispánica [. . .] la venganza se presenta de modo [. . .] sangriento” (88), these examples serve to make the point that in this miracle about the Jews of Toledo, the absence of a graphic detail or two is a compelling stylistic choice. Why does Berceo conserve the Latin version’s restrained account of the mob violence against the Jews? Why does he resist the opportunity to embellish the action with a visual detail that would elevate the emotional impact of the action on a captivated audience? Seeking answers to these questions about Berceo’s narrative choices can provide an insight into the most obvious question of all: How can a miracle of the Virgin enable the breaking of Christianity’s own murder taboo?

I propose that Berceo’s narrative choices are strategic. While they appear to be derived from the logic of Church dogma, they actually fuse secular and religious paradigms of meaning that ultimately delineate a comprehensive process by which breaking the taboo against murder finds sanction. In the Virgin Mary’s complaint against the Jews of Toledo, she says:

Otra vez crucifigan al mi caro Fijuelo,
Non entendrié ninguno quant grand es el mi duelo,
(420ab)

Complicity in the death of Jesus is certainly one of the most common accusations made against the Jews. As Dwayne Carpenter notes, during the Middle Ages, “all other indictments, including sorcery, blasphemy, and usury, pale in comparison with the charge of deicide. This crime became the pretext of popes and the rallying cry of the rabble as they proclaimed the enduring antipathy of the Church toward the Synagogue” (62). The accusation against the Jews as the crucifiers of Christ implies the taboo of murder, and yet in this miracle the murder of Jews seems to acquire a sacred tone when committed in

response to a plea from the Virgin. In *cuaderna* 425, where the archbishop orders everyone to go at once to the homes of the chief rabbis (“Vayamos a las casas, [. . .] de los rabís mayores ca algo hallaremos”), Berceo connects the Communion of the Mass and the execution of the Jews in 425c: “desemos las yantares, ca bien las cobraremos”; that is, let us leave the meal (understood to be Communion in the context of the interrupted Mass), because we will surely recover it. In the end, the symbolic enactment of violence against Christ (the wax effigy) becomes realized in the form of the literal violence of the Christians against the Jews (Diz 159). The Christians give the Jews a “bad meal” (yantara mala). As we know, however, the eerily colorless account of the killing of the Jews lacks the graphic details allotted to the description of the wax crucifixion. The frenzy of violence reaches a crescendo at the point of the discovery of the wax Christ, and then the solution to the problem, the Marian solution, is quickly dispatched, “mas non con grand savor,” like a necessary job that must be done for the sake of some higher purpose.

While “not with great pleasure” could imply neutrality or even a little pleasure, in the context of the narrative (“recabdáronlos luego, mas non con grand savor,”), the act of the executions is linked by the conjunction “but” (mas) to the absence of great pleasure. Therefore, the second part of the verse (“mas non con grand savor”) qualifies the first (“recabdáronlos luego”); the assumption appears to be that the mob would have taken great pleasure in the killings given the sacrilege they were avenging. Thus the expression seems to convey the antithesis of a neutral stance or of even a small measure of enjoyment. Instead of mere neutrality or diversion, then, the phrase conveys a sense of displeasure or uneasiness on the executioners’ part, in spite of the necessity of the act. This tone of displeasure or unease accords with the one described by Georges Bataille in reference to ritual sacrifice as a violation of taboo. “Anguish is desired in sacrifice to the greatest possible extent. But when the bounds of the possible are over-reached, a recoil is

inevitable” (82). The abrupt ending perhaps seems eerie precisely because it conveys a sacrificial tone. The expression of unease and the limitation of details that might produce a recoil achieve this tone. There is not even any reference to dead bodies. This sparseness of visual imagery reveals, according to Ana Diz, that “la matanza de los judíos se concibe como acto ritual” (159). As in ritualistic discourse, the execution scene (*vs.* 428-429) is recounted in abstract and even metaphoric words and expressions (“recabdar,” “prender mala muerte,” “dar yantar mala”). Berceo’s association of the two ‘yantares’ (*vs.* 425c and 429b) appears to ritualize the violence of ‘sacrificing’ the Jews by connecting it to the ritual of Communion.

As Diz observes, the sacrifice of the Jews substitutes for the missed Communion; thus the ritual killings ultimately fulfill the same function as the Eucharist, that is, the remembrance of the suffering and sacrifice of Christ (158). She suggests that the sacrificial scene suffers a displacement due to the fact that now it is not the Christians who receive the sacred nourishment of the Mass, but rather that the sacrifice of the mass has acquired a new victim: the Jews of Toledo replace Christ. The Christian community takes the place of the archbishop. This new multitudinous officiate gives, rather than life (“el buen yantar,” the body of Christ), death. The meaning of the celebration is not profoundly altered, however, because receiving life (the Eucharist) becomes giving death to those who killed Christ (Diz 157-9). Diz’s main point in this argument is that the social and religious order of the Christian faith is founded on an original violence, which the Mass celebrates in the ritual of Communion. Despite the unlikelihood that Berceo intended for his audience to perceive the miracle as a legitimate alternative ritual to Communion, the narrative strategy of the tale nevertheless borrows these ritualistic elements in order to lend a sacred tone to the killings. Of course, in the miracle the ritual murder of the wax Christ is the outrage, the real murder (the Crucifixion) is not.

In order to justify murder, Berceo employs still other narrative devices. These call for the defense of Christian honor, and conveniently apply to the cause for the sanction of murder both Old and New Testament as well as secular law, depending on where the loopholes can be found. But before delving into honor and law, it will be useful to explore the significance of the wax image with regard to Jewish stereotypes in the thirteenth century.

Aside from the primary stereotype of the Jews as accomplices in the death of Christ, a secondary category of medieval literary references to the Jews and the crucifixion accuses them of desecrating sacred Christian images. In this secondary category we find two main types of complaints: “that the Jews dishonored crucifixes, and that they manufactured waxen images of Jesus and then profaned them” (Carpenter 64). In addition to the wax image in this *milagro*, we also find these stereotypes in the *Cantigas* (song 12), for example. Carpenter notes that frequent stories “of sanguineous crucifixes coincided with and reinforced the popular belief that Jesus existed in images, just as he was present in the wine and wafer of the Eucharist” (64). The Jews allegedly ground the wafers in a pestle, and when the *Corpus Domini* bled, they were either converted or slaughtered, depending on the didactic intentions of the author (64). Accusations and reports of the making of wax images often appeared in connection with common charges against heretics, like demon worship, witchcraft and sorcery. In the 1230s, the Archbishop of Bremen “decided that the best way to encompass the ruin of the people of Steding, who had defied his authority, would be to accuse them of heresy” (McCall 246). The archbishop proceeded to appeal to the Pope for assistance in handling the ‘heretics,’ and the “Pope in 1232 issued a Bull urging the Bishops of the surrounding area to preach a crusade against the people of Steding, who were guilty, among other things, of making wax images, of communicating with demons and of holding

consultations with witches” (247). While concepts associated with demon worship can be dated back to the fourth century, when St. Basil is reported to have released a man from a pact with the devil, one of the earliest suggestions that connected devil worship and witch-like activities as the purview of heretics appears recorded in a trial at Orléans in 1022 (244-5). The first representations of the Jews as agents of Satan, however, do not appear until the thirteenth century, “the century of Mary,” and, of course, Berceo (Diz 112). One source, then, for the waxen image motif in connection with the Jews derives from the general accusation against heretics of being in league with the devil. It is noteworthy that the denunciation of the Jews as heretics did not actually find full expression within the Church until the fourteenth century, when linking the Jews to heretics and pagans became a key ingredient used by the Church to arouse the hostility, fear and violence of the Christian laity against the Jews (Cohen 14). In 1215, the Fourth Lateran Council established the mendicant orders to fight heresy, especially the Cathar and the Albigensian sects in southern France. The eradication of these sects does not, however, characterize the scope of the activities of the Franciscan and Dominican orders. In particular, the encounters between the mendicants and the Jews shaped the long process of demonizing the Jewish people, and by the early 1300s, the “friars openly advocated that Latin Christendom rid itself of its Jewish population, whether through missionizing, forced expulsions, or physical harassment that would induce conversion or flight” (14).

A decisive factor in the increasing hostility toward the Jews was the friars’ growing awareness of the existence of an extensive body of post-biblical Jewish literature that did not limit itself to the exegesis of the Old Testament (Funkenstein 377). One of the great preachers of this era was the Franciscan friar Berthold von Regensburg, who was born in the first decade of the thirteenth century and died in 1272. He traveled

through much of Germany, France, Austria, Switzerland, and the Czech Republic, and attracted huge crowds. Berthold especially hated the “rabbinic tradition and leadership which governed the Jewish community. [. . .] Most significantly, he branded talmudic Judaism a hindrance to the presence of God on earth, since belief in the Talmud constituted a gross violation of the Jews’ covenant with God, amounting to no less than outright heresy” (Cohen 233-234). The Jews’ status among Christians was initially protected to some degree in accordance with Augustinian Church doctrine. “Prior to the thirteenth century, Catholic theology had demanded that the Jew be tolerated in Christendom” (14). Augustine of Hippo (354-430), who provided the basis for medieval Christian thought in the West, instructed that God had ordained the survival of the Jews so that their observance of Mosaic Law would ultimately lead them to recognize the truth of the New Testament and convert at the “end of days.” Thus, since their continued observance of Old Testament laws would finally lead them to Christianity, their existence ultimately validated and legitimated the truth of Christianity. Meanwhile, their dispersion and subjugation provided evidence to the Christians that the Jews were on the wrong path (14). One factor in the process by which the protection of their status disintegrated to such an extent as to leave them vulnerable to mob attacks justifiable on the basis of heresy can be traced by following the trail of the wax image motif backwards in time. We can see that the assignment to the Jews of stereotypes initially reserved for heretics played a role in conditioning the solution to the continued survival, vitality and religious independence of the Jewish communities. Even though Berceo’s miracle was written over 750 years ago, in a general sense it nonetheless can represent for us today a stage in the dangerous process whereby the unwarranted use of inflammatory stereotypes can result in institutionalized persecution.

In the context of Berceo's era, the story of the Jews of Toledo most probably signifies more of a theological polemic than an outright accusation of heresy. The key to this interpretation lies in the theme of dishonor, and rests on the issue of the legitimacy of images. The action of the story originates in the Church during the Mass and climaxes with the invasion of the rabbi's house. The Jewish space invaded here is not simply an *aljama* where Spanish Jews and Christians probably did interact on a daily basis, but rather the very house of the most honored rabbi. In fact, one critic, Bermejo Cabrero, has suggested it is the synagogue itself (45). This permeation of the Jewish synagogue by Christians did indeed occur toward the latter part of the thirteenth century, when the friars compelled the Jews to listen and respond to their inflammatory sermons, which they delivered in the synagogues (Cohen 13).

In the miracle, the Communion left pending when the Christian mob leaves the church culminates in the discovery of the wax effigy, thus creating a thematic opposition of images—wafer vs. wax, “misa y rito paródico” (Diz 158). Diz suggests a burlesque tone to this opposition: “al rito cristiano, se opone el rito burlesco de los judíos de Toledo” (158). The information Berceo provides that the Jews “la fazién toda por nuestra deshonor,” lends a tone of deliberate effrontery to the event, which leads us to construe the offense as a disdainful act rather than a blasphemous diabolical ritual. As early as the first quarter of the twelfth century the chronicler Adhémar de Chabannes reports an incident concerning the Jews and a crucifixion effigy not in terms of desecration, but rather in terms of mockery:

. . . on Good Friday 1020, the city of Rome was ‘imperilled [*sic*] by an earthquake and an exceeding great whirlwind, . . . forthwith a certain Jew brought word to the lord Pope that at that hour the Jews in their synagogue were wont to make a mock of the image of the crucified Lord.’ Benedict VIII . . . took the precaution of checking the story but on ‘finding it to be true, he presently condemned the authors of that crime to death. And no sooner had they been beheaded,’ says Adhémar de Chabannes, ‘than the fury of the winds ceased.’ (qtd. in McCall 267)

The versions of the miracles from Berceo's Latin sources probably date from the early twelfth century or before. Perhaps the story chronicled by Adhémar de Chabannes represents a possible source for the miracle rendition. Considering the timeframes⁸² of both Berceo's source and his own version of the tale—each of which include the detail of dishonor rather than accusations of satanically-inspired desecration of holy images—the essence of the discovery of the wax image suggests not so much the hysterical anger aroused by the exposure of a diabolical blasphemy, but rather the fury of pride wounded by derision. While the Roman Jews in Adhémar de Chabannes' report make a mock of the image itself, the Jews of Toledo, by desecrating a mock image, seem to be disdainful, or even denouncing the Christians themselves (i.e., "nuestra deshonor"). If this is the case, they could be 'making mock' on various levels, not the least of which might be the reverence Christians hold for the image of the Crucifix and for religious images in general.⁸³ In his study of illuminations from thirteenth century bibles, Michael Camille notes that these Christian images portray the Jews as both idolaters and iconoclasts. One of the most common images of Jews as idolaters depicts them bowing before the golden calf in Exodus 32 (170). But, as Camille states, besides depicting Jews "in their Old Testament guise as idolaters," the "other major activity" of Christian art, the depiction of the Jews as iconoclasts, also continued. "Instead of showing the Jews destroying false idols, however, this imagery showed them destroying, or rather attempting to destroy, images of the Christian faith" (185). Of course, these acts of violence by Jews against

⁸² Regarding the historical progression of anti-Judaism and its causes, the twelfth century marks an era of classical polemics, i.e., prefiguration theory and the citing of Old Testament examples of prophecies, and the growing resentment of the presence of Jews as intermediaries for the nobility. By the time Berceo writes the miracles, awareness of the Talmud is growing, but his work really does not seem to partake of that trend of awareness and condemnation. He seems more rooted in the classical polemics while at the same time his work foreshadows the events to come between the Church and the Jews.

⁸³ The most serious argument against iconoclasm was that it "denied one of the fundamental tenets of the Christian faith, the doctrine of the incarnation. According to the defenders of images, Christ's human birth had made possible his representations, which in some sense shared in the divinity of their prototype. The rejection of these images, therefore, automatically carried a repudiation of their cause" ("Iconoclasm").

Christian images seem illogical since the Jews did not believe in their power; in fact, as Camille suggests, “such stories reveal an unease about their efficacy for the *Christian* community” (185-6). He documents a popular tale about “a group of Jews who repeat the Passion by crucifying an image of Christ that a Christian leaves in his house” (186). Clearly, the Second Commandment forbids the worship of images: “You shall not make for yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them or serve them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God. [. . .]” (Deut. 5: 8-9).⁸⁴ “This image-jealous Jahweh [. . .] ensured that representations were, even for medieval Jews living in the image-crowded cities of Western Europe, something to be shunned” (Camille 165).

In medieval society, “Jews were a problematic ‘Other’ [. . .] because they were in a dual position”: they were both God’s chosen people of the Old Testament who had prophesied the coming of the messiah, and also the ones who had rejected and crucified him (165). Christians interpret the Old Testament in terms of its fulfillment in the New, “a tradition that culminated in the thirteenth century in vast visual programs like the *Bible moralisée* and allegorical cycles” (165). These visual agendas strikingly portray the Christian perception of the Jews as both idolaters and iconoclasts. Camille points out that it could be said that the Jews “functioned as a scapegoat for Christian concern about adapting to an expanding economy of images, which allowed greater access by more segments of the Christian community to a whole gamut of representations, private, public, and cult” (185).⁸⁵ Since one of the most common points of contention between the Jews and the Christians (outside of the essential disagreement about the messiah), in

⁸⁴ Bible quotations are from the Revised Standard version.

⁸⁵ Christians’ projection of own anxieties on/ in anti-Jewish imagery.

Berceo's time especially, involved Judaism's rejection of what it considered unbridled Christian idolatry⁸⁶, then an interpretation of the wax effigy as a mocking of the Christians' reverence for the crucifixion idol appears plausible.⁸⁷ Certainly the issue of idolatry was one that divided Christians and Jews.

The deification of any human figure, much less the assignation of divinity to an image, presented an example of idolatry for the Jews. As Ben Zion Bokser explains Judaism's point of view," the "*man* Jesus, who lived and taught and struggled for his ideals and in the end died a martyr's death, is a major figure in Jewish history. But Christianity has invested his being with metaphysical significance. It has made his role as mediator between God and man an indispensable element in the scheme of human salvation." Furthermore, to the Jews, the idealization of heroes was always a practice of the pagans who raised their heroes above human stature, "characterizing them as semi-divine or divine beings" (332). As Bokser makes clear, the

deification of human figures so current in the Hellenistic world was for the Rabbis an idolatrous practice which they denounced as inconsistent with the belief in the unity and transcendent majesty of God. The Christian belief in the Incarnation, ascribing divine stature to Jesus, with its various doctrinal ramifications, will always prove unacceptable to those schooled in the conception of God as taught in Jewish tradition. (332-3)

And yet, as Camille points out, "this was a choice many Jews faced in the thirteenth century—between conversion and acceptance of the image of God in Christ, or destruction" (165). Whether or not we can ever know for sure if the Jews actually did

⁸⁶ An opinion also held by the Christian iconoclasts who, because of their views, in particular about the symbolic nature of Communion vs. the Transubstantiation, were branded as heretics by the Church.

⁸⁷ Of course, in the miracle this derision on the part of the Jews highlights all the more the uneasy relationship of Christianity to Judaism. Not only did Christianity originate from Judaism, but its very messiah, much less the mother of God herself, are Jewish. One wonders, Could God be Jewish too? At the very least the possibility exists at a very subliminal level that perhaps the laughing and pointing is justified and all the allegorical interpretations of the Old Testament are just that: interpretations, especially since the Talmud represented another possibility of 'interpretation' of the very same material by the race of Christ himself.

deride these aspects of the Christian religion in the manner of a direct effrontery or denunciation, the significant factor is the *implication* in Christian texts that they practiced mockery of the crucifixion image.

In Adhémar de Chabannes, in the Latin versions of the miracle, and in Berceo, the Jews are presented in connection with the effigy of the crucifixion not as perpetrators of satanic ritual desecration, not as revelers at a commemorative celebration of their complicity in Christ's death, but as the authors of willful dishonor or disdain of either the Christians themselves or of their central icon. This presentation of the Jews indicates that Berceo's audiences most probably had a general understanding of the classic theological debates between the two religions, that is, the disagreement regarding the incarnation of God as Christ and the reverence for idols as repositories of deities. "The irony visible to us, and not lost on medieval Jewish commentators, was that idolatry was a sin easily imputed, not at those praying in the synagogue but at those praying in the church" (Camille 175). In a sense, the accusation that the Jews were iconoclasts and desecrators of Christian images still implies a belief in Jewish idolatry since it could be argued that for these acts to have any meaning to the Jews they would have to believe in the divinity of the representation.

In addition to the theme of image worship, the Jews also could have found reason to ridicule the notion that all Jews were responsible for the death of Christ, the inherent problem of blaming all Jews in the "economy of divine providence":

There was a certain inconsistency [. . .] in blaming the Jew for the crucifixion if it was maintained that the death of Jesus was a necessary event in the economy of divine providence, that his death was the supreme triumph of his redemptive ministry, that it was a freely willed sacrifice to atone for the sins of humanity. Christian teachers were not inhibited by the primitivism of believing in corporate guilt and inherited guilt, nor were they disturbed by the inconsistency of blaming the Jews for an event which represented for them the very heart of God's plan for man's salvation. The charges were repeated through the centuries and became a

Christian amalgam in the blind passions of Anti-Semitism. In the Middle Ages it was invoked to account for Jewish persecutions and expulsions. (Bokser 321-2)

Many scholars have worked to uncover the political motivations for the Gospels' casting the lion's share of the blame on the Jews as the ones who extorted the death penalty from Pilate. The fact that the Gospels were written after the Church had relinquished hope of a Jewish acceptance of Christianity and had turned to seek its converts among the Roman pagans, lends support to the idea that the story of Christ's crucifixion became "subtly reshaped to minimize the Roman involvement and center the blame on the Jews" (Bokser 21). But even in the Gospels themselves, the most blame for Christ's death is placed on the Sanhedrin and the chief councils of the Jews, those whom Jesus himself so often preached against. It cannot be overlooked, however, that at the time of Jesus' death, his mourners were all Jewish. The first report of a gentile to receive the Holy Spirit occurs after the death of Christ (the conversion of Cornelius, through Peter's ministry: Acts 10:22-37). Also, the Gospels are not at pains to make clear whether or not the crowd that chose Barabbas was all Jewish, but rather to emphasize that the chief Jewish priests aroused the people to demand Barabbas rather than Jesus. In any event, it does seem doubtful that the Jews would have held significant influence over Pilate since they were a subject people, enslaved by Roman power, and deprived of any independent juridical initiative. "The Roman occupation was maintained ruthlessly and every unrest that seemed to threaten the established order was suppressed mercilessly, usually by crucifixion. One Roman procurator, Florus (64-66), crucified some thirty-six hundred people, including women and children, in one outburst of fury." The sign "King of the Jews," placed above Jesus on the cross, "indicated he was crucified for a political offense, as were thousands of other Jews in those troubled times. The Jews were not supposed to have any other king but Caesar" (Bokser 24). An alternative historical

perspective, then, might view the crucifixion of Christ as an example of Roman oppression against the Jews. Still, the accusation of deicide in the Middle Ages proved to be a handy rallying device for Christian unity on behalf of a variety of causes that ultimately involved a power struggle between the Church and the nobility.

In Berceo's story about the Jews of Toledo the rallying cry is only partly the Virgin's charge of deicide. The Jews' dishonoring of the Christians by means of the wax effigy mobilizes the cause of honor: the mob must defend its Christian honor for the sake of Mary and her son, Jesus Christ.⁸⁸ The crowd does not respond merely to a discovery of Jewish black magic, a matter often handled, though not necessarily humanely and without hysteria, by a court trial. Nor does it seem realistically convincing that the mob was responding to the primitive call of ritual sacrifice and the displacement of violence against an entire race onto a contained group of victims. The collective defense of offended honor, however, finds much legal precedence throughout European history, particularly in Spain.

Rafael Serra Ruiz observes that Sánchez-Albornoz⁸⁹ makes clear the extraordinary amplitude of the concept of medieval dishonor and its deeply rooted vitality in Spain: "No olvidemos que esa aguda sensibilidad ante las leyes de la honra no era una fresca floración juvenil de la España del siglo XVI. Era una prolongación de formas de vida medievales" (659; qtd. in Serra Ruiz 125). Legal documents and texts present "desde el siglo XI claras pruebas de la vidriosa estimación de su honor por los nobles de León y de Castilla. [. . .] La deshonra podía ser de dicho o de hecho y hasta referirse a actos cometidos contra los vasallos o las cosas del hidalgo" (Sánchez-Albornoz 620; qtd. in Serra Ruiz 14). Serra Ruiz points out that the concept of dishonor appears much

⁸⁸ By implication, the honor of Mary and Jesus has also been besmirched. However, the verse in Berceo specifically says *nuestra deshonra*, referring to the narrator and the audience.

⁸⁹ Claudio Sánchez-Albornoz, *España, un enigma histórico*, 2 vols. (Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 1956).

earlier, in fact, than the eleventh century, and that “la deshonra [. . .] en su mayor parte es equivalente a injuria” (14). He traces the term *deshonra* to the concept of *injuria* via Roman and Germanic law:

[E]n el Derecho Romano se entendió sustancialmente por injuria dos cosas relacionadas pero distintas entre sí: lo injusto y la acción judicial de injuria. Dentro de ésta iban comprendidas la mayoría de conductas que hoy tenemos por injuria. Esta última acepción es . . . la que, unida a la deshonra visigótica y de los textos medievales españoles, formará el núcleo de lo que hoy entendemos por delito de injuria. (Serra Ruiz 12)

This medieval *deshonra*, or *injuria* in the modern sense, had to do with offending or attacking another either verbally or physically, or making false accusations (*afrentando*, *denostando*): “Imperaba un honor rudo, externo, integral, centrado en valores físicos, tangible, al que corresponde una injuria predominantemente de hecho, manifestada de ordinario en forma de agresiones corporales y en un estricto y limitado catálogo de palabras injuriosas” (125). Some of these offensive or insulting words specifically delineated in juridical texts include “traitor,” “treacherous,” “excommunicated,” with the worst insult being, apparently, that of the false accusation of “traitor”:

En el Pseudo Ordenamiento I de Nájera, a través del Ordenamiento de Alcalá, se mencionan los denuestos de traidor y alevoso; en una fazaña leemos alevoso y descomulgado y en otra se habla del peor denuesto que se puede decir (“denuesta del peor quel puede desir”), refiriéndose, a nuestro parecer, a traidor, según nos confirmarán después las Partidas. (122-3)

The *Libro de los Fueros* of Castile is the text that most profusely and repetitively dispenses penalties for *deshonra*. It generally does so “en forma de talión, aplicando a quien hubiere dado puñadas a otro recibirlas dobladas” (124). Bermejo Cabrero notes that Berceo’s legal formulae remain very close to the *Libro de los Fueros* (51). In regard to canon law, a designation for *injuria* or *deshonor* does not become defined until the seventeenth century:

En el Derecho Canónico . . . el título “De iniuriis” (36 de Libro V) de las Decretales de Gregorio IX no se ocupa de la injuria en el sentido propio de injuria, cual hoy lo entendemos, sino en la acepción de daño ocasionado por injuria o sin derecho (“damnum iniuria datum”) y que es preciso llegar al siglo XVII para encontrar jurídicamente delimitado al delito de injuria. (Serra Ruiz 13)

Thus, in Berceo’s time the term *deshonor* encompassed or implied *injuria*, and furthermore, it was not a concept of canon law. The offense and its punishment fell within the purview of secular law, and the *Libro de los Fueros* generously prescribed the *pena de talión* as punishment for *deshonra/ injuria*. Américo Castro⁹⁰ stresses the collective aspect of medieval honor which was well established long before the Spanish honor plays of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: “Es muy necesario ponerse en contacto con esa personalidad colectiva, manifestada a nosotros en una situación anterior a la existencia de los casos literarios de la honra, y sin perfil limitado y único” (qtd. in Serra Ruiz 125). Medieval juridical sources⁹¹ record

casos de injuria (deshonor en general, más amplio que injuria) que constituyen directos precedentes de las situaciones literarias de honra de los siglos XVI y XVII; hallaremos casos de venganza colectiva de la afrenta padecida por uno de los convecinos; . . . que la pena por injuria es idéntica y aun mayor que por homicidio y que en las fuentes medievales es tan grave “desornar” a otro o descabalarle que darle muerte. (Serra Ruiz 16-17)

In this miracle, the archbishop authorizes the collective action of the Christian congregation against the Jews of Toledo. He mediates the religious and the secular, unifies them, and thereby achieves the mutual sanctioning of both. By exercising his role as authoritative intermediary between Heaven and the congregation, he confirms the voice of Mary and clarifies her message in order to leave no doubt that the Jews are doing

⁹⁰ *Cuadernos* 38 (1959): 3. By referring to the scholarship of Castro and Sánchez-Albornoz in regard to medieval honor in a chapter about Jews and Christians, I do not wish to suggest that their opinions concerning the Spanish Jews (or their visions of the history of Spain) are similar. It should also be noted that the work of Serra Ruiz focuses on Spanish law, not the Jews.

⁹¹ *Fueros de Guadalajara, Salamanca, Calatayud y Usatges de Barcelona*.

something against Christ, thereby offending and upsetting her: “Sepades qe judíos fazen alguna cosa/ en contra Jesu Christo, Fijo de la Gloriosa,/ [. . .] non es esta qerella baldrera nin mintrosa” (423abd). The archbishop then assumes the voice of the law and commands the congregation to “meted mientes en esto” and “si la cosa buscáredes, batuda hallaredes,/ e d’esta malfetría derecho tomaredes” (424 b-d). In this role of authority he represents the Church as law, that is, secular law, as he casts the Christian mob as judge, jury and executioner of the Jews. He orders everyone to go at once to the homes of chief rabbis, “Vayamos a las casas [. . .] / de los rabís mayores [. . .] / desemos las yantares, ca bien las cobraremos” (425a-c), otherwise, “de la Gloriosa mal rebtados seremos” (425d). “Desemos las yantares” refers to the Communion, which has not yet taken place. Consequently, the archbishop, as officiate of religious ritual, makes a connection between exacting justice (“derecho tomaredes”) and the celebration of Communion, warning of retaliation from the Virgin herself lest the Christians fall short of placating her. The incompatibility of exacting justice and celebrating Communion becomes obscured in the apparent displacement of the commemorative ritual. The killings seem to serve the same purpose as the Eucharist—the celebration in memory of the Passion of Christ. Nothing is displaced, however. What actually occurs in this miracle is the substitution of one ritual for another.

The incongruous aspects of the murder of the Jews of Toledo are the ritual tone of the killings and their association with the celebration of Communion: “recabdáronlos luego, mas non con grand savor,/ qual fazién tal prisieron,/ [. . .] diéronlis yantar mala qual ellos merecieron” (428cd, 429b). The taboo of murder appears to find sanction based on the familiar accusation that the Jews killed Christ (“qui ál tal li fiziesse num tuerto non farié”) and the Old Testament judgment of ‘an eye for an eye’ (“qual fazién tal prisieron”). At the same time, the Jews’ reenactment of the crucifixion of Christ is

described as an offense of dishonor to the Christians, which they avenge by killing the Jews in keeping with the legal prescription of the *pena del talión*. The ambiguous application of scriptural and secular law engages the many facets of the concept ‘an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ On the one hand, as Jewish law from the Old Testament, this rule of justice, according to Christian doctrine,⁹² becomes superseded by the New Testament laws, which nullify it in favor of ‘turning the other cheek’: “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I say to you, Do not resist one who is evil. But if any one strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also;” (Matthew 5: 38-39). Within the context of Christian dogma, the defense of personal honor by the offended party runs counter to this admonition. The secular *ley de honor*⁹³ is unjust in terms of Christianity, and yet the ritual tone of the killing of the Jews of Toledo tends to obscure this incongruity. The murders, which appear to find sanction through the theology of Christian ritual, actually receive it through a sort of sacrament to a theology of honor.

Dunn suggests that the devotion to the law of honor resembles a religion in itself dedicated to the worship of a “false god” (79). He compares the devotion to honor with the glorification of the love-object expressed in the poetry of courtly love: “Lover poets [. . .] have expressed their complete absorption in the object of their love in the terms of a pseudo-religion and, while speaking figuratively, they have spoken the truth. So, too, with honour” (79). Furthermore, a “religion has a central rite which expresses and sustains the relation between god and man. There is shedding of blood, in fact or in symbol; ritual sacrifice, either as self-giving or as propitiation” (Dunn 82). The example that Dunn gives regarding Don Juan Roca’s feelings about avenging his honor in

⁹² “la ley vieja cerresti e la nueva abrist” (119d).

⁹³ “Concerning the phrase *ley de honor*, we might bear in mind the common usage *ley* = “religion,” “faith”; e.g., *ley vieja*, *ley nueva*, *ley de Gracia*, *ley cristiana*, etc.” (Dunn 83, n.1).

Calderon's *El pintor de su deshonra* is apropos to Berceo's characterization of the Christians' performance of the act of killing the Jews, "mas non con grand savor." In the course of his tirade, Don Juan Roca says: "¿El honor que nace mío,/ esclavo de otro? Eso no./ ¡Y que me condene yo/ por el ajeno albedrío!/ ¿Cómo bárbaro consiente/ el mundo este infame rito?" (vs. 501-506). Don Juan refers to

the "infame rito" which it is his duty to perform [. . .] "Infame" expresses his human feeling, but the "rito" indicates that he is committed morally to an act of faith which makes his feelings of no account.[. . .] The bloody vengeance is an imperative to which the man of honour is bound, for *honor* imposes it as a moral duty. (Dunn 82)⁹⁴

The sacred tone that characterizes the killing of the Jews of Toledo, then, appears to reflect the ritual covenant to commemorate Christ's death. Nonetheless, while the ritual may indeed contain religious overtones, it is not truly Christian: "The new dispensation, inaugurated by Christ's sacrifice, united a broken world through love. But *honor* knows no redemption; it demands the ancient retributive rites" (85).

Christian doctrine since its inception upholds the Ten Commandments, which include the law "Thou shalt not kill" (commandment six). Paradoxically, however, in this miracle, the narrative simultaneously maintains the Sixth Commandment of Moses' law by assessing Jewish guilt on the basis of the oft-repeated accusation that the Jews killed Christ, and sanctions murder on the basis of dishonor and revenge. P. Agustín Herrera describes this paradox of taboo and sanctioned transgression well when he notes that "este ídolo de la venganza, con el nombre de punto de honra y de duelo [. . .] se opone derechamente á las leyes del cristianismo" (qtd. in Jones 201-2).⁹⁵ Bokser, unmasking the common argument of Christian polemicists against Judaism—that the "God

⁹⁴ Original emphasis.

⁹⁵ "P. Agustín de Herrera, after the appearance in 1682 of Vera Tassis' *Verdadera Quinta Parte de las Comedias del célebre D. Pedro Calderón de la Barca*, published a *Discurso teológico y político sobre la apología de las Comedias que ha sacado á luz el Reuerendissimo P.M. Fr. Manuel Guerra, cõ nombre de aprobación de la quinta, y la sexta parte de las Comedias de D. Pedro Calderón*. [. . .]" (Jones 201-2).

of the Old Testament is a God of justice, while the God of the New Testament is a God of love”—succinctly declares that the truth, of course, is that the Church Fathers “also knew how to invoke God’s wrath on sinners,” even as the rabbis “knew how to speak tenderly of God’s love” (339). Clearly, if the Christians considered the Ten Commandments “closed” by virtue of their pertinence to Old Testament law, then they would not be able, in religious terms, to justify blaming and judging the Jews for Christ’s death, especially considering the role that Christ’s sacrifice played in Christian salvation.

Ironically and/ or conveniently, Christ’s commandment (‘turn the other cheek’) and Moses’ could be circumvented through secular law where the ‘eye for an eye’ rule, or the *pena del talión*, held legal sway. As we have seen, the saying “qual fazién tal prisieron” (they received that which they did) has a juridical usage and history: “La frase [. . .] tiene su origen en la fórmula con que terminaban los pregones para hacer pública la sentencia recaída sobre un delincuente” (Montoya Martínez, qtd. in Diz 115). Bermejo Cabrero, who documents the legal sources reflected in Berceo, writes:

Todo el Libro de los Fueros está muy cerca de Berceo; no olvidemos que se redactó en Burgos [. . .]. Varias veces usa Berceo la expresión “qui tal faze tal prenda”; [. . .] Pues bien; dicha expresión aparece recogida al pie de la letra en una de las fazañas del Libro de los Fueros: “qui tal fizo tal prenda. . .,” LF Castilla, 278, pág. 151. (51)

Thus if the boundaries between the Old and New Testament laws appear hazy in regard to the sanctioning of murder on the grounds of the precept of ‘an eye for an eye,’ they become clarified in legal terms on the same grounds. The collective violence, moreover, acquires further absolution by drawing from the religious resource of the Ten Commandments to indict the Jews on the charge that they ‘killed Christ,’ and to sanction their murder in terms of ‘an eye for an eye.’ The *ley vieja* appears truly closed as the old law of ‘an eye for an eye’ judges the Jews, while the Christians appear exempt from the

consequences of this judgment⁹⁶ since the *ley nueva* protects them. Nonetheless, this appearance of religious sanction is only an illusion. Retaliation or vengeance remains a secular rationale that makes sense only in legal terms of *injuria*, or dishonor, not in terms of “las leyes del cristianismo.” The religious intimations serve to legitimize the secular motive, which, in its turn, by virtue of its traditional and unifying resonances, lends a sense of *esprit de corps* to the Christian cause.

In quatrain 426, the Christians quickly mobilize to search for the house of the most honorable rabbi, which they find thanks to the guidance of Jesus and Mary:

Moviéronse los pueblos, toda la clerecía,
 fueron a muy grand priessa pora la judería;
 guiólos Jesu Christo e la Virgo María,
 fo luego escubierta la su alevosía.
 (426)

There they encounter the wax image of Christ upon which the Jews have reenacted the crucifixion. The mob immediately descends upon the Jews: “recabdáronlos luego, mas non con grand savor/ qual fazién tal prisieron, ¡grado al Criador!” (428cd). “They received that which they did” is the ‘eye for an eye’ theme that signifies both legal discourse (*la pena del talión*) and Old Testament law. This theme of the execution being just deserts is repeated in the next quatrain: “Fueron bien recabdados los que prender podieron,/ diéronlis yantar mala qual ellos merecieron” (429ab). As Bermejo Cabrero tells us, “Berceo prodiga la pena del talión” (45). In reference to Berceo’s comment, “qual fazién tal prisieron,” Bermejo Cabrero confirms that “a la hora de aplicar la pena del talión, Berceo no se muestra remiso: con la intención, manifiesta ante un cuerpo de cera, basta” (45).

In Spanish, the word *honor* also meant “fief”: “Para las acs. feudales ‘heredad, patrimonio’ y ‘usufructo de las rentas de alguna villa o castillo realengos’ [. . .]”

⁹⁶ The judgment that the Christians escape would be for breaking if not Moses’, at least Christ’s command.

(Corominas 383). “Feudalism was characterized by the granting of fiefs, chiefly in the form of land and labor, in return for political and military services—a contract sealed by oaths of homage and fealty. The grantor was lord of the grantee, his vassal, but both were free men and social peers” (Cazel). Enlisting the cause of honor evokes the vision of a feudal honor sealed by the fulfillment of the mutual pledge of support, protection and loyalty between lord and vassal. The appearance of the honor theme in a thirteenth century priest’s poem is no coincidence, for the “feudal system duplicated in the realm of the human the divine organization of the Church” (Castro, *SSH* 497). Within the scheme of this divine organization, the Church, as self-ordained (i.e., claiming to be ordained by God) representative of Mary and the holy court of Heaven, assumed the traditional feudal role of the nobility as lord or king. Thus the parishioners, whose numbers often included kings and princes as well as vassals and peasants, held the mutual pledge of loyalty and protection with the Church. Indeed Berceo addresses his audience as *vasallos de Dios* in the opening verse of the *Milagros*:

Amigos e vassallos de Dios omnipotent,
si vos me escuchássedes por vuestro consiment,
querríavos contar un buen aveniment:
terrédeshlo en cabo por bueno verament.
(1)

In Christian Spain itself, “las vías centrales del Estado cristiano-feudal se hallaban obstruídas por el judío, tan necesario como extraño” (Castro, *España* 510). In terms of feudal honor, the presence of the Jews appeared to thwart the development, or at least the flowering, of the Christian feudal state. As the nobility prized more and more the services of the Jews, the Church’s animosities toward them increased. Initially serving as fiscal agents for the Christian kings, they gradually obtained a dominant presence in the most vital centers of state organization. Such dominant fiscal and administrative presence encompassed the unpopular position of tax collector, an occupation which

included collection of the Church's tenth. Resentment mounted, as the Christians had to pay taxes and tithes to the Jews as the kings' agents. Historians who write about Church history have often overlooked the fact that a significant amount of the taxes were collected from the Jews themselves, as well as the tithes they too were required to render to the Church. The royal coffers and the Church's also, were supplied with money via the Jews. The Jews became caught in the middle of a power struggle between the Church and the Spanish monarchs on the one hand, while on the other they seemed to impede the relationship between the people and their kings:

Los señores cristianos se libraban de quebraderos de cabeza al entregar el cuidado de sus bienes al buen postor judío, ducho en tratar con cosas tangibles; tal entrega significaba romper la unidad moral entre vasallos y señores, y especializar al judío en la antipática tarea de estrujar al pobre en beneficio del rico. Se tajaba así un permanente abismo entre pueblo y gobierno, y también entre el Estado y la Iglesia, porque los reyes tenían en el judío una fuente única de ingresos, y en la Iglesia un rival que se los restaba. (Castro, *España* 525)

From such circumstances began the protection dispensed by the kings to the Jews until almost the eve of the decree of exile (516).⁹⁷

In 1215, for example, the Fourth Lateran Council ordered that all Jews wear a symbol so that they could be distinguished from the Christians. The Spanish Jews became infuriated, and some of the most important members of the *aljamas* threatened to leave for Moorish lands,⁹⁸ which in those days were more tolerant. So, although the wearing of distinctive signs was strictly enforced in other parts of Europe (Camille 182), Fernando III and the archbishop of Toledo begged the pope to suspend the rule with

⁹⁷ Another social circumstance that caused the Jews to have to rely increasingly on protection from princes and kings for security had to do with the rise of a Christian merchant class, which gave birth to resentment because the Jews were already well established in European commerce (Cohen 15). The general tone of the *Milagros*, dominated by its strikingly rustic and ingenuous imagery, appears designed to target a more rural audience, or at least to evoke a bucolic nostalgia. Nevertheless it is noteworthy that the episodes that involve Jews (including "Teófilo"), are some of the few "urban" miracles. That is probably because the majority of the Jews would have been in the urban areas.

⁹⁸ That is where Maimonides went, for example. (First to Morocco and then to Egypt).

regard to Castile because the major part of the royal rents came from Jewish contributions. Pope Horacio III acceded to this request since he did not want trouble with the king (Castro, *SSH* 502). The fact that even the archbishop involved himself in pleading with the pope on behalf of the Jews suggests the degree to which the Church itself depended upon Jewish money, no doubt dispensed at the king's discretion. The very presence of the Jews, especially in positions of power and/or superiority, must have been a thorn in the side of the bishops. The peculiar characteristic of Spain compared with the rest of Europe at this time is that the Christian kings opposed "con gran decisión a la iglesia cristiana; el monarca aspiraba a conservar la gallina de los huevos de oro, y la Iglesia, respaldada por el rencor popular, pretende aniquilarla para obtener de una vez las mayores ventajas" (Castro, *España* 520-21). If the State saw the Jews as a permanent source of riches, the Church and the people saw them as a prized booty (Castro, *SSH* 502).

In addition, then, to the secular mechanism for the breaking of the murder taboo, the theme of honor points also to socioeconomic reasons for the relevance of the anti-Jewish motive in our story. The Jews seemed a threat to Church hegemony not only financially, however, but also doctrinally. In fact, the Jewish presence embodied the essence of an evangelical paradox:

The endeavor of Christianity to appropriate Judaism as a stage in its own development is challenged by the abiding loyalty of Jews to Judaism, while the eagerness of Christianity to convert Jews derives from the necessity to substantiate the basic claim of Christian doctrine. The resistance of Jews to the missionary activities of the Church thus becomes a basic Christian frustration, an affront and a threat to the Christian image of itself. Those who are frustrated are always tempted to translate their frustration into hostility toward those responsible for their predicament. (Bokser 34-5)

The unsettling endurance of the Jewish religion, coupled with the survival, prosperity and royal protection of the Jews themselves despite undermining persecution by the Church,

set the stage for the plausibility of perceived mockery or dishonor. The nobility was in competition with the Church for power and income. The Jews were in the middle, obstructing the direct relationship between vassals and kings, and fortifying the kings' independence from the Church. In this context, the theme of dishonor/ honor in the story would have awakened the resentment of both the clergy and the laity toward the monarchs' protective⁹⁹ treatment of the Jews. Within this scenario of resentment, the cause of honor sanctions murder and the Jews become the scapegoats for an animosity that would be impractical, if not impossible to unleash directly against the nobility.

Although the narrative of "Cristo y los judíos de Toledo" appears to justify the murder of Jews, Berceo also includes in his collection miracles in which salvation from mob violence—at least in earthly terms—is granted to Jews who convert. In these miracles the Church extends its protection to those who 'see the light' and recognize it as the proper authority.¹⁰⁰ In one such example, "El mercader de Bizancio," a Jewish moneylender and his companions receive the Church's protection when they convert to Christianity and thereby avoid the fate the Jews of Toledo suffer at the hands of the Christian mob.

"EL MERCADER DE BIZANCIO"

The story takes place in the city of Constantinople. As the narrative begins, a Christian merchant needs a loan because his irrepressible generosity has caused him to run out of both money and credit. To secure a loan will provide the means for him to make another fortune, thereby enabling him to continue his generous habits. He prays

⁹⁹ "Protective," although they were enslaved. But then, so were the peasants—perhaps even more than the Jews. To say that the Jews had it really bad because they were chattels of the king is true but not a woe of the Jews exclusively. If the people had not had such rigorous and hazardous conditions that resulted from the abuses of the kings and the knights, they may not have been so eager to jump onto the Church's bandwagon.

¹⁰⁰ Those who "see the light" also include the Jewish boy and the crowd in "El judiezno."

before an image of the Virgin, and God directs him to a wealthy Jewish moneylender. Since the merchant can vouch neither collateral nor patron to the lender, he takes the liberty of pledging as guarantor his church's statue of the Virgin and Child. He bases his pledge upon his faith in the Virgin, who he knows will assure his profit and ability to pay his debt. Although reluctant to accept a statue as a valid guarantor of the loan, the wealthy Jew nevertheless decides to lend the money to the merchant. Far from home on the loan's due date, the merchant prays to the Virgin, "la de Rocamador" (664d), to direct his payment to its rightful recipient. He then places the money into a sack and casts it out to sea, imploring the Virgin and Jesus Christ to accept the payment and consider fulfilled his obligation to them as his guarantors. This concludes the first part of the story (625-671). The second part (672-696) begins when a chest washes ashore near the moneylender's home in Constantinople. Both Jews and Christians try to seize it, but it slips away from them. By chance the lender passes by and the chest miraculously directs itself to him. He then takes it home, counts the gold and silver, and hides the empty chest under his bed. He considers his luck to be marvelous, indeed his neighbors envy it, but he maintains that the debt owed by the merchant remains unpaid. When the Christian returns to Constantinople, the Jew, thinking to double the money lent, confronts him at his home, declares the debt still outstanding and demands payment. The Christian challenges the allegation and the two men agree to go to the church to hear if the guarantor-images of the pledged statue, Virgin and Child, will have something to say about the situation. Many witnesses accompany them to the church. There the Christian talks to the images, refreshing their memory of the particulars and asking for confirmation of the paid debt. The Crucifix then speaks the truth and announces that the chest can be found hidden under the Jew's bed. The crowd mobilizes and heads to the Jew's home. Upon searching his home, they indeed find the chest exactly where the

Crucifix has indicated. The Jew must now tell the whole story, and he and his companions forthwith convert to Christianity. He remains a Christian until he dies.¹⁰¹ Thus ends the second part of the miracle and the story proper about the merchant and the lender. The miracle closes with an anecdote (697-702) about its source: an archbishop, who happened to be travelling through Constantinople on the day of the annual celebration of the Crucifix's spoken revelation, inquired about the reasons for the extravagant festivities. Upon hearing this miracle, he committed it to writing.¹⁰²

Along with "El milagro de Teófilo" and "La abadesa preñada," "El mercader de Bizancio," with a total of seventy-eight quatrains, is one of the three longest miracles in Berceo's collection,¹⁰³ three times as long as the average length of most of the other miracles. As Diz observes, "[e]n muchos lugares de su obra, Berceo reconoce la brevedad como valor narrativo, pero en este caso, la brevedad es totalmente anómola" (149). As we have seen in "Cristo y los judíos de Toledo," Berceo ritualizes a pogrom in one brief quatrain. Indeed the general lengthiness of this miracle is anomalous within the collection itself, and particularly so since this narrative is punctuated by ambiguity, contradiction, and repetition. These elements are uncharacteristic of Berceo's sharp, epigrammatic style, which is present even in the other two longer miracles. These uncharacteristic elements appear in the ambiguous characterizations of the two main protagonists in which the narrative tends to double back on itself to recast a previous scene, and in the merchant's exaggeratedly long prayers to the images of Christ and the Virgin, which seem either to recapitulate previous plot information or to summarize

¹⁰¹ Ana Diz (149) argues that he dies right then, since the line "murió enna fe buena, de la mala tollido" (696d), immediately follows the conversion. However, the line echoes the death scenes of most all the other miracles where death occurs at the end of a penitent life. In any event, whether or not he died immediately or later, he died a Christian.

¹⁰² The Latin version begins with the annual celebration and the archbishop's visit. Diz believes that Berceo's placing an amplified version of the celebration at the end of the story lends a ritual tone to the commemoration and emphasizes the triumph of the Church (151).

¹⁰³ "Teófilo" contains 163 *cuadernas* and "La abadesa" 83.

future action, both unnecessarily. In each of these areas, the characterizations and the prayers, Berceo has amplified considerably the Latin versions. Dutton notes, for example, that he adds a prayer (632-635) in which the merchant prays before the altars for help and advice, and amplifies the ones insinuated in the Latin version (*Obras* 200-201). In his prayer of thanks to the Virgin for the good fortune of receiving the loan, the merchant not only repeats a description of his precarious financial situation—information already known from the opening narrative as well as from his first prayer (632-635; the prayer added by Berceo). He also gives away the gist of the next scene where he finds himself far from home on the loan's due date.

Sennor, andava eri pobre e adebdado,
 só oĩ por tu gracia rico e abondado;
 a ti di por fiança mas fízilo sin grado,
 por mí serié grand tuerto qe tú fuesses reptado.

Sennor, yo non querría de mi vierbo fallir,
 lo qe ante ti pussi bien lo querré complir;
 pero si non podiero yo al plazo venir,
 el aver ante ti lo querré aducir.

Sennor si por ventura fuero yo alongado,
 qe non pueda venir al término tajado,
 porrélo ante ti qe me has enfiado,
 e tú comoquequiere féslo a él pagado.
 (656-658)

The next prayer, for the guidance of his money to the lender, goes on for over four quatrains. Each verse repeats essentially the same imploration, itself a repetition from the previous prayer. Here is an example of one of the quatrains in this prayer:

Sennora gloriosa, mienna sancta María,
 tú bien en medio yazes en esta pleitesía;
 quando bien la catares tuya es más qe mía,
 a ti do la pecunia, Sennora tú la guía.
 (669)

We will return to the question of why Berceo devotes so many quatrains to the prayers.

In addition to the extension and addition of prayers in which much repetition occurs, Dutton has noted that the compelling differences between Berceo and the Latin versions affect the characterization of both the merchant and the lender (*Obras* 200-01). Berceo amplifies the descriptions of these two protagonists, creating an indefinite portrayal of their personal characteristics, and expanding the dialogues between them. As we will see in the discussion of the characterization of the lender, these dialogues draw out a theological polemic between Jew and Christian that reflects their differences in belief regarding religious images and Christ as God incarnate. In the dialogues, these religious disparities are contrasted in terms of the merchant's simple faith and the Jew's cunning reason. The dialectic between faith and reason illustrates well a significant aspect of the scholastic method of intellectual inquiry applicable to the liberal arts, medicine, theology and law in the Middle Ages, especially during the eleventh through the thirteenth centuries (Baldwin, *SC* ii).

Berceo's description of the merchant is not one-dimensional—the merchant appears as both prideful and good hearted, both worldly and spiritual. Jesús Montoya Martínez notes the vocabulary of mercantilism (*fazienda*, *espender*, *dar en baldón*, *prender mudado*) and honor (*sobir en grand precio*, *exaltar su fama*, *valer más*) in Berceo's description of the merchant (146). This vocabulary, he observes, implies “una repercusión social, que nada tenía que ver con el carácter benéfico de la caridad” (Montoya Martínez 146). He suggests that “[l]as palabras de Berceo nos sugieren un ‘burgués’ que pugnaba por competir con la clase noble, practicando una de sus virtudes literariamente más destacadas: la largueza” (147). Indeed at the outset, and following the gist of the Latin, in quatrains 627-629 Berceo tells us that the Christian spends his entire fortune—“sin tiento” (629a), “sin mesura” (630a)—in order to “sobir en grand precio” (627b) and “el su precio crecer” (628a). “Por exaltar su fama” (628a), he even “prendié

de sus vecinos mudado volunter” (willingly received loans from his neighbors) (628d) in order to keep on spending. “Él non dizrié de non” (627d) to anyone who asked him for money, and “siempre trovárié omne en su casa conviento,/ quando vent, quando treinta, a las vegadas ciento” (629cd). Berceo, however, embellishes the connotations of the merchant’s character in the Latin versions, moderating his pride or aspiration to worldly honor (“el su precio crecer,” “por exaltar su fama”) and irresponsibility (he spends “sin tiento,” “sin mesura”) by adding the description of his “muy grand corazón” (627a) and information such as “espendié sos averes, dávolos en baldón” (627c),¹⁰⁴ “derramava sin duelo quanto podié aver” (628b), “derramava lo suyo largament” (albeit “sin tiento”) (629a), “menguavan los averes mas non el buen taliento” (629b). Berceo thus creates an impression of a merchant who, in Diz’s estimation, “con generosidad genuina, vale a su prójimo aun cuando no le resulta fácil” (143). I would amend this impression by adding that the combination of generosity, irresponsibility, and desire for fame or popularity helps paint a picture of a merchant who, unable to say no to anyone, probably finds himself vulnerable to being taken advantage of by others. In other words, the merchant is generous, but also naïve and gullible.

The merchant of the Latin version spends all his fortune in order to be popular and have fame: “La razón de tantos gastos en el latín es ‘nominis sui fama...extendere’ (cpse. 627b, 628abc)” (Dutton, *Obras* 200). Referring to García de Valdeavellano’s remarks about the *burgueses medievales*, Montoya Martínez states that many were owners of considerable patrimonies accumulated through their commercial activity, and some even had enough money to buy land and become leisurely, thereby distinguishing themselves as superior among the citizens. They thus aspired to emulate the nobility, the social structure that they were destroying (146). The names assigned to the protagonists

¹⁰⁴ *Dar en baldón* means to lend without interest (Diz 143). In Baro’s glossary, *de balde*, i.e., gratis (33).

of the story are arbitrary, different in various versions of the tale, both Latin and vernacular. The name Berceo uses for the merchant, don Valerio (and this after he has become rich again), was a “nombre típicamente romano, que había sido llevado por las más nobles familias patricias” (Montoya Martínez 148). Upon considering this information about the burgers and the nobility, one wonders if Berceo might have intended some subtle humor with the characterization of his merchant for the benefit of the clergy in his audience, most of whom would have come from aristocratic families.

In any event, Berceo, without omitting altogether the Latin description of the spendthrift Christian, extends it by painting him also as generous because of his big heart. He transforms the irresponsibility of the squanderer into the virtue of generosity. The merchant’s pride is folly but his heart is good. In Berceo’s miracle we are inclined toward some degree of sympathy for the foolish merchant’s gullibility, in spite of easily recognizing pride as a factor in his largesse. Undoubtedly the emphasis on the merchant’s generosity serves to distinguish him from the greed of the Jew, which develops in the second part of the narrative. It is also noteworthy that the ingenuous aspect of the Christian’s character is precisely what configures him for the humbleness of faith.

All throughout the miracle the Christian’s long prayers are addressed directly to images of Christ and the Virgin. The four prayers, which, as we have seen, tend to recapitulate information we already know, comprise around twenty percent of the story’s seventy-eight quatrains. Why does Berceo include all of them? Why does he make them so long? One reason may be that they serve to emphasize the simplicity of the Christian merchant’s faith, and, perhaps more importantly, to underscore his intermediary relationship with God and highlight the concept of the Trinity. The prayers draw attention to God as the ultimate bestower of miracles. When he prays before the altars

for help, the merchant addresses himself directly to God as Trinity: “Sennor, que un Dios eres e tres personas pares” (632c). God guides him to the Jewish lender: “Demientre qe orava, quísoli Dios prestar [. . .] quísolo guiar” (635a,c). When the merchant gives thanks for the loan, he prays to the Glorious one, but addresses himself to God: “Tornó a la Gloriosa, [. . .] fo render a Dios gracias [. . .] Sennor—disso—fezístme merced e caridat” (654cd-655c). When, far from home, he prays for his money to find the lender, he apparently stands before an image of the Virgin of Rocamadour (664d), and in his prayer he addresses God: “Sennor, tú lo entiendes e sabes la verdat” (665a), Christ: “Tornó en Jesu Christo [. . .] plorando gravemientre” (667ab), and Mary: “Sennora gloriosa [. . .] a ti do la pecunia, Sennora tú la guía” (669a,d). Confirming the intermediary powers represented by the images, the money finds the lender because it pleased Mary and Jesus: “Plogo a la Gloriosa, al su Fijo querido” (672a). When the merchant seeks confirmation of the loan payment, he prays to God before the statue of Mary and the baby Jesus: “Paráronse delante al Ninno Coronado,/ el qe tenié la Madre dulzement abrazado;/ díssoli el burgés: Sennor tan acabado” (692a-c). Berceo takes care to connect God with the images, yet underscores the miracle as ultimately the work of God. When the crucifix speaks, we can then assume that the voice of God is speaking through the image. Since the Jews reject the concept of an intermediary between God and man—much less the idea of the incarnation of God in either man or image—the theological polemic that develops between merchant and lender shows us that the Jew must become convinced that indeed Christ is God, thereby proving the triumph of the simple faith of the Christian. This theme of winning over the Jew revolves around the legitimacy and competence of the Christian images (and ultimately of Christ and the Church) as sanctioned intermediaries between human beings and the Divine Court of Heaven.

In contrast to the simplicity of the merchant's faith, the Jew's friends serve as representatives of reason when, for example, they chastise him for accepting such foolish surety as "una imagen dura" (680d). Another example occurs when the merchant invites the moneylender to his shrine to introduce him to his guarantors. The moneylender gladly agrees to go, and others from the Jewish quarter also accompany him. These companions will serve as witnesses to the loan. The merchant presents the image of the Virgin and the Christ child to the moneylender as if they were real, and "fueron embergonzados los de la judería" (649d), apparently because of the reverence shown to the images. Undaunted by the embarrassment of the Jews, the Christian evangelizes to "los de la aljama" (650a)—he introduces them to "nuestro Sire" and "nuestra Dama" (650b), adding that "siempre es bien apreso qi a ellos se clama,/ qui en ellos non cree bevrá fuego e flama" (650cd). When the crucifix speaks the truth about the loan payment and backs it up by disclosing the hiding place of the money chest, it validates the authority of the Christian images as intermediaries and therein proves to the Jew the true faith of the Church as legitimate earthly representative of God's authority.

In the verses that serve to create a characterization of the Jewish lender, Berceo plants the elements of the theological polemic at stake in order for faith (Christianity) to convince reason (Judaism): messiah vs. prophet, true faith vs. bad faith or false religion, and image/ intermediary credibility. As Dutton points out, he amplifies considerably the Latin versions' pejorative epithets for the lender, stressing the act of denying the evidence (trufán renegado, 648 and 670) (*Obras* 201), which structures the central theme of the story. Curiously enough, however, Berceo also makes some courteous additions to the presentation of the Jew, which serve to create another ambiguous characterization. We are told in 637, for example, that the Christian is well received by the Jew who already

knows about his concerns. The idea here is that the Jew knows everything because the whole town knows, i.e., the Jew is part of the community:

Un judío bien rico avié enna cibdat,
non avié d'él más rico en essa vezindat;

Fo luego al judío e fo bien recibido,
demandó l cómo andava, por qué era venido,
ca de otras sazones lo avié conocido
e todo el su pleito bien lo avié oído.

Díssoli su fazienda el burgés al ebreo:
“Don fulán, bien savedes mi pleito como creo,
(636ab, 637-638ab)

In quatrains 638-647 the lender is referred to as the “ebreo” or the “judío.” In spite of the fact that Berceo uses the phrase “dar en baldón,” that is, to give without interest, in order to characterize the Christian and perhaps contrast him to the Jew who charges interest, there is no suggestion in the narrative proper that the terms of the loan involve any interest at all. The merchant simply asks for the loan: “si tú me quissiesses del tuyo acreer,/ yo bien te lo cuidava a un plazo render” (640cd), and the lender immediately agrees to grant it: “Díssoli el judío: “Ferlo *hé* de buen grado,/ dar t *hé* quanto quisieres de mi aver prestado” (641ab). The only condition imposed by the lender is his request for a guarantor; otherwise, he would fear trickery or deception: “mas dame fiador qe sea segurado,/ si non, pavor avría de seer engannado” (641cd). By requesting a guarantor, the Jew is not singling out the Christian or harassing him, but rather is simply following lending procedures standard in Berceo’s time. The structure of a standard medieval loan requires that the borrower’s “señores” vouch for him, although he is still responsible to repay (Diz 145). The expressions Berceo uses reflect the formulae of finance and lending utilized in Roman law; these being oral and with witnesses (Bermejo Cabrero 43-4).¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁵ The group of people that accompany the merchant and the lender to the church on the occasion of presentation of the images as guarantors become the witnesses to the loan arrangement.

In response to the Jew's offer, the Christian, we are told, "fablóli a sabor" (642a), saying that he could not offer any guarantor except Christ, "mi Dios e mi Sennor,/ Fijo de la Gloriosa, del mundo Salvador" (642c-d). This proposition of offering Christ as guarantor in a business arrangement with a Jew seems to punctuate the sequential flow of the story with a parenthesis. Even a thoroughly indoctrinated audience would probably observe that the merchant's self-confident pronouncements possess a coercive and didactic tone out of line with the expected expression of a man in need of a favor. Indeed, Berceo seizes the opportunity that this narrative aperture affords to contrast a theological difference between the two religions. The lender counters the merchant's didactic proclamation with the affirmation that he cannot believe Jesus is God, but rather that he is a true prophet:

[. . .] Yo creer non podría
 que éssi qe tú dizes, qe nació de María,
 que Dios es, mas fo omne cuerdo e sin follía,
 profeta verdadero —yo ál non creería.
 (643)

Thus Berceo sketches out the central theological polemic at issue in the story: Christ as messiah vs. Christ as true prophet. At stake in this debate, of course, is the key issue of medieval Christian dogma with regard to Judaism: the issue of whether or not Christ is the true messiah prefigured in the Old Testament and whose ministry is fulfilled in the New.

In her discussion of the Jewish episodes of the *Milagros*, Diz says that ordeal ("El judiezno"), judgment ("Cristo y los judíos de Toledo"), and financial contract ("El mercader de Bizancio"), are variations on the same theme of the confrontation between Jews and Christians, and that this confrontation is one of the modes used in medieval Christian literature to characterize the battle between Good and Evil (148). I would suggest that in "El mercader de Bizancio," the theological polemic engendered by the

opposition of Christianity and Judaism overshadows the motif of Good vs. Evil that many critics have seen as the structuring theme of all the *milagros*. Curiously, for example, the lender states that “for His love” he will make the loan without a guarantor: “Si él te enfiare, yo por el su amor/ acreer t *hé* lo mío sin otro fiador” (644ab). What we have here is an affirmation of a Jew’s esteem for Jesus, albeit as *profeta verdadero* rather than *Dios e sennor*. Moreover, in order to assure the accentuation of this esteem in the narrative, Berceo refrains from anti-Jewish phrases in order to make his point: that this Jew, in spite of his doubts regarding the capacity of a prophet to serve as guarantor for a loan, nonetheless agrees to lend the money to the Christian. As Montoya Martínez observes, the lender’s religious beliefs “sólo afloran con motivo de aceptar a Jesucristo como garante del préstamo, pero no son obstáculo para que se lleve a cabo la operación. Es, pues, un judío liberal” (143). Ironically, the tone of esteem for Jesus (as prophet) in the lender’s responses to the merchant emphasizes at this point a theological polemic rather than a struggle between Good and Evil. For reasons I will demonstrate, the Good vs. Evil theme seems contrived. Therefore, narrative focus shifts toward the miracle’s principal topics of Christian dogma with respect to Judaism. Berceo contrasts these religious topics by means of the quintessential narrative motif of medieval scholasticism: faith vs. reason.

Dutton tells us that in the initial verses of negotiations for the loan (640-643), Berceo has added to the neutral Latin text genteel details and formalities in reference to the lender.¹⁰⁶ For example, Berceo added *cuaderna* 637, which, as was mentioned

¹⁰⁶ Here are the Latin verses that form the basis for Berceo’s text (quatrains 636-644b):
 Sed cum omnino, quod mutuo acceperat, iam et ipsum ei deficeret nec iam, a quo mutuaretur amicum
 immo christianum invenire valeret, iudeum quendam perdivitem adiit et, ut ei aliqua mutuo daret, obnixe
 oravit [636-640]. At ille: “Faciám—inquit—quod petis, si mihi vadem condignum attuleris.” “Vadem—
 inquit—certe condignum non habeo, sed quicquid mihi prestiteris, me tibi redditurum die constituto
 verissime spondeo” [641]. At ille: “Sine vade nihil omnino tibi prestare volo, quia falli aliter timeo.” Ille
 autem: “Quia ergo—inquit—vadem alium invenire nequeo, vellesne Deum meum Ihesum Christum, quem
 colo, pro vade accipere?” [642]. At ille: “Ihesum—ait—Christum deum esse non credo, sed quia hominem

earlier, tells us that the merchant is well received by the Jew, who already knows of his plight. Also, 641ab are additions that emphasize the Jew's willingness to grant the loan (*Obras* 200).¹⁰⁷ But then, Dutton notes, “donde el latín ofrece palabras razonables y consideradas, Berceo añade unas mofas que apenas vienen al caso” (200-01):

mas seméjame cosa esquivá sin color
e seméjame hascas omne escarnidor.

Yo non sé de qual guisa lo podiesse aver,
ca non es en est mundo secúnd el mi creer;
non esperes qe venga pora ti acorrer,
onde otro consejo te conviene prender.”
(644cd-645)

Diz (144) and Biglieri (101-2) suggest that the formalities are offered with a tone to underscore not the politeness of the Jew, but rather his duplicity: “más que mejorar al judío, lo empeoran, si se interpretan como índice de la duplicidad del usurero. Esos añadidos, que manifiestan el escepticismo del judío, trazan el retrato de este prestamista cortés pero porfiado e implacable” (Diz 144). While the more skeptical verses indeed tip us off to the Jew's impending duplicity, they also function to reinforce a narrative motif of faith vs. reason. This theme is illustrated in terms of the differences in comportment between Christian and Jew respectively. First, the voice of reason reveals to the Jew his feeling of vulnerability and skepticism for making such an irrational and unprofessional business decision (“cosa esquivá sin color”) by accepting a statue as surety. What he most probably considers a mocking attitude on the part of the Christian (“omne escarnidor”) is the audacity of his unreasonable expectation that his guarantor must be taken seriously. Secondly, the Jew's words, by means of his rational expression of incredulity, serve to reiterate the Jewish position on the messiah vs. prophet topic (“ca

eum iustum et prophetam fuisse non dubito; hunc mihi si pro vade (31~) dederis, indubitanter accipio” [643-646].

¹⁰⁷ The positive aspects of the portrait of the Jew could also serve to characterize him as someone who could be a good Christian once he converts.

non es en est mundo secúnd mi creer”), and thirdly, they warn the Christian that he had better plan to be responsible for his own debt (“otro consejo te conviene prender”). The moneylender’s remarks in general describe a rational caveat about the irrationality of placing all one’s faith in images and miracles rather than in personal efforts, a concept that incidentally happens to be a particularly strong ethical belief of the Jews:

Judaism [. . .] is a detailed system of ethical *practices* by which its adherents consecrated their daily lives to the *service* of God. The cornerstone of Judaism was the *deed*, not the *dogma*. [. . .] Salvation for professing Christians is not a consequence of duty done in the conscious service of God; it is something mystically received as a gift of divine grace. [. . .] Christianity and Judaism appealed to different sides of human nature; the former to the passive side, the latter to the active side. Christianity stressed *faith*, Judaism *right action*. (Bokser 337)¹⁰⁸

In Bokser’s view, the call to faith in dogma—rather than the consecration directly to God of worldly action—“withdraws the existential world from religious concern and establishes in fact two autonomous kingdoms, the kingdom of the world and the kingdom of the spirit.” The focus on an eschatological vision, in effect denies the viability of the goal stressed in Judaism: to “perfect the world under the kingship of the Almighty” (327-8). Berceo, by adding the Jew’s skeptical remarks, effectively highlights an essential difference in the psychological structure of the two religions. Berceo ties in to the intermediary theme and the messiah vs. prophet polemic by contrasting these religious issues through the narrative motif of faith vs. reason.

Diz observes that the *mofas* described by Dutton “hacen verosímil la respuesta del mercader y permiten toda una línea de diálogo (vs 646-647) que insiste en el significado más profundo de la transacción” (144). Indeed the ensuing portion of the dialogue draws attention to the merchant’s ingenuously self-confident faith and the lender’s logical doubts. In fact, this contrast sharpens as the narrative diverges from its linear progression

¹⁰⁸ Original emphasis.

in order to recast the previous scene in which the lender has already agreed to the loan. To the lender's "rational caveat" (645), the merchant acknowledges: "Entiendo qe me tienes por loco e sendío,/ qe non trayo consejo e ando en radío,/ mas ál verás tras esto secundo qe yo fío" (646b-d). In a sense, if the merchant stands for Christian virtue, then Berceo emphasizes the apparent irrationality of the merchant's reliance on faith alone. In response to the merchant, the lender says, "si tal cosa mostrares,/ yo te daré empresto quanto tú demandares" (647ab). This statement appears odd since we know already that he is going to bestow the loan for His love ("por el su amor"). He continues with "mas por otras pastrijas lo qe de mí levares,/ non pagarás con ello caçurros nin joglares" (647cd). This sudden hostility is probably inserted to provide a transition that will justify the abrupt turn of the narrative against the Jew in 648a: "Díssoli el burgés al trufán renegado." At first the moneylender sounds generous and reasonable, and then quite unexpectedly the narrative turns back on itself and alters the tone of the story by presenting us with a second account of the same scene. In the first one, the Jew agrees to make the loan "por el su amor," and subsequently laments the irrationality of his decision, warning the Christian not to rely too much on divine intervention in order to pay his debt. In the second version, the Jew demands a demonstration that the Christian is not a fool as a condition for granting the loan. He then becomes mordant upon considering the possibility of trickery. This scolding reaction from the lender sets the tone for the pejorative epithets that are to follow. The transition is abrupt, but it is probable that members of a medieval audience, who would be anticipating the anti-Semitic topos, could have received the sudden turn of the narrative with satisfaction that their expectations were indeed confirmed. The stereotypical slandering of Jews provided the entertainment factor of the stories in which they were protagonists.

In spite of the sudden turn of the narrative against the lender, the theme of Good vs. Evil as a confrontation between Christian and Jew nevertheless appears forced, or at the very least transparently contrived, and therefore unconvincing as the primary theme of contention. This unpersuasive aspect of the theme underscores it as unessential to the story.¹⁰⁹ Even in the Latin versions, as Montoya Martínez explains, the description of the merchant has nothing to do with moral connotations derived from his Christianity. The use of the word ‘Christian’ is mainly for effect in opposition to the Jew: “...el término ha sido seleccionado en razón de su oposición al interlocutor, el judío, a sus creencias religiosas” (143). About the Jew, Montoya Martínez states that “hay que reconocer que responde al cliché clásico” in terms of his social function (“creditori”) and his wealth (“perdivitem”) (143). As a result of its secondary status within the narrative, the theme of Good vs. Evil personified as the confrontation between Christian and Jew, rather than structuring the narrative, becomes subsumed as just another of the many stereotypes used for the hearty and gratuitous slandering of Jews. With the characterizations of the Jew and the Christian, the Good vs. Evil scheme has been perfunctorily set into place while maintaining a general emphasis on the theological polemics encompassed by a motif of faith vs. reason—the issues of image credibility and messiah vs. prophet—that symbolize questions of dogma concerning the legitimacy of religious intermediaries and of the Christian interpretation of the Old Testament.

The triumph of the Christian religious images upholds the divine power of Christian symbols, which reflects the triumph of simple faith over reason. Baldwin recognizes the issue of faith and reason as a doctrinal problem very pertinent to theology and philosophy. He sustains that this fundamental issue of medieval thought, while it

¹⁰⁹ In “Cristo y los judíos de Toledo,” the striking aspect of the narrative is the transparent representation of the dynamics of mob violence (non-cathartic), while the Christian vs. Jew = Good vs. Evil theme structures the story.

“does not sum up the problems of theology and philosophy,” nevertheless “serves to exemplify the method which underlay medieval scholastic culture” (SC ii). In the thirteenth century, the schools of thought regarding the primacy of faith or reason in questions of theology developed along the lines of influences from the previous century. Abelard (d. 1142), for example, with his expertise in dialectics, maintained that the names and attributes of God revealed the divine nature. To Abelard, words, if not in all cases revelatory in and of themselves, nevertheless afforded an entrance into the mysteries of the Scriptures. Despite the limitations of words, he persevered in the attempt “to demonstrate the reasonableness of faith by grammar and logic.” “The most formidable adversary of the speculative theologians [Abelard, et. al.] was the ponderous Cistercian abbot, Bernard of Clairvaux [d. 1153] who [. . .] expressed the new piety of the rural monasteries, and distrusted the urban schools of the secular clergy.” More than actually representing “dogmatic faith” against “unfettered reason,” Bernard proposed “a division of knowledge into two realms, the one investigated by faith, the other by reason” (90-91). This division became further accentuated with the progressive appearance of Aristotle’s philosophical and metaphysical works. At the end of the twelfth century the fundamental problem for theologians was: “What was now to be the relation between Christ and Aristotle, theology and philosophy, faith and reason?” (92). The relation between faith and reason was sharply debated by the Paris theologians well into the middle of the thirteenth century when it reached its most eloquent synthesis in the works of Thomas Aquinas (92).¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰ “In Thomism alone we have a system in which philosophic conclusions are deduced from purely rational premisses [*sic*]. Theology remains in its proper place, that is to say at the head of the hierarchy of the sciences; based on divine revelation, from which it receives its principles, it constitutes a distinct science starting from faith and turning to reason only to draw out the content of faith or to protect it from error” (Etienne Gilson, 6). Thomas found Aristotelianism and, to a lesser extent, Platonism (including Socratism) useful tools for communicating Christian thought, but he adapted and expanded the concepts that he borrowed from them. He did not compromise Christian doctrine, but instead brought it into line

In the realm of theology, St. Bernard's position, while expressed in scholastic terms, very much reflected that of Augustine who proclaimed the primacy of faith as a prerequisite to understanding. Even though Berceo was a secular priest, his inclinations, not coincidentally, appear to align with St. Bernard's, in whose writings the elevation of Mary to such high status in the economy of salvation found its fullest flowering. While for the Jewish lender in the story the evidence given by the talking crucifix provides the prerequisite for his conversion, for the Christian audience, faith in the reported evidence of Mary's miracles forms the basis for devotion to her. In a sense, however, the lender takes a first step toward "the Faith," that is, the Church, by accepting the statue of Virgin and Child as surety despite his initial doubts. Once drawn into the sphere of Church influence, he ultimately cannot escape. Confronted by the mob that has invaded his home and discovered the empty chest hidden under his bed, the Jew and his companions convert to Christianity:

Movió s el pueblo todo, como estaba plecho,
 fuéronli a la casa, fizieron grand derecho;
 trovaron el escrinno do yazié so el lecho,
 fincó el trufán malo confuso e maltrecho.

ovo del pleito todo a venir connocido,
 elli con sus compannas fo luego convertido,
 (695, 696bc)

Since God guided the Christian to the Jew in the first place ("quísolo guiar" (635c)), the miracle must be God's plan not only to help the Christian but also to convert the Jew.¹¹¹

with the current Aristotelianism by means of modification and correction of the latter whenever it conflicted with Christian belief ("St. Thomas Aquinas").

¹¹¹ It is worthy of note that in the Latin version, the lender recognizes his error and along with his companions converts to Christianity in the church as soon as the image speaks:

His ille peroratis, voce absoluta audientibus cunctis, mirabile dictu, ymago respondit: "Testimonium—inquit—tibi perhibeo, quia prestitum omne illi reddidisti die constituto, his indiciis, quia scrinium, quo pecunia fuerat clausa, ipsius iacet sub lecto." Audit iudeus et stupet, signa recognoscit et horret. Quid plura? Judaicum errorem agnoscit. Fidei Christiana cum omni domo sua colla submittit. (Dutton, *Obras* 199-200)

Diz points out that the violence of the epic expression “movió s el pueblo todo” mirrors that in “Cristo y los judíos de Toledo”: “Moviéronse los pueblos, toda la clerecía,/ fueron a muy grand priessa pora la judería;/ guiólos Jesu Christo e la Virgo María” (426a-c). In both miracles, the movement of the people to the home of a Jew follows the word—of Mary or of the crucifix—that issues from the church (see Diz 151). The coercive tone present in Berceo’s version of the conversion of the lender and his companions undoubtedly foreshadows, if not reflects, realities of the thirteenth century. Mass conversions in Castile and Aragon toward the second half of the century were due not only to violence but also to “decline of morale,” which was the end result “not just of successful integration but of unceasing anti-Jewish polemic and of relentless Christian preaching to which the ‘successful’ Jewish community had been subjected ever since the heyday of the Reconquest and of the disputation at Barcelona” (Gampel 29). The Church program for conversion of the Jews in Spain sought any means possible, from preaching to outright violence, to achieve its goal. The Dominican and Franciscan friars spearheaded this campaign. Eventually, it seems, violence and threat of exile became the most persuasive means of converting Jews. During the tumultuous period from 1391-1415, at least one-third to one-half of the Jews in Spain converted to Christianity (29). “In 1492, given the choice of conversion or exile, half of the Jewish population converted” (32).

Another kind of violence to which the Jews became increasingly subjected in the thirteenth century was, of course, the violence of their negative representation in stereotypes and iconography. Christian religious imagery, both in pictures and in words, portrays the Jews’ unwillingness to accept Christ for their messiah as a form of blindness or inability to see the evidence of the prefigured truth. This blindness, often portrayed as willful, or as a denial of the truth (“el trufán renegado” in this miracle), is variously

depicted in thirteenth-century Christian iconography. The image of Synagogue, for example, is portrayed as a woman who often stands beside the crucifixion or the figure of the New Law, *Ecclesia*. “Her attributes vary [. . .] but more usually the tablets of the Law drop from her hands. Her staff, often with a banner, breaks and she is blindfolded” (Camille 178). In inscriptions that “contrast the erect figure of the New Law, *Ecclesia*, to the collapse of the Old Law, *Synagoga*, with the dichotomy of *surgit* and *cadit*—this one rises, this one falls,” she symbolizes Judaism as the old law supplanted by Christianity (178). The potency of stereotypical and iconographic representations derives from their symbolic nature. Judaism and Jews in these symbols variously stand for folly (blindness to the New Law, for example) and depravity (devil worship, desecration of holy images), as opposed to the legitimacy of the Christian faith. As Camille explains,

Western Europeans in this period sought to define themselves against the Other; against a past Other, the pagans, whose culture still permeated medieval texts and images; against a foreign Other, the Muslims, whom they had been fighting for more than a century in order to regain the Holy Land; and against a domestic Other, the Jews, who denied the Faith right before their eyes. (xxix)¹¹²

The development of the Jewish lender’s character in the second part of the story diverges sharply from the courteous Jew, blind to the dogma of the messiah in the first part. While still illustrating the basic theological dialectic of the story, descriptions of the lender focus on his greed. Biglieri considers this miracle “uno de los textos más logrados desde el punto de vista de la caracterización de un personaje según el concepto medieval de los vicios y pecados [. . .] El personaje que mejor ejemplifica [la avaricia y la codicia] es el judío del milagro XXIII” (97, 110). Most of the pejorative references to the lender’s character are additions made by Berceo to the Latin, “siempre en el sentido de empeorar la figura del judío” and “para hacer hincapié en la avaricia del judío”(Dutton, *Obras* 202).

¹¹² In Berceo’s Spain, of course, the Muslim “Other” had been on Spanish soil for 500 years.

The first example occurs in the verses where the lender recovers the money from the chest:

El trufán alevoso, natura cobdiciosa,
Non metié el astroso mientes en otra cosa;
Tenié qe su ventura era maravillosa,
Púsoli al burgés nomne ‘boca mintrosa.’
(679)

The lender, who made the loan “por el su amor” and accepted the church images of Mary and Jesus as guarantors, now has become a dirty, greedy traitor. In spite of the negative description, however, the verses still allow for some ambiguity: Was he really blind to the miracle and therefore considered himself lucky and the debt still outstanding, or did he recognize the miracle for what it was and decide to lie about it? Therein lies the power of the iconographical symbol of the blindfold: it can stand for either blindness or denial. As we know, when the merchant returns, the lender demands to be paid, but the following lines are also additions of Berceo: “plógoli al judío, tóvose por guarido,/ cuydó qe doblarié el aver acreído” (684cd). Again we have some ambiguity: Did the lender, knowing he had already been paid, think to double the money lent, or would he be able to collect a large interest payment because the debt was overdue?

Although Berceo does not make usury an issue in this miracle, it was a stereotype inextricably linked with the Jews. Furthermore, as Camille notes, in the iconography of Berceo’s time the association of Jews with usury was often conflated with the image of Avarice:

Like the sin of Pride, she [Synagogue] is shown falling; like Idolatry, she represents false as against true Faith. Moreover, she would have been linked in everyone’s minds with the [bas-]relief of Avarice, who is portrayed counting his money into a chest, because Jews were synonymous with the vice of usury even more than with that of idolatry [. . .]. Sometimes, indeed, Synagogue is depicted with the money bags of the vice Avarice. (179)

In images where they were depicted as worshippers of Mammon, the Jews were associated with the silver pieces of Judas. These images of the Jews and money, says Camille,

must also be seen in the light of what Lester K. Little describes as a vast mechanism of projection whereby the Jews “functioned as a scapegoat for Christian failure to adapt successfully to the profit economy.” It could also be said that they functioned as a scapegoat for Christian concern about adapting to an expanding economy of images [. . .]. (185)

Of course, the identification of Jews with wealth is a commonplace not only in medieval iconography, but also in literature (Carpenter 66). In the episode of Raquel and Vidas in the *Cid* (vs. 85-200), for example, the author does not explicitly say the moneylenders are Jewish, but all the stereotypes of Jews and the context give it away. The conclusion that their success is due to avarice and “covert business dealings” diffuses the immoral connotation of the *Cid*’s deception of them, for he is “merely beating the Jews at their own game” (66-8). The Christian merchant’s apparent ineptitude with money, at least until he enlists God’s help and offers the statues as surety, distances his character from any taint of greed and therefore places him in sharp contrast to the ways of the Jewish lender in business and money. Ironically, in the endeavor to regain his fortune, his patrons turn out to be God and a Jew (via God, of course), and the images of the Virgin and child prove to be a valuable spiritual as well as monetary asset. It is difficult to tell whether or not Berceo intended this irony, but the story itself certainly reflects an irony emerging in Berceo’s time. Although the stereotype that moneylenders are Jewish and usurers remains generally irrelevant to the point of the story, we know that in the second part of the miracle the greed of the Jew receives considerably more focus along with other stereotypical disparagements. Overall, however, the narrative argument centers upon the merchant’s faith in the images, and the moneylender’s doubts in the images’ effectiveness as guarantors, his initial blindness or denial and subsequent recognition of

the evidence of loan payment, and finally his conversion to Christianity. This argument provides Berceo with a context for dogma promulgation via the theological polemic engendered by the confrontation of Christianity and Judaism.

Berceo's emphasis upon the theological polemics in this miracle draws from, as Montoya Martínez has noted, "los debates entre judío y cristiano." In "El mercader de Bizancio," the confrontation of Christian and Jew plays out more in the literary tradition of polemical debates than in the frame of a battle between Good and Evil. The debate motif most probably derives from the literary genre of dialogues between Christians and Jews. These dialogues referenced the Old and New Testaments in debates between the representatives of the two religions. Practiced in defense of Christianity before an audience primarily of Christians, these exercises involved little more than a "stockpiling" of non-analytical proofs attesting to Christ's prefigured messiahship (Cohen 23). To the extent that the early polemics did not directly attack the Jews of their own day by attacking the orthodoxy of the Talmud itself, "they betray a highly literary and theoretical character; dialogues between Christians and Jews and *sermones contra Iudeos* usually represent adherence to literary genres in vogue and not records of actual exchanges with Jews" (22). The Talmud remained unknown to Christians for hundreds of years after Augustine. Augustine had made minimal use of rabbinic literature in his writings, and none at all in his anti-Jewish treatises. "Even pronounced enemies of the Jews such as Isidore of Seville (ca. 570-636), Julian of Toledo (642-690), and Agobard of Lyons (769-840), although they lived in large and flourishing Jewish communities, acquired their knowledge of Judaism from biblical, classical, and patristic sources" (22). By the time Berceo wrote the *Milagros de Nuestra Señora*, however, awareness of the Talmud was intensifying. The existence of the Talmud represented another direction of Old

Testament interpretation that flourished independently from the New Testament of Christianity.

The mock disputations of the eleventh and twelfth centuries frequently contained dialogues in which the Jew points out Christian idolatry. In one example, a Jew accusing Christians of idolatry states that “I have seen with my own eyes, in your temples you offer adoration to great images which are the work of painter and sculptor” (cited in Camille, 176). Of course, these texts “literally put words into the mouths of the Judaic interlocutors, constructing arguments in order to refute them. The Christian in defense of images refers to the Tabernacle and the Solomonic temple of Exodus itself” (Camille 176). Montoya Martínez points out that “El mercader de Bizancio,” which takes place in Constantinople, “obedece a la reacción eclesiástica al movimiento iconoclasta promovido por los emperadores (s. VIII) que originó el desprestigio de las imágenes” (141). This movement, which indeed centered itself in Constantinople, ended with the final condemnation of iconoclasm at the Council of Orthodoxy, held in 843. “According to the defenders of images, Christ’s human birth had made possible his representations, which in some sense shared in the divinity of their prototype. The rejection of these images, therefore, automatically carried a repudiation of their cause” (“Iconoclasm”).

Both Jews and Christians alike share a tradition of the fear of idolatry, so it is not surprising that idolatry should be a topic of the literary dialogues. The actual disputations between leading Christian and Jewish theologians, the most famous of which took place in Paris (1240) and Barcelona (1263), involved proofs on both sides taken from the *midrash* as well as the Old Testament and focused primarily on proving, by rational argument, that the Jewish texts themselves contained the evidence that Christ was the promised messiah. In “El mercader de Bizancio,” the theological polemic engendered by the opposition of Christianity and Judaism reflects the format of the literary debates with

its focus on the question of idolatry and prefiguration. The confrontation of Good and Evil personified as Christian vs. Jew is the entertainment factor of the piece, but Berceo appears to be more interested in the messiah vs. prophet debate and in the dogma of images.

We can see that it is no coincidence that the issue of the credibility and sanctity of Christian images as intermediaries turns up in thirteenth century miracles about Jews and Christians. Revering the word and forever vigilant against a reverence for images, the Jews of Berceo's era strongly disapproved of what they perceived as a burgeoning Christian inclination toward idolatry. Ironically, in spite of the Jewish iconophobia, Christian iconography of the thirteenth century, drawing from the Old Testament stories, often depicts the Jews as idolaters worshipping, for example, the golden calf of Moses' people or of King Jeroboam, the metal idol of Nebuchadnezzar or the temple of Solomon. In 1215, the Fourth Lateran Council promulgated the concept of transubstantiation. Although it was not made official dogma until 1264, the transcendent quality of material images was an important idea at Berceo's time, and there was a polemic among Christian sects about this: rites as representation vs. rites as real. Berceo holds this second position, rites as real, in *Sacrificio de la Misa*, "donde concibe la eucaristía como una renovación del sacrificio de Cristo en la cruz y, con ello, combate la herejía de ciertas sectas, que no veían en la eucaristía la presencia real de Jesús sino una mera repetición en memoria del sacrificio original" (qtd. in Diz 158, n.32). As the "herejía" of certain Christian sects demonstrates, the orthodoxy of making and praying to religious images gnawed at the conscience not only of Jews, but of Christians as well. Medieval Christian artists were aware of the Old Testament prohibition in the Ten Commandments against graven images, as well as of the Exodus story about the construction of the Tabernacle. Beseleel, the invisible artist of the magnificent structure, was divinely inspired; therefore

his work came from God. In his technical treatise *De Diversis Artibus*, the twelfth century metalworker Theophilus refers to “the Lord’s filling the tabernacle’s creator with ‘the spirit of understanding’” (qtd. in Camille 31). Theophilus subscribes to “a creative context of self-effacement” in which he admonishes the young artist, “You can do nothing of yourself” (qtd. in Camille 31). Thus all art production in the Middle Ages “had to steer between these two extremes: between the base materiality of the golden idol before which the Israelites kneel [. . .] and the resplendent symbolic objects of the Tabernacle” (Camille 29). The Jews, in keeping with their rejection of the notion of any intermediary between God and His children, especially rejected one in the form of an image.¹¹³ In “El mercader de Bizancio,” the issue of the credibility of images as intermediaries emerges as emblematic of the intermediary essence of Christianity: its “claim to be the only true religion, and its insistence that only through [Christ] can man attain salvation” (Bokser 3). The Jews could not accept Christ, much less the Church, as God’s intermediary. The talking crucifix that gives evidence of the loan payment also provides evidence of God’s intercession through images. The very fact of its speaking asserts the divine link between image and God. This link forms a subset of the link to Christ as the messiah and God incarnate provided by the Old Testament prefigurations. The essence of image credibility in “El mercader de Bizancio” seems to point to the Jewish lender’s incorrect interpretation of the Old Testament since his initial failure to recognize Christ as the messiah forms the basis for his doubt in the efficacy of the church’s statue as guarantors and his subsequent blindness to, or denial of the evidence of the loan payment.

The relationship of faith and reason to theological knowledge was sharply debated in the thirteenth century. In “El mecader de Bizancio,” this issue of faith and reason

¹¹³ The reality and power of the images is at stake as well in “El judiezno” (the eucharist) and “Cristo y los judíos de Toledo” (the burlesque wax image).

becomes superimposed on a derivation of the literary genre of dialogues between Christian and Jew, which included the notions of both prefiguration and idolatry. In spite of the fact that the theme of Good vs. Evil seems artificial and secondary in this miracle, that Berceo establishes it in terms of a confrontation between Christian and Jew comes as no surprise and, in fact, complies with his audience's expectations. As the Good vs. Evil theme becomes assimilated into just another of a large collection of pejorative Jewish stereotypes, the confrontation of the Christian's simple faith and the Jew's analytical reason takes precedence as the fundamental motif. In this motif of faith vs. reason, the Jew and the Christian dispute in their dialogues the theological differences between the two religions presented in this miracle: the intermediary efficacy of the Christian images and Christ as the true messiah vs. true prophet. The elucidation of these differences must occur so that one belief will triumph over the other and prevail. The victory of faith is ultimately a victory for the Church, as evidenced by the Jew's conversion. His conversion symbolizes the authority of Christianity's interpretation of the Old Testament as a prefiguration of the New. His recognition of the intermediary power of the images of the Virgin and Jesus stands as an acknowledgement of the intermediary authority of the Church in the business of money. The Church, in a sense, appropriates the influence of the lender, a rich and respected member of the community. Thus the conversion of the Jew validates the Church on both theological and secular grounds.

In my treatment of this miracle, I have expounded upon an observation that Montoya Martínez makes in passing in his article: "La narración es, además de una exaltación del culto a las imágenes, una derivación de los debates entre judío y cristiano" (142). I suggest that in this miracle Berceo makes emphatic use of these thematic and stylistic motifs to underscore the authority of the Church in an urban setting. Montoya

Martínez argues that the “burgés” in Berceo and the “borjois” in Gautier de Coincy¹¹⁴ stand for an “individuo de la clase burguesa” rather than, as maintained by Daniel Devoto and Brian Dutton, “habitante de un burgo, ciudadano.” The Latin versions use *civium quidam* (un cierto vecino), which the romance versions (French and Spanish) translate as “bon omne” or “uns hom.” But Berceo and Gautier translate *christianus* as “burgés/borjois.” (see Montoya Martínez 139-140). Montoya’s argument underscores the urban dynamic in the miracle. The appearance of large bodies of townspeople created revolutionary changes in the organization of the whole of medieval society (Baldwin, *SC* 31). “By the end of the twelfth century popular heresies sprouted in towns, which suggested that the urban masses were increasingly unchurched.” These expanding urban populations, which brought new dilemmas to the Church, created the need for the extension of the secular clergy, who were in the world and “whose primary care was the spiritual needs of the laity” (33). By the dawn of the thirteenth century, the Jews were already well established as merchants and administrators in the towns and had begun to prosper. At the same time, rabbinical scholarship flowered, especially in Spain. Maimonides’ *Mishneh Torah* (c. 1180), an abstract of all the rabbinical literature in existence at his time, as well as the Spanish Cabalist Moses de León’s *Zohar* (c. 1286), are two famous examples of the productivity of Spanish Jewry in areas of both philosophical and esoteric knowledge. As the bourgeois merchant class expanded in the towns, and the clergy became increasingly aware that the Jewish religion involved much more than the Old Testament, anti-Jewish sentiment increased. This sentiment was reflected in intensified persecution of the European Jews in the thirteenth century. The stigma the Jews were required to wear is one example of how ecclesiastical authorities “sought to isolate a group that had become very much a part of urban society” (Camille

¹¹⁴ *Miracles de Nostre Dame*, contemporary with Berceo.

181). We see these trends of urbanization reflected in “El mercader de Bizancio.” In this vein, I believe there is more we can observe regarding the triumph of the images.

The images for the merchant have material as well as spiritual value. Because he can present them as surety, he does not need to rely on the patronage of the nobility to secure financing for his mercantile ventures. Thus we see a way in which the intermediary function of the Church could play various sides against each other in the bid for organizational authority in the expanding urban population. Considering that the bourgeois merchants were owners of considerable patrimonies, and that, as García de Valdeavellano suggests, they contributed to the weakening of the social structure of the nobility, we can see why the Church might seek to attract their patronage. In “El mercader de Bizancio,” the merchant loses face, or honor, through bankruptcy and debt. But the Church holds out for him another kind of honor, the virtue of his Christian faith. The long prayers before the images emphasize this faith, and the recovery of his fortune with the help of God restores his worldly honor. The attraction of the laity, especially the wealthy ones, to the Church strengthened its ability to wedge itself between the Spanish nobles and their Jewish administrators. In this miracle, the Jew lends the Christian money, the Christian uses it to become wealthy, and the Church, through the conversion of the Jew, winds up with the patronage of two wealthy men instead of one penniless merchant.

In the urban settings, images held profound power as didactic tools for the marginally to completely illiterate laity. In the miracle of “El mercader de Bizancio,” Berceo appropriates the conflated image of Avarice and the Jew as usurer in order to undermine the lender’s character. While for Biglieri the character of the lender stands for the vice of avarice, I suggest that this portrayal functions as a didactic disguise. In the second part of the miracle, the lender’s greed represents more than one of the seven

deadly sins; it represents an anti-Jewish stereotype that coincides with Camille's description of "a domestic Other, the Jews, who denied the Faith right before their eyes." The link of the Jews and money in the negative context of avarice provides an image relevant to an urban setting. This vice becomes the driving force behind the lender's final trip to the merchant's church, from which he is escorted by "el pueblo todo." The triumph of the images in the miracle mirrors the power of iconographic images to rally Christian masses against the iconoclastic Jew.

In "Cristo y los judíos de Toledo," an outwardly manifest symbol of conscious rejection of Christ—the wax image of a re-enacted crucifixion—is powerful enough to imply mockery and dishonor, thus inciting a pogrom. The Jewish moneylender, rather than facing attack by the Christian crowd, becomes convinced of the power of the images and converts to Christianity. The miracle "El judiezno" also draws our attention to the themes of images, conversion and collective justice by focusing upon the rupture in family relations that results from a Jewish child's partaking of the Christian sacrament.

"EL JUDIEZNO"

This story of the little Jewish boy held wide currency in the East and the West before the end of the eleventh century and appears in the miracle collections of Copenhagen, the *Liber de Miraculis*, and the *Miracula Sanctae Virginis Mariae* (Boreland 17; Saugnieux 84). In Western Christianity, it is the most widely distributed *milagro* of the Virgin, with 33 versions in the Classic and Romance languages (Vicente García 21).¹¹⁵ Berceo himself vouches for French and German renditions:

Enna villa de Borges una cibdat estranna,
Cuntió en essi tiempo una buena hazanna;

¹¹⁵ Two other well-known thirteenth century collections of miracles in Romance languages, both of which contain the story of the little Jewish boy, are the *Cantigas de Santa María* of Alfonso el Sabio and the *Miracles de Nostre Dame* of Gautier de Coincy.

Sonada es en Francia, sí faz en Alemanna,
Bien es de los miraclos semejant e calanna.
(352c)

Here is a summary of the miracle.

A school overseen by the clergy in the French town of Bourges provides the setting for the Jewish child's contact with the Christians. The little Jewish boy is drawn to the Christian school because he wants to play with the children there. The Christian children receive him well. On Easter Sunday he accompanies his friends to mass and, along with them, partakes of the Eucharist. While he receives communion, he lifts his gaze and sees over the altar the beautiful figure of the Virgin with the baby Jesus in her arms. Although he does not understand that this is the Virgin Mary, he perceives that she gives communion to everyone, and he falls in love with her beauty:

Vío qe esta duenna qe posada estava,
a grandes e a chicos ella los comulgava;
pagóse d'ella mucho, quanto más la catava
de la su fermosura más se enamorava.
(358)

The child leaves the church, happy and satisfied, but arrives home late. There he encounters his father, who is angered by his tardiness. He tells his father the truth about where he has been and what he has done with his Christian friends: “con ellos odí missa ricamientre cantada,/ e comulgué con ellos de la ostia sagrada” (360cd). His news distresses and pains his father: “Pesóli esto mucho al malaventurado,/ como si lo toviesse muerto o degollado” (361ab). Wrath overtakes him to such an extent that he appears demon-possessed. He builds a fire in the oven of the house and throws the child into it. The mother “[m]etió [. . .] voces e grandes carpellidas,/ tenié con sus oncejas las massiellas rompidas” (364ab), and many people arrive to see what is the matter. Thus they all witness a great miracle of the Almighty King, “el Rey omnipotent” (365d): the salvation of the child who, protected by the Virgin Mary, and because “pusiera en elli

Dios la su bendición” (367d), remains unscathed by the fire. The Jewish and Christian witnesses clamor to ask him how he was able to conquer the flames. He answers,

la duenna que estava enna siella orada
con su fijo en brazos sobre'l altar posada,
éssa me defendié qe non sintía nada.
(369b-d)

The witnesses recognize that the Virgin Mary has appeared to the child and protected him. They all celebrate and sing praises, and “metieron est miraclo entre la otra gesta” (370d). Then they grab the father, tie his hands and throw him into the fire he had built for his son. The flames quickly consume his body and soon nothing is left of him but coals and ashes. Rather than prayers for his soul, the crowd hurls curses and insults. The miracle concludes with four quatrains in which we receive assurance that the Virgin bestows glory upon those who serve her and punishes those who do not, that she will not hold past sins against those who turn to her, and finally, that we had best guard against offending her.

Many critics of Berceo have noted that his version of “El judiezno” tends to amplify the anti-Semitic sentiments of the Latin sources for this miracle. One such observation claims, for example, that Berceo skews the Latin narrative away from an impression of harmonious *convivencia* among Christians and Jews, and toward a more segregated atmosphere: “no le interesa a Berceo dar una imagen de convivencia estrecha entre cristianos y judíos” (Vicente García 26). The descriptions of the story’s opening scene help illustrate the differences between the Latin and Berceo’s version that create these contrasting impressions of *convivencia*. The Latin text begins with a brief and concise contextualization of the story in space and time, and then proceeds to state simply that a Jewish boy who goes to school with the Christian children accompanies them to

church on Easter, approaches the altar and receives communion from the ignorant cleric (who presumably is unaware of the fact that the child is Jewish):

Die igitur sollempnitatis Pasche cum christiani pueri in quendam ecclesiam accederent ad participandum sacrum corpus Domini, quidam puer de gente hebreorum qui cum eis litteris instruebatur inter illos ad altare accessit et corpus dominicum ignorante presbytero cum eis percepit. (Dutton, *Obras* 129)¹¹⁶

As we can see, the Latin version alludes to the common instruction of Christian and Hebrew children. Dutton observes that Berceo embellishes considerably this part of the story (130). Berceo's description of the school provides more details:

Tenié essa villa, ca era menester,
un clérigo escuela de cantar e leer;
tenié muchos criados a letras aprender,
fijos de bonos omnes que qerién más valer.
(354)

Berceo amplifies the setting of the school not only by making it explicitly of the clergy, but also by placing importance on education and social mobility: “fijos de bonos omnes que qerién más valer.”¹¹⁷ Further augmenting the opening lines of the Latin versions, he goes on to create the impression of separate Jewish and Christian worlds through the longing of the Jewish child who is accepted by the Christian children:

Venié un judiezno, natural del logar,
por sabor de los ninnos, por con ellos jogar;
acogiénlo los otros, no li fazién pesar,
avién con elli todos sabor de deportar.
(355).

¹¹⁶ Vicente García interprets “qui cum eis litteris instruebatur” to mean that the Jewish child attended the same school as the Christian children: “[. . .] el texto latino se nos presentaba un punto de intersección entre ambos mundos representado por la escuela a la que asisten tanto cristianos como judíos” (22).

¹¹⁷ The emphasis here on education reflects the spirit of the Church reforms initiated by the Fourth Lateran Council. In the fifty years following 1215, in Castile and elsewhere, “[e]piscopal and archidiaconal visitations of parishes, the institution of vicarages, the administration of the sacraments, the building-up of schools and universities and the spread of the new religious Orders all took place [. . .]” (Lomax 302).

Berceo then invents the Jewish child's grand desire for communion: "priso l al judiezno de comulgar grand gana" (356c). Bernard Gicovate has noted that in these added details of yearning, Berceo has achieved the attribution of psychological motive on the part of the child—his wish to play with the children drives him to the school and his great desire for communion precedes the act of receiving the *corpus domini* (7). Here also, Berceo's suppression of the "ignorante presbytero" of the Latin version allows for emphasis on the Jewish child's spontaneous desire for communion. An audience may ponder "cuanto se quiera el beneficio de la escuela en general," conserving at the same time "la motivación libre del niño, no influida por la escuela, ni asistiendo cotidianamente a ella" (Vicente García 22). The child's spontaneity adds ingenuousness to his character, making the act of receiving Holy Communion, and thus converting to Christianity, appear natural and sincere. Vicente García suggests that in the amplification of the opening scene of the miracle, Berceo "aleja radicalmente el mundo cristiano y el judío, mientras que en el texto latino se nos presentaba un punto de intersección entre ambos mundos representado por la escuela a la que asisten tanto cristianos como judíos" (22). In "El judiezno" we have a Christian school and Christian customs—a Christian world—which a little Jewish boy has joined because of his innocent desire to do so.

The representation of *convivencia* that Berceo makes in his version of this miracle, however, probably "se corresponde [. . .] con lo que históricamente sabemos de la situación de los judíos en España durante el siglo XIII" (Vicente García 26). The term *convivencia* does not necessarily convey something other than what Berceo depicts. The Spanish Jews of Berceo's day had their own courts of law and autonomous jurisdiction within the *aljama*. This suggests that the separateness of Christian and Jewish relations was not an innovative concept promulgated by Berceo, despite the fact that there exists evidence that these relationships may also have been marked by some degree of fluidity.

In his essay “Jews, Christians, and Muslims in Medieval Iberia: *Convivencia* through the Eyes of Sephardic Jews,” for example, Gampel offers his readers the following caveat:

When we employ the term *convivencia* [. . .] we are not attempting to conjure up an image of total harmony, of a cosmopolitan setting wherein all faith-communities joyfully infused each other with their particular strengths. Rather we are evoking images of a pluralistic society where communities often lived in the same neighborhoods, engaged in business with each other, and affected and infected each other with their ideas. At the same time, these groups mistrusted each other and were often jealous of each other’s successes, and the ever-present competition among them occasionally turned to hatred. (11)

While by the thirteenth century Jewish culture had begun to flourish in the Christian territories of Spain, at about the same time the anti-Jewish prejudice of European civilization began to filter into the Iberian Christian kingdoms (Gampel 22). As their culture flourished, the Spanish Jews found themselves increasingly surrounded by anti-Jewish sentiments. A famous event illustrative of this paradox occurred no more than a decade after Berceo’s death and involved James I, Conqueror of Aragon. This king, who “employed Jews in the highest administrative posts within his realm,” was also responsible for convoking the first high profile disputation between a Christian and a Jew (22).¹¹⁸ In 1263, James I ordered the well-known and highly respected Rabbi Moses ben Nahman (Nahmanides) to Barcelona to appear in a religious disputation with Paulus Christiani, a Jew who had converted to Christianity. Real (as opposed to literary and hypothetical) disputations between Jews and Christians developed in southern France as part of the innovative approaches “designed by the newly fashioned Christian mendicant orders among whose goals was the conversion of Jews to the Christian faith” and the eradication of heresies (22). The Christian disputant would attempt to convince the Jewish disputant of the truth of Christianity by means of scripture not only from the Old

¹¹⁸ Many scholars have studied the transcripts of this debate. Cohen (*The Friars and the Jews*) provides a concise summary of the debate and its consequences for both Christian and Jewish scholars of religion (see esp. pages 108-128).

Testament, but also from the Talmud. One of the earliest disputations had occurred in Paris in 1240, but the 1263 debate in Barcelona was much more sensational, due, particularly, to the fame of the Rabbi Nahmanides. “Immediately following the conclusion of the disputation, Aragonese Jews were compelled to attend Christian sermons in their synagogues, where local preachers put these new ideas to use” (20). Thus it seems that Berceo, by creating the impression of separate worlds between Christians and Jews as the scene for the Jewish child’s conversion to Christianity, has rendered a subjectively accurate representation of thirteenth century *convivencia*. This is not to say that he might have thought his Latin source was unrealistic, but simply that he interpreted and amplified his version according to his reality. From a dramatic standpoint, by stressing the separateness of the children, the ingenuousness of the little Jewish boy receives the spotlight, making his conversion seem right and natural. Certainly the reinforced impression of the separateness of the religions serves to heighten the dramatic tension surrounding the conversion itself. The intense implications of the Jewish child’s conversion find confirmation in the reaction of his father, who goes out of his mind with grief and throws the child into the fires of the oven.

Helen Boreland observes that the “story of the Jewish boy thrown into the fire by his father is one which doubtless appealed to the imagination of Berceo’s thirteenth-century audience. The belief that the Jews were prone to child murder was prevalent from the twelfth century onwards [. . .]” (16-17). A popular anti-Jewish stereotype in Berceo’s day attributed to the Jews the Satanic practice of ritual murder of Christian children. Long before Christians accused Jews of this practice, they often ascribed it to heretics as well. The first recorded case in which Jews were accused of the ritual murder of a Christian child was that of William of Norwich in 1144 (McCall 272). Diz notes that this stereotype is one of a larger group of stereotypical accusations—which besides ritual

murder, includes cannibalism—levied against groups and communities in response to a perceived threat. Citing the observations of a study by Norman Cohn, she notes that “El asesinato ritual y los festines caníbales encajan en un estereotipo tradicional: el de la organización conspirativa o la sociedad secreta movida por un impulso irracional en pos del poder político” (113).¹¹⁹ In other words, the motive for stereotyping is itself a stereotype; one which justifies the more preposterous accusations of ritual murder or cannibalism. Other incidences of these sorts of allegations include, for example, those of the Roman pagans against Christians and Jews in the second century, or, hundreds of years later, of the Spaniards against the Incas (Diz 113).¹²⁰

The story of “El judiezno” alludes to other anti-Jewish stereotypes besides the primary one of child murder. These allusions are contained in the epithets ascribed to the father in his rage and grief: “diablado,” “malaventurado,” “can traidor,” “falso descreído,” “falso desleal.” Many critics have noted that Berceo amplifies the Latin versions considerably with the insertion of these epithets, which embed stereotypes that go beyond the labels themselves. All except perhaps “malaventurado” relate directly to anti-Jewish ideas: that Jews are in league with the devil, that they do not believe that Christ is the messiah (i.e., blindness, willful disbelief, denial), that they are traitors, disloyal, false (i.e., Judas and the ‘Jews killed Christ’ accusation). Despite these anti-Jewish amplifications, however, the relevance of the Jewish father’s reaction seems to connect more directly to the conversion of his son rather than to the stereotypes themselves, especially the ‘child killer’ and ‘devil league’ ones. We will remember that in “El mercader de Bizancio,” the anti-Jewish stereotypes provide the entertainment

¹¹⁹ Norman Cohn, *Los demonios familiares de Europa*. (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1980) 22.

¹²⁰ El Inca Garcilaso defends the Incas against Spanish accusations of cannibalism. One significant difference, however, between these accusations and those of the Christians toward the Jews is that the Christian religion is founded upon Judaic beliefs (Langmuir 33). In this case, Christian stereotyping of Jews in a negative manner suggests the ambivalence, tension and conflict surrounding the (Jewish) basis of Christian beliefs (282-84).

factor of the piece while the story itself is about a religious polemic between Christianity and Judaism. Likewise, in “El judiezno” the stereotypes overlap the story, but the story itself is about conversion and the drama of separation of family. As in “El mercader de Bizancio,” the narrative contains the motifs of the anti-Jewish stereotypes but does little to exploit them for the sake of a confrontation between Good and Evil, where ‘evil’ is synonymous with ‘Jewish.’ How is this so in “El judiezno”? To answer this question, let us compare the miracle to “Cristo y los judíos de Toledo.”

Unlike the miracle of “Cristo y los judíos de Toledo,” which is structured around the stereotype of the Jews as desecraters of holy images and crucifiers of Christ, the story of the little Jewish boy is not ordered around the devil league/ ritual sacrifice stereotypes. Although the fate of the Jewish boy’s father, like that of the Jews of Toledo, is certainly death, the narrative suggests that the reason for his execution is the crime against his son:

dio con él en el fuego bravament encendido:
¡mal venga a tal padre qe tal faze a fijo!

Prisieron al judío, al falso desleal,
Al qe a su fijuelo fiziera tan grand mal,
(363cd, 371ab)

While the father’s crime is specific and concrete, the crime committed by the Jews of Toledo—mockery—is more abstract, with the impact of its significance originating in the stereotypes it draws from. In “El judiezno,” the father’s crime does not possess the character of a ritual murder consecrated to Satan, in spite of the fact that because of his anger he appears possessed by demons. The little Jewish boy, albeit converted to Christianity, does not match the stereotypical profile of a Christian child abducted by Jews for the purposes of evil ritual sacrifice. He is obviously a victim of his own father’s grief, rage, and derangement, of a spontaneous though heinous crime, which highlights the enormous family consequences for the Jewish child that converts to Christianity.

Within the frame of the narrative, the stereotypical anti-Jewish epithets—traitor, disloyal, false—tend to take on a more personal tone, which supplants their relevancy to Jews in general and refers instead to the actions of the father against the son. This specificity tends to draw attention toward the theme of conversion and resultant family rupture. I do not deny that the stereotypes carried anti-Jewish overtones for Berceo's audiences. I do think it is significant, however, that the semantics are ambiguous in that they can refer specifically to the father's individual actions also.

Diz determines that the father's violence toward his son "no es castigo a la transgresión del hijo, ni tampoco una manifestación de intolerancia religiosa sino que aparece como el acto monstruoso de un padre que intenta matar a su propio hijo" (135). Here Diz refers to where the father throws the child into the fire and Berceo says "¡mal venga a tal padre que tal faze a fijo!" (363d). I have also noted 371b, where the crowd ties the hands of the father, "al qe a su fijuelo fiziera tan grand mal." The father, fortunately, did not actually kill his son. He would have, but luckily God blessed the child and sent the Virgin to protect him. The Latin describes the father as "the one who threw his son into the fire" (*iudeum patrem pueri, qui in fornace miserat eum*) (Dutton, *Obras* 129). Berceo has maintained the gist of the Latin versions in that the monstrous attempt against the son clearly indicts the father. Because Berceo has focused so much more attention than the Latin on the dynamics of the father's rage, however, I think that this violence also signifies anguish on the part of the father, which highlights further the theme of conversion and family rupture.

In these verses where Berceo has amplified or emphasized the anti-Semitic elements relating to the father following the child's arrival home from the church, we also find the amplified description of the father's emotions and reactions:

menazólo el padre porque avié tardado,
que mereciente era de seer fostigado.

“Padre—dixo el ninno— non vos negaré nada,
ca con los christianiellos sovi grand madurgada;
con ellos odí missa ricamientre cantada,
e comulgué con ellos de la ostia sagrada.”

Pesóli esto mucho al malaventurado,
como si lo toviessse muerto o degollado;
non sabié con grand ira qué fer el diablado,
fazié figuras malas como demoniádo.

Avié dentro en casa esti can traïdor
un forno grand e fiero que fazié grand pavor;
fízolo encender el locco peccador,
de guisa que echava sovejo grand calor.

Priso esti ninnuelo el falso descreído,
asín como estava, calzado e vestido,
dio con él en el fuego bravament encendido:
(359c-363a-c)

Dutton observes that Berceo makes the father's character much more severe than the Latin story,

ya que en el latín sólo quiere saber dónde ha estado su hijo, pregunta natural, mientras Berceo crea amenazas de azotes. [. . .] La copla 361 amplía mucho las palabras ‘Hoc audiens pater gravi iracundia accensus . . . cum furore . . .’ En 362, como en 359cd, Berceo quiere hacer aún peor el carácter del padre judío. En el latín su ira le hace echar al niño en un horno ya encendido que ve en ese momento: ‘corripiens puerum cum furore conspexit haut longe fornacem ardentem . . .’ Berceo atribuye al padre un sadismo frío: en vez de un espasmo de ira, tenemos a un desgraciado que enciende fríamente el horno (362c) para que arda con mucho calor (362d). Sólo entonces echa a su hijo en las llamas (363), que deriva del latín ‘currensque iactavit puerum in illam.’ A lo mejor estos cambios derivan del prejuicio antisemítico del clero medieval [. . .]. (*Obras* 130)

Certainly Berceo's addition of *cuaderna* 362 adds suspense and can be seen as a powerfully visual dramatic tactic. While the scene protracts the deranged mental processes of a father who becomes crazed enough to throw his own son into a fire,

however, I do not think that the father of the Latin version appears any less guilty.¹²¹ In the view of Saugnieux, the nature of Berceo's anti-Semitism is primarily religious. Reflecting upon some of the same verses as Dutton, particularly 361-363, Saugnieux considers that Berceo insists on the religious aspect of the paternal fury and on the religious motives that provoke it (85). In this respect, he diverges from Diz's view that the father's violence is not a matter of religious intolerance or punishment. In view of verses 361-363, and noting in 362 and 363 Berceo's references to the father as "can traidor," "locco peccador," and "falso descreído," Saugnieux suggests that

El judío es, pues, un súbdito del diablo. Su actitud con su hijo revela su odio a los cristianos. No se trata de un acto de severidad excesiva, sino de intolerancia, y es interesante subrayar que Berceo presenta al niño de manera totalmente favorable: reacciona como cristiano verdadero, se enamora de la Virgen, sale de la Iglesia "alegre e pagado," y ello es lo que su padre no puede aceptar. El drama se explica, pues, por motivos puramente religiosos. (85)

Berceo obviously has taken advantage of the anti-Jewish *topoi* of child killer and devil association in order to heighten the drama of his story. By drawing out the father's rage and oven preparation, Berceo adds suspense and sensationalism to the scene. He also provides dramatic balance to the story in that the intensity of the crime must be commensurate with the punishment; i.e., the father must eventually burn for his crime at the hands of a mob. I do agree with Saugnieux that the father's rage is motivated by religious concerns, but I think that the drama with which Berceo portrays these concerns has less to do with the father's hatred of Christians than with the anguish of losing his son. The conversion has sparked a family crisis. In expanding the Latin versions by elaborating on the nature of the father's anger in *cuaderna* 361, Berceo draws attention to the father's psychological state. Upon hearing that his son has taken Holy Communion

¹²¹ This is due in part to the matter-of-fact, unadorned style of the Latin. In any event, I would suggest that Berceo's verses do not preclude a visual image of stoking an already existing fire or hot coals. One might imagine that a household oven would be in use most of the day.

with the Christians, the father is deeply grieved (361a). He feels as if he has encountered his son dead, or not merely dead, but with his throat cut (361b). Then the grief turns into a crazed rage, as though he were demon-possessed (361cd). Many critics have not failed to note the resonance here with the theme of separation of family described in Matthew 19:29. I would also note the separation of family theme as it relates more specifically to conversions in Matthew 10: 34-7.¹²² The theme of violent family upheavals in the face of Jewish conversions to Christianity, however, may well have resonated with Berceo's audiences for causes less abstract than Bible verses.

One of the reasons the story of the Jewish father killing his own son received such popular impetus may have had to do with reports of how "during the pogroms Jews often preferred self-inflicted death to forced baptism or death at the hands of the Christians. It is not difficult to see how an action which was at the time recognized as a sacrifice in the name of religion, might have led to a popular conception of Jews as child-killers" (Boreland 17). In the Spain of Berceo's time forced mass conversions had not yet swept the peninsula, but certainly the precedents for intensive conversion campaigns were already in place. The Fourth Lateran Council recommended that "conversional sermons should be preached to the Jews by the newly recognised Orders of Friars Minor [. . .]" (McCall 278). With relation to popular conceptions of Jews, we find that in the autonomous courts of Jewish law, sentences of harsh punishment for offenses of dishonor against the Jewish community had become prevalent. Gampel explains that in Spain, "the Jewish community in the Middle Ages, and before and after as well, was very anxious about its authority over its members" (23). It was also "anxious lest its

¹²² Matt. 19:29: "And every one who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life." Matt. 10: 34-7: "34. Do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. 35. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; 36. and a man's foes will be those of his own household. 37. He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; . . ."

jurisdiction be undermined and was therefore much troubled when Jews sought redress of grievances or adjudication of conflicts at the ‘courts of the Gentiles’” (Gampel 23).

Hence we find it surprising to note that

the Jewish courts in Sepharad arrogated powers to themselves that quite outstripped their authority as delineated by Jewish law. We find these communal bodies issuing sentences of corporal punishment such as maiming and cutting off body parts and even ordering particular offenders to be put to death: actions that clearly violated the *halakhah*. The *bet din* [court of Jewish law] would not execute the sentence itself but rather would remand the guilty party to the local government that, for a fee, would carry out the wishes of the Jewish court. These harsh and extralegal punishments were usually meted out to those accused of slandering the Jewish community. (Gampel 24)

Since these punishments were remanded to local governments for execution, their harshness must have become well known to the general public—that is, to whomever witnessed public punishments. Thus the story of the little Jewish boy’s conversion echoed elements of real life dramas about the Jews that must have loomed large in the minds of a Christian audience: rumors of self-inflicted death as a preference to forced baptism, Church sanctioned sermonic campaigns to convert the Jews, and sentences of corporal punishment meted out to Jews by their own courts for offenses of perceived dishonor to the Jewish community. In this context, the boy’s conversion and the violent grief-turned-to-rage of the father may well have contained engaging and newsworthy referents for Berceo’s audiences. By maintaining the gist of his Latin tale with regard to the father’s crime, Berceo suggests that the father deserves punishment because of the bad thing he did to his son, and not simply because he is Jewish. Since Berceo’s portrait of the father’s violence focuses on the psychological aspects of his crime, then the event is not obscured by an anti-Jewish stereotypical dichotomy of Good vs. Evil. This allows the family drama surrounding the child’s conversion to hold center stage. It also paves the way for the broad implications of the father’s punishment, which, as we shall see, could pertain to non-Jews as well.

For Diz, the dynamic of the father's death contains a ritualistic tone that originates from the stereotype of 'the Jews killed Christ,' "porque en ese judío puede verse la figura de la comunidad protagonista de la violencia original infligida contra Cristo" (137). Drawing on René Girard's theories of the scapegoat, Diz sees the violence against the father in this story as the point of convergence of two related elements in the drama of the sacrificial victim:

En tanto padre que intentó matar a su hijo, recibe justicia pública; en tanto figura de la comunidad que se volvió contra el Hijo de Dios, el judío es adecuada víctima sacrificial. Desplazado el objeto de la violencia—de comunidad judía a padre judío—se evita la reciprocidad perfecta, se detiene la cadena de violencia que de otro modo no tendría fin. Se rompe el paralelismo, y con él, la peligrosa simetría que podría engendrar una interminable sucesión de violencias. (137).

In other words, the father serves as a convenient scapegoat in that he attracts the generalized anger of the Christian community toward the 'Jews as killers of Christ.' The Christians seize the opportunity to displace their anger onto the father, thereby dissipating their violence against just him and averting an all out pogrom, such as the one described in "Cristo y los judíos de Toledo." It is noteworthy that the interpretation of the father's death as a sacrificial rectification of the crucifixion of Christ hinges on the community of avengers as being exclusively Christian. Indeed Diz makes this assumption quite explicit, as we can see in these examples: "la comunidad cristiana quema al padre [. . .]" (134); "el pueblo cristiano prende al judío y lo echa al fuego [. . .]" (137); "[I]a "buena hazanna" anunciada por Berceo es una hazaña doble: es la hazaña de la Virgen que salva al niño y también la de la comunidad cristiana que mata al padre" (140).

I see this miracle in a different light. As I will discuss later, the retributive action of the crowd has a cathartic and spectacular tone, which differs from the non-cathartic, understated ritualistic tone of the pogrom in "Cristo y los judíos de Toledo." For now, however, I wish to suggest that the father's death represents the unity of Christians and

Jews. It is true that in the Latin version it remains unambiguous that just the Christians punish the father, and, in fact, only the Christians recognize the Virgin: “Tunc christiani intelligentes sanctam Dei genitricem eius esse protectricem, iudeum patrem pueri, qui in fornace miserat eum, in eandem fornacem immiserunt” (Dutton, *Obras* 129). In Berceo’s version, however, the assumption that only Christians kill the father is not explicit. In fact, it would seem that Berceo prefers to imply that a mixed crowd participates in both recognition of the Virgin’s miracle and in punishment of the father. Here is a brief review of these scenes in Berceo’s story:

Preguntáronli todos, judíos e christianos
 cómo podió venger fuegos tan sobranzanos
 quando él non mandava los pides ni las manos
 quí lo cabtenié entro, fiziésselos certanos.
 (368)

Upon hearing the child’s explanation of how the beautiful lady defended him (369),

Entendieron qe era sancta María ésta,
 que lo defendió ella de tan fiera tempesta;
 cantaron grandes laudes, fizieron rica festa,
 metieron est miraclo entre la otra gesta.

Prisieron al judío, al falsso desleal,
 al que a su fijuelo fiziera tan grand mal,
 legáronli las manos con un fuerte dogal,
 dieron con elli entro en el fuego cabdal.
 (370-371)

Let us examine the deliberate process by which Berceo establishes a mixed crowd of Christians and Jews in comparison to the Latin version of the events. At the very least, Berceo’s version allows for more speculation than the Latin, which is very explicit about who does what.

In the Latin version, the Virgin actually saves the little boy *before* the mother yells in anguish: “Dei genitrix in specie ymaginis quam super altare vicerat apparuit eumque ab igne liberans nec eciam parum caloris eum sentire permisit. Mater vero pueri

nimio dolore constricta eiulando clamare cepit multosque [. . .]” (Dutton, *Obras* 129). (Obviously we understand that the mother does not realize that the child is safe in the fire.) Upon hearing the mother’s anguished cries, “tam christianos quam iudeos in brevi aggregavit” (129). Berceo’s version places the mother’s cries and the arrival of many people (“Metió la madre voces e grandes carpellidas,/ [. . .] / ovo muchas de yentes en un rato venidas” (364a,c)) before the scene of the child in the oven and the safe haven provided by the Virgin. This allows for the child’s experience in the fire to be climactic and embellished. Berceo uses three stanzas for this event (vs. 365-367). In the Latin version, as soon as the witnesses (Christians as well as Jews) arrive, they observe that the child is uninjured and ask him how he has escaped harm. In Berceo’s version, the child escapes from the fire, and then “Preguntáronli todos, judíos e christianos” (see *cuaderna* 368 above). In fact, Berceo’s version allows for the assumption that the Jews arrive on the scene first upon hearing the mother’s cries—we know that the crisis takes place at the home of a Jewish family, separate from the Christian community as Berceo’s amplification of the “clérigo escuela” implies. Assuming this, Berceo lets us know that Christians are present at the point of questioning the child. Even the Latin version itself emphasizes that *Christians* arrive on the scene. We know this because they are mentioned first: “tam christianos quam iudeos.” In this grammatical structure of comparison of equality, the exception appears first in order. Vicente García, however, finds that in Berceo “el público judío se hace presente sólo en el momento en que el niño judío identifica a la autora del milagro. [. . .] Este es el momento más conveniente [. . .] para situar la derrota religiosa de los judíos, que deben reconocer con sus propios ojos, el poder de la Virgen y, por tanto, la superioridad de la religión cristiana.” (25-6). I agree that Berceo has opted for the most dramatic effect, as compared to the Latin version, for the scene of joint recognition of the Virgin, but would point out that implicitly the

“público judío” is already present rather than just arriving. In any event, if Berceo’s narrative is not absolutely explicit about the ethnic composition of the Jewish boy’s neighborhood, why assume that only Christians live there and that the Jews appear tardily on the scene? Since it is implicitly a Jewish neighborhood—i.e., the little Jewish boy wandered into Christian territory at the school and church and longed to play with the Christian children there—why would not the Christians be the newcomers on the scene? As we have already observed in *cuadernas* 368-371, once this mixed crowd is established, the third person plural verb form continues throughout the story in the actions of recognition and celebration of the Virgin Mary’s miracle, and of collective punishment of the father. While in any piece of medieval Christian religious literature the superiority of Christianity will be a foregone conclusion, I do not think that the focus here is on the “derrota religiosa de los judíos.” The compelling event to me is the consensus and unity of Jews and Christians. The Jewish witnesses’ identification of the Virgin Mary from the child’s description serves to bolster her renown and validate the miracle, as if to say that even the Jews acknowledge the (Jewish) mother of Christ. This recognition might even imply that they convert at this moment. They definitely are not pummeled to death by the Christians like the Jews of Toledo, and they do not appear threatened by a Christian mob. In Berceo’s version of this miracle, the recognition of the Virgin Mary by Jews and Christians fuses them and they act as one to celebrate the miracle and punish the father.

The fire quickly consumes the father’s body: “Quanto cantarié omne poccus de pipiones,/ en tanto fo tornado cenisa e carbones” (372ab). The crowd, comprised of both Jewish and Christian participants, says neither psalms nor prayers for the father’s soul, but rather hurls curses and insults. Instead of reciting the *Pater Noster*, they say “Qual

fizo, atal prenda” (373b), “la más cumplida expresión de un acto de justicia popular” (Diz 130):

non dizién por su alma salmos nin oraciones,
mas dizién denosteos e grandes maldiziones.

Diziénli mal oficio, faciénli mal’ ofrenda,
dizién por “Pater noster”, “Qual fizo, atal prenda.”
De la comunicanda Domni Dios nos defenda,
pora’l diablo sea tan maleíta renda.
(372c-373)

As in “Cristo y los judíos de Toledo,” this concept of *qual fizo atal prenda* (as he did so may he receive) corresponds to both secular and ecclesiastical authorities. As a common legal term it pertains to the pronouncement of a sentence and therefore carries a semantic load of legality in terms of *injuria* and popular justice, emphasizing the collective action of the *pena de talión*, which is upheld or exercised by the community. In contrast to the mercy Mary bestows upon those loyal to her, *qual fizo atal prenda* recalls the Old Testament law of ‘an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth,’ which reminds us of the larger theme of the “New Dispensation of grace and mercy,” or “el dictamen revocado” (Boreland 21; Diz 55-6). It is significant to note that *el dictamen no revocado*, the fate of the Jewish father, is, according to Christian dogma, considered to be the fate of those who do not accept Christ as the true messiah. We will recall the merchant’s pronouncements in “El mercader de Bizancio” with reference to Christ and the Virgin: “qui en ellos non cree bevrá fuego e flama” (650d). In the case of the father, these pronouncements are literal. In “El judiezno,” as in “Cristo y los judíos de Toledo,” we find the fusion of secular and sacred law in the sanction of collective action. In “El judiezno,” however, the collective action fuses Jews and Christians rather than separating them. In this aspect of fusion of Jews and Christians through the collective justice of the *pena de talión*, “El judiezno” is very different from “Cristo y los judíos de Toledo,” where the sentence justified the ritual sacrifice of the Jews. The tone of the crowd’s retaliation against the

father, in contrast to the non-cathartic, ritual tone of the killings of the Jews of Toledo, is cathartic and creates a spectacle with the tying of the hands, the rapid combustion of the body in the fire, the curses and denouncements in place of psalms and prayers for the father's soul. In both miracles, collective justice in terms of the old covenant draws sanction from secular customs and serves to reinforce a fusion of secular and Church law, which canon law exemplifies.

Helen Boreland, in her study of typology in Berceo's *Milagros*, points out that Old Testament stories, such as Cain and Abel, Abraham and Isaac, Daniel and the lions, the three Jewish boys in the fire, etc., suggest themselves as typological precedents for this miracle.¹²³ Compared with Old Testament reminiscences suggested by the miracle story, Berceo "underlines quite sharply the contrast between the Jewish religion and Christianity, and between the Old Dispensation and the New" (Boreland 21). Diz proposes the concept of *ordalía* as a sort of structuring principle of the miracle that orders a whole logic of "*la buena fe* vs. *la mala fe*" (118-128). An *ordalía* is a trial by ordeal, the most common types in European history involving fire, water or battle. According to Diz's research, the ordeal is a test of faith dating back to Jewish tradition and the Old Testament stories of vindicated faith in God such as the ones mentioned above. The ancient practice was Christianized in Europe by the tenth century but was outlawed definitively by the Fourth Lateran Council. In spite of having been banned in 1215, the practice implicitly conveys legality so that at the end of the miracle the vindication of the Christian order over the Judaic carries the weight of the Law (Diz 140). Thus in "El judiezno," the Christian faith (*la buena fe*) becomes upheld in the miracle of the little boy's escape from harm, while the ordeal of fire, which proves fatal to the boy's father,

¹²³ The fact that this miracle parallels Abraham and Isaac in some ways is striking. Both sons are saved in the end. Of course, one big difference is that God tells Abraham to sacrifice Isaac as a test of Abraham's fear of God. See Genesis 22:1-19.

implies the inferiority of the Jewish faith (*la mala fe*). Undoubtedly this miracle holds typological resonances of the Old Testament vindication of faith stories; however, I do not feel that these themes necessarily structure an argument of religious opposition, i.e., superiority vs. inferiority. Certainly Berceo cannot be accused of ambivalence with regard to asserting the superiority of the Christian faith; nonetheless, I think that in this miracle he draws on the collective aspect of *qual fizo atal prenda* to paint us a picture of Jews and Christians become one in Mary. Ultimately, then, the collective punishment of the father carries the weight of the Law not because of its associations with ordeals, but because it fuses the secular *pena de talión* with the authority of the Old Testament on the side of Mary, and by extension, of course, on the side of Christianity. The fusion of Jews and Christians serves as a metaphor representing a resolution to the tension inherent in Christianity's New Testament as *el dictamen revocado*, with its roots of legitimacy in the Jewish Old Testament.

While the Jewish father perishes by both popular justice and “by the Old-Testament law of ‘an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth,’” Berceo is quick to remind his audience that “the Virgin has never reacted in this way towards those who love her and ask for her mercy” (Boreland 21):

Los que tuerto li tienen o que la desirvieron,
d'ella mercet ganaron si bien gela pidieron;
nunca repoyó ella a los que la quisieron,
ni lis dio en refierta el mal que li fizieron.
(376)

In the conclusion of the miracle, however, we are confronted by a coercive tone underlying the ‘grace’ of Mary. Although we are assured that the Virgin bestows glory upon those who serve her, the punishment that befalls the Jewish father actually expands to encompass anyone, not just Jews, who do not serve Mary:

Tal es sancta María que es de gracia plena,
por servicio da Gloria, por deservicio pena;
a los bonos da trigo, a los malos avena,
los unos van en Gloria, los otros en cadena.

Qui servicio li faze es de buena ventura,
qui l fizo deservicio nació en ora dura,
los unos ganan gracia e los otros rencura,
a bonos e a malos so fecho los mestura.
(374-375)

Diz considers that “el carácter retributivo de la justicia mariana alcanza acaso su más clara y económica formulación en la conocida metáfora ‘a los bonos da trigo, a los malos avena’” (129). This justice of retribution calls to mind not only the miracle of the child’s salvation, but also the account of the Jewish father’s horrible death at the hands of the crowd. With this in mind, “el castigo del padre, aunque materialmente llevado a cabo por agentes humanos, queda vinculado a María” (Diz 129). In the context of these verses in which service to Mary provides protection from the wrath she directs toward those who do not serve her, the idea expressed in 375d—that the good and the evil are revealed by their deeds—conveys the impression that ‘evil’ may be defined simply as disobedience or disservice to Mary. The implications of this notion confirm that the fate of the Jewish father had more to do with his misguided deed against his son than with his being Jewish, but also suggest that his subsequent failure to recognize the Virgin actually sealed his fate. We find in the very next quatrain (376 above) the invitation for conversions. The invitation to convert, as well as the threat of retribution, are not, as far as I can ascertain, restricted only to Jews. The clear message seems to be that even the Jewish father, “el diablado,” could have spared himself the fate of the oven had he, along with the other Jews, immediately recognized the mercy of Mary in the miracle of his son’s safe delivery from the flames, and, as the lender in “El mercader de Bizancio,” forthwith converted to Christianity.

While Berceo attributes retributive powers to the Virgin Mary, he takes pains to credit the miracle to God. Mary protects the boy, but God does a great miracle because he puts a blessing on the child:

el ninnuelo del fuego estorció bien e gent,
fizo un grand miraclo el Rey omnipotent.

Non priso nulla tacha, nulla tribulación,
ca pusiera en elli Dios la su bendición.
(365cd, 367cd)

In the Latin version, as Richard Burkard notes, “mention of an intervention of the Deity is absent throughout: it is the Virgin who saves the child” (258). In Berceo, the child suffers the severe reproach of his earthly father, but receives the blessing of his heavenly father through the sheltering arms of Mary, who protects him as would his own mother:

Yazié en paz el ninno en media la fornaz,
en brazos de su madre non yazrié más en paz,
non preciava el fuego más qe a un rapaz,
ca l fazié la Gloriosa companna e solaz.
(366)

Berceo’s allusions to the Virgin’s maternal love (366b) are not present in the Latin version (Vicente García 25). Thus, although the child’s conversion has rent his family asunder, in Berceo’s version of the miracle he acquires “a Dios y a la Virgen respectivamente, actuando en conjunto como la nueva Familia del niño” (24). Surely the idea of this celestial family can provide solace and comfort to those who, upon converting to Christianity, might find themselves in conflict between family and Church. The little Jewish boy, however, acquires much more than divine parents; he also gains the support of his community. Those who understand and who praise the Virgin Mary are not only the Christians, but the Jews also. They all act together as one community, or family, united by their mutual recognition of Mary. Together they celebrate the miracle and punish the father. Popular justice seals the fate of the Jew who lives by the old

covenant of ‘an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ This new community of Mary, more than the ‘celestial parents’ per se, replaces the original Jewish family of the beginning of the story. Rather than the family law of the father we have the law of the new family of Mary. In Berceo’s “El judiezno,” the family violence caused by the conversion of the little boy finds resolution in the concept of Jews and Christians fusing together in collective recognition of the Virgin and in a cause for justice. Ultimately, the fate of the father represents that of anyone, not just Jews, who fails to serve the Virgin, and, by extension, the Church.

By uniting Jews and Christians in the action of executing the father, Berceo averts a religious polemic such as the one elaborately set forth in “El mercader de Bizancio,” or a wholesale attack against the Jewish community like the one described in “Cristo y los judíos de Toledo.” Rather than a story exclusively about Christian triumph, “El judiezno” addresses a sequence of conversion, separation and unity, ending with coercive exhortations to honor Mary and an invitation to convert. While anti-Jewish stereotypes are undeniably present in all these stories, and indeed Berceo has embellished the use of them in comparison to the Latin, as in “El mercader de Bizancio,” in “El judiezno” they are not exploited for the sake of a confrontation between Good and Evil, where ‘evil’ is synonymous with ‘Jewish.’ As Vicente García notes, “Berceo no nos trasmite un antisemitismo racial—el milagro invita a la conversión—sino religioso” (26). It is here, in the invitation to conversion, that we find the thrust of the miracle’s dialectic, which begins and ends on the same note: conversion.

Retrospectively considering the fate of the father, the promise of mercy and forgiveness in verses 374-376 offers a dramatic contrast, if not a blatantly propagandistic incentive to convert. The theme of conversion, highlighted and represented in the various contexts of the miracle—the conversion of the child through Holy Communion; the

implicit conversion of the Jewish witnesses, or at the least a miraculous moment of consensus between Jews and Christians; the closing exhortation to honor Mary—is not merely a theme of simple opposition between Christian triumph and Jewish defeat. Let us remember that there existed historical impetus for the conversion theme in the first place. The religious reforms and conversion campaigns initiated by the establishment of the mendicant orders and proclaimed by the Fourth Lateran Council resulted from the Church’s alarm at the ever increasing number of heretical sects, as well as, significantly, at “the influence that the Jews, who were as a rule better instructed in their religion, might have on the less educated Christians or even the lower ranks of the clergy” (McCall 278). The Church’s challenge was to establish its supremacy by proving the legitimacy of its orthodoxy, hence the conversion campaigns. The presence of the Jews represented the incarnation of disbelief in Jesus, a presence that not only held the power to inspire doubts, but to fuel already existing ones (Langmuir 284). The tension that Christianity establishes between the Old and New Testaments in the form of the simultaneous doctrines of *el dictamen revocado* and of prefiguration enshrines the conflict between Christianity and Judaism (see Langmuir 282-4). The point of the fusion of the Jews and the Christians through their mutual recognition of the Virgin Mary is not the religious defeat of the Jews. On the contrary, the recognition by Jews of the Virgin bolsters Christianity’s doctrinal claims.

The cathartic unity of Christians and Jews appears like a fantasy of validation that works on two levels, law and theology. This unity joins the secular and the sacred by means of the collective justice of the *pena de talión* and the retributive justice of the Old Testament on the side of Christianity. The inassimilable tension between the Old and New Testaments dissolves in a purifying harmony of mutual verification. Jews and Christians coalesce to become a new family of Mary, thus fulfilling a fantasy of the

obliteration of differences in the unity of community. Vicente García suggests that in this miracle of Berceo we see the standardization of religion as a propagandistic motive: Berceo “nos trasmite una sociedad cristiana en depuración de elementos extraños a su cultura. Esta depuración se realiza por absorción [. . .]” (26). In “El judiezno” we are left with an image of a homogenous community under one Church and one Law.

To conclude this chapter, I would like to point out what I see as the four main thematic currents that run through each of these narratives. All three of these miracles have in common a narrative mechanism by which the fusion of secular and sacred law can occur. In both “El judiezno” and “Cristo y los judíos de Toledo,” collective justice draws authority from the old secular laws of *injuria* where we find the frequent application of the *pena de talión*. *El dictamen revocado* refers to Old Testament law and represents the ‘new covenant’ of Christianity. Punishment in terms of the justice of the old covenant draws sanction from secular customs and serves to reinforce a fusion of secular and Church law, which canon law exemplifies. In “El judiezno” the collective justice unifies Christians and Jews; in “Cristo y los judíos de Toledo,” it divides them. “El mercader de Bizancio” also establishes a somewhat different fusion of the secular and the sacred. The Jewish moneylender’s conversion symbolizes the authority of Christianity’s interpretation of the Old Testament as a prefiguration of the New (and thus of Christ as the true messiah). His recognition of the intermediary power of the images of the Virgin and Jesus stands as an acknowledgement of the intermediary authority of the Church in the business of money. Thus, as in “El judiezno,” the conversion of the Jew validates the Church on both theological and secular grounds.

The validation of the Christian dogma regarding the legitimacy of religious images and of the Christian interpretation of the Old Testament is present in all three of these miracles. This quest for validation assumes the form of establishing the authority

of the dogma of intermediaries. Obviously the title itself—*Los Milagros de Nuestra Señora*—suggests the centrality of this dogma to the work as a whole. In these miracles about Jews, however, we can clearly see that the ultimate intermediary in the affairs, both divine and secular, of human beings is the Church. But in order for this concept to be convincingly legitimate, the Church's doctrinal orthodoxy must be validated. Both the issues of religious images and the theology of prefiguration are directly at stake in contraposition to Judaism. In "Cristo y los judíos de Toledo," the theme of dishonor rests on the issue of the legitimacy of images. The reenactment of the crucifixion upon a wax image can be perceived as a mockery of the Christian reverence for images. Thus when the Jews are killed, the avenging of Christian honor involves more than punishment for image desecration or black magic. At stake is the Christian insecurity in regard to the proliferation of religious icons and the Church's concern about adapting to this expanding economy of images. Ironically, for example, in the endeavor to regain his fortune, the Christian merchant's patrons turn out to be God and the Jewish moneylender to whom God guides him. The images of the Virgin and child prove to be a valuable spiritual as well as monetary asset.

The power of the image as a potent force for rallying collective action in urban communities recurs in all three miracles. In most cases, the power of these images lies in their effectiveness for representing or alluding to anti-Jewish stereotypes. Given that Christianity is built upon Judaic beliefs, the negative Christian stereotyping of Jews suggests the ambivalence, tension and conflict surrounding the (Jewish) basis of Christian beliefs. The wax image represents more than a dishonor to the Christians. It also suggests the common accusations against the Jews as crucifiers of Christ, desecraters of holy images, and even touches on the allegation against the Jews as themselves idolaters who worshipped false gods. The link of the Jews with money in the negative context of

avarice is particularly relevant to an urban setting. This vice becomes the driving force behind the lender's final trip to the merchant's church, from which he is escorted by "el pueblo todo." In "El judiezno," the recognition of the Virgin Mary by Jews and Christians alike unites them, and they act as one to celebrate the miracle and punish the father. The negative stereotypes that serve to inflame the indictments against the father, while they apply generally to any perpetrator of such a crime, are also anti-Jewish. By examining how Berceo uses the anti-Jewish themes of his time, we gain insights into the roles that these ideas have played historically in shaping Christian dogma and canon law.

Many of these themes remain today in exactly the same forms as seven hundred years ago. The negative association with money appeared in the content of Nazi propaganda that included the identification of Jews with capitalist elements in Germany and elsewhere, and Christian dogma has accused the Jews of deicide since the fourth century AD (and possibly before) ("Anti-Semitism"). Christian missionary propaganda continues to reveal the frustration over the 'stubborn refusal' of the Jews to accept Christ as the son of God, as this excerpt from a paper submitted in 1948 to the First Assembly of the World Council of Churches by the Protestant Commission on the Witness to Israel of the Protestant Federation of France, demonstrates:

The Church must say that their [the Jews'] sufferings are not God's vengeance for the death of Jesus, but an appeal to conversion and to turn from their unfaithfulness. It is obviously very hard to use this language to the survivors of the Nazi massacres. But Christians cannot proclaim the Gospel to the Jews unless they begin by affirming that Jesus really is the Christ, the son of God, and that their unfaithfulness consists in their refusal to recognize Him as the Messiah foretold by the prophets. (qtd. in Bokser, 31)

We can see from this excerpt that many of these stereotypes and tensions involving deicide, prefiguration and denial of the 'truth' continue to remain a part of Christian dogma.

Ultimately, each miracle challenges authority figures of urban communities: the rabbi, the moneylender, the father. In “Cristo y los judíos de Toledo,” the authority of the archbishop and the Christian mob destroy the rabbi and the Jewish congregation. In “El mercader de Bizancio,” the Church appropriates the authority of the lender, a rich and respected member of the community. In “El judiezno,” the new community of Mary replaces the original Jewish family of the beginning of the story. Rather than the family law of the father we have the law of the new family of Mary. At the end of the miracle the invitation to convert, as well as the threat of retribution, are not restricted only to Jews. Because of the clearly stated rewards and punishments scheme of the Virgin, these figures of authority expand to encompass anyone, not just Jews, who threatens to compete with the hegemony of the Church in the relationships of the community, whether religious, familial or economic. We know that during the thirteenth century the hegemony of the Church in Western Europe probably reached its zenith, and that after the turn of the century the history of the Church began its phases of conflict and slow decline. We know also, to some extent, how the Church attracted followers, for example by means of sermons, education, propagandistic entertainment and even coercion. But the question still remains of why people were persuaded, particularly if the setting for conversion were not one of duress. As Gavin Langmuir points out, it is not enough to explain people’s actions by their beliefs. “Why did they believe what they did and act as they did?” (43). In this miracle we have an image of a homogenous community under one Church and one Law. Was the essence of Church appeal the attraction of uniform laws? Had the Jewish father sought Mary’s mercy, then he presumably could have joined the ranks of Christians for whom the sentence “qual faze, atal prenda” is suspended. Could this mean that the Church would vouch for its members if they got on the wrong side of the law? These questions seem contradictory, but perhaps they are not. The

attraction of uniform laws perhaps meant protection and sanctuary for those who fell victim to the overly harsh and arbitrary law of petty local rulers.

The last *cuaderna* of “El judiezno,” with its theme of guarding against causing the Virgin’s grief, appears to introduce, or allude to, the next two miracles:

Por provar esta cosa qe dicha vos avemos,
digamos un exiemplo fermoso qe leemos;
quando fuere contado mejor lo creeremos,
de buscarli pesar más nos aguardaremos.
(377)

Indeed, as Dutton notes, “En vez de la última frase del latín, Berceo escribe cuatro coplas 374-376 que enseñan la moraleja, mientras 377 introduce al milagro siguiente como ejemplo de esta misma moraleja. Estas coplas derivan de la introducción latina al milagro XVII (Thott 18)” (*Obras* 130). “El judiezno,” deliberately it would appear, marks a turning point in the thematic progression of miracles, which except for the first one, have ‘happy’ endings. The two miracles that follow are about the Virgin Mary’s wrath against the knights in “La iglesia de Santa María profanada” (miracle XVII), and against the Jewish community in “Los judíos de Toledo.”

Chapter 4: Conclusion

Michel Foucault has suggested that in “Western societies since the Middle Ages, the exercise of power has always been formulated in terms of law” (87). As documented by Pseudo-Dionysius and the Bible, the law was given to humankind by angels. Mary’s celestial legal authority as the Holy Advocate par excellence for Christian souls establishes her supreme knowledge of the law within the celestial order. Berceo’s use of legal features in the miracle tales, particularly in scenes of celestial intermediary activity, serves to link canon law with divine authority. The conceptualization of the celestial mediation of the laws of judgment in terms of a terrestrial courtroom drama fuses religious and secular notions. In the miracles of Chapter One, Mary’s decisions in cases involving confession, documents, and restitution of Church properties illustrate divine justice as provisos of canon law and Church policy. Implicit in these notions of courtroom drama and canon law lay the clerical and notarial activities with which Berceo’s world bustled; indeed the terrestrial mediation of canon law lay within the purview of the clergy. Thus, in these miracles we can conceive of a triadic hierarchy structuring the direction of Mary’s mediation in the ascending order of the clergy, canon law, and the Virgin. In the scheme of Pseudo-Dionysius, the clergy conveyed divine enlightenment to the laity. The authority of clerics to define and mediate canon law is therefore achieved by the logic of the triadic hierarchy ‘clergy-canon law-Virgin Mary.’ The power of the clergy to prosecute offenses against the Church in cases of profanation and robbery appears as a propagandistic ideal motivated by realities of the times. We will recall from the discussion of the miracle of the knights who profane the sanctuary of

a church dedicated to the Virgin, that Church properties often became targets for knightly plundering.

The progression of urbanization created revolutionary changes in the organization of medieval society, notably in the field of law. Berceo's signature flair for legalistic vocabulary and dramatic structure in his religious verses of *cuaderna vía* demonstrates his notarial occupation and legal formation, and identifies him as a member of the class of intellectual poet-clerics whose art a context of increasing urbanization and burgeoning canon law fostered. In Berceo's day, the implementation of the Lateran canons involved the clergy in the enterprises of educating clerics and the laity about dogmas of the Church, fighting against heresies, and, in general, establishing Church hegemony on both religious and secular fronts. Berceo engages in this effort at the level of pastoral care, writing poetry in the vernacular for the entertainment and doctrinal edification of both laity and clergy, be they monks, pilgrims, or the people of his bishopric.

By the end of the twelfth century popular heresies sprang up in towns, which suggested that the urban masses were increasingly lacking in Church indoctrination. These expanding urban populations, which caused new quandaries for the Church, created the need for the extension of the secular clergy, who were in the world and whose primary concerns were geared toward the spiritual needs of the laity. The Fourth Lateran Council, in a concerted effort to combat heresy, provided impetus to the education of preachers and established the preaching orders of Dominicans and Franciscans. These mendicant orders of the cities rapidly developed schools and universities for the express purpose of pastoral education. Lateran IV's increase in penalties for secular clerics that violated their vows of celibacy reflected concerns of the Church to consolidate its

property and instruct the masses. Since the initiation of the Gregorian reforms, clerical celibacy had become a key component of the plan for establishing the differentiation between the clergy and the laity, a plan deemed necessary for the carrying out of clerical reforms. By 1215, this differentiation became pertinent particularly to the role of priests in the administration of the sacraments of confession and communion, and in the indoctrination of the laity in dogmas of the Church concerning penance and transubstantiation.

In Chapter Two, the miracles about the fornicating monks, the pregnant abbess, and the canon who decides to marry, highlight the discourses of Church reform pertaining to celibacy requirements for the clergy and reflect the ambiguity inherent in those discourses. In the miracles of the monks, the emphasis on confession and penance attenuates, yet simultaneously affirms, the notion of the 'sinfulness' of fornication. Although the stories are about monks, they speak directly to the circumstances of priests confronted with the enforcement of celibacy requirements. On one level, these miracles discredit the concept of sexual purity as a criterion either of moral superiority, or for Mary's intercession. Thus, they undermine those rhetorics of moral justification, such as ritual purity, recruited to support the rationale for clerical celibacy. On another level, the confession solution to the breaking of celibacy vows implies the power of priests as authorized confessors to implement Church policy. Lateran IV required the annual confession of all persons who had reached the age of reason. In the miracles, the Virgin Mary's endorsement of confession in cases of fornication provides an example for policy interpretation. The attenuation of the sinfulness of fornication by the solution of confession found support in secular beliefs that did not view simple fornication, or

concupinary relationships, for that matter, as sinful or improper. Thus we see a fusion of secular and sacred law in the ambiguity of Church policy relating to clerical celibacy. This ambiguity becomes authorized discourse by means of Berceo's triadic hierarchical order of 'clergy-confession-Virgin Mary' that structures the direction of the Virgin's mediation in the miracles of fornicating monks.

The pragmatic motives of the Gregorian reforms—the consolidation of Church property—are addressed in the stories of the abbess, the canon, and the lusty monk. The religious ideal vs. the reality of clerical celibacy devolves into a consideration of marriage vs. fornication. From a comparison of these miracles, we might surmise that this reform effort regarding Church property could have had an elitist motive as well. In the situation of the abbess and her child, the Church takes care of its own. Her story suggests the historical reality that abbesses often came from noble families who had founded the abbey and provided the endowments for its income. The monk's provisions for his child by the prostitute would have probably had to come from, and thus exit, his monastery. The absolution of his misstep, however, relieves him of the burden of responsibility to his offspring. On the other hand, Mary overrules the canon's plans to marry and produce legitimate heirs to his inherited fortune. A comparison of the canon's story to that of the abbess suggests that the canon should have fornicated and made his sons canons or even bishops. As a response to Lateran IV's increased sanctions against fornicating clerics, these practical considerations of Church reform in the miracles reflect Berceo's position in relation to a developing attitude within the Church of compromise and accommodation with regard to clerical celibacy. The implementation and

interpretation of this Church policy reflected not only pragmatic considerations regarding Church property, but also the secular belief that simple fornication was not a sin.

The Church's campaign for doctrinal hegemony, legal authority and acquisition and consolidation of assets encountered pronounced competition in the urban centers. By the dawn of the thirteenth century, the Jews, well established as merchants and administrators in the towns, had begun to prosper. At the same time, rabbinical scholarship flowered, especially in Spain. The unsettling endurance of the Jewish religion, coupled with the survival, prosperity and royal protection of the Jews themselves despite undermining persecution by the Church, represented a challenge to the Church as an authority figure in urban communities and inspired doctrinal anxieties. In the miracles about the Christians and Jews in Chapter Three, the direction of Mary's mediation appears to be structured in an ascending triadic order of 'laity-Church-Virgin Mary.' Within this hierarchical scheme, the fusion of secular and sacred elements takes place at the level of the Church, or the occasion for this fusion process is initiated there. Within the church in Toledo, the archbishop mediates religious and secular laws, unifies them, and thereby achieves the mutual sanctioning of both. Here, collective justice, couched in terms of the Old Testament law of 'an eye for an eye' and validated through the secular law of the *pena de talión*, justifies the invasion of the rabbi's house and the ritual sacrifice of the Jews. In the church in Bourges, the little Jewish boy partakes of the sacrament of the Eucharist and becomes enamored of the image of the Virgin. This innocent act of devotion initiates the chain of events that results in the unification of the Jewish and Christian communities against the child's enraged father through the collective justice of the *pena de talión*. The conversion of the Jewish lender in

Constantinople stems from his recognition of the intermediary power of the church's images of the Virgin and Jesus as guarantors of the Christian merchant's loan. Within the miracle tales themselves, images of anti-Jewish stereotypes reflect Christian ambivalence regarding the Jewish basis of the Christian religion. Generally, these stereotypes undermine authority figures of urban communities that are Jewish—a rabbi, a father, a moneylender—and expand beyond just Jews to encompass any authority figure outside of the Church.

Significantly, the miracles of Jews and Christians aim to remove the Jewish characters, either by pogrom-style destruction or assimilative conversion, from a position of obstruction in the hierarchical scheme of mediation between laity and Church. The design of this triadic order ('laity-Church-Virgin Mary') indeed reflects the aspirations of the Church to duplicate in the human realm a scheme of divine organization in which the Church, as representative of Mary and the holy court of heaven, would assume the traditional feudal role of the nobility as lord or king. Thus the parishioners would hold the mutual pledge of loyalty and protection with the Church. In Spain, the dominant fiscal and administrative presence of the Jews as agents for the Christian kings, especially in urban communities, helped facilitate the monarchs' increasing independence from the Church. In the emergent urban economy, however, even a peasant could become rich. We see an example of this in the story of the Christian merchant. The images of the Virgin and child in the merchant's church have material as well as spiritual value for him. Because he can present them as surety, he does not need to rely on the patronage of the nobility to secure financing for his mercantile ventures. This circumstance illustrates a way in which the intermediary function of the Church could play various sides against the

other in the bid for organizational authority in the expanding urban population. The attraction of the laity, especially the wealthy ones, to the Church strengthened its ability to wedge itself between the Spanish nobles and their Jewish administrators. In the miracle, the conversion of the Jewish lender provides the Church with the patronage of two wealthy men instead of one penniless merchant.

In this study of the *Milagros*' hierarchical aesthetic of the Virgin Mary as Holy Advocate, I have attempted to contextualize within a historical framework of Church reforms and canon law the ambiguity in relation to Christian doctrine of topics in the miracles related to law, sex and anti-Semitism.¹²⁴ This approach to the analysis of the Virgin's intermediary dynamic has entailed attention to Berceo's use of legalistic stylistic devices in the context of devotional poetry that he elaborated from Latin sources. My discovery of the triadic orders of hierarchical mediation enables us to characterize Berceo's scheme of Marian mediation within the context of the neo-platonic medieval logic. Also, these triadic orders of mediation provide a model for perceiving the manner in which Berceo's text engages and participates in the discourses, both popular and orthodox, of the Gregorian and Lateran reform eras. Some of these discourses include, for example, debates between the cleric and the knight, and between the cleric and the Jew, faith and reason, the philosophy of Abelard, monastic reform rhetoric, the Bible, law, marriage vs. fornication, the dogma of transubstantiation and the perpetual virginity of Mary, to name a few. The logic of the triadic hierarchy of mediation in the *Milagros*

¹²⁴ Respectively, the seemingly unorthodox role of Mary, rather than Christ or God, as possessor of the final word in the salvation of her devotees; the ambivalence with regard to the ideal vs. the reality of clerical celibacy; murder and idolatry.

provides the means to link and fuse secular and religious concepts. The ascending order of ‘clergy-canon law-Virgin Mary,’ for example, belies the role of the clergy in this process of fusion as interpreters and implementers of canon law. The fusion of the secular belief in the ‘sinlessness’ of simple fornication and the sacred doctrine of the sacrament of confession is enabled by means of the triadic structural link of ‘clergy-confession-Virgin Mary.’ Here again, the model implicates the power of secular priests in their role as confessors to interpret and implement Church policy regarding clerical celibacy requirements. In the miracles about Jews and Christians, the dynamic for the validation of the efficacy of religious images, the legitimacy of intermediary dogma, and the doctrinal orthodoxy of prefiguration, unfolds through the triadic order of mediation structured as ‘laity-Church-Virgin Mary.’ Here, the Church functions as the locale of the symbols of mediation: the archbishop, the images of Virgin and child, the Crucifix, the Eucharist. These symbols stand for the Christian doctrines at stake in contraposition to Judaism, particularly the legitimacy of Christian religious images and prefiguration dogma. The contact of the Jews in the miracles with these symbols initiates the process whereby the fusion of secular and sacred laws either rallies the Christian mob to murder or unifies the Jews and Christians via the conversion of the Jews.

In short, the triadic hierarchies of mediation illustrate a model of interpretation for what Brian Stock describes as “a linking of literacy with reform, by which the local, the particular, and the unwritten become elements in a programme of higher religious culture” (71). By drawing on this description, we can see that the miracles under study here abound with unwritten issues that fuse popular and orthodox religious culture. Here are a few examples: the pregnant abbess (the unwritten circumstances that make the

ending to her story viable), the monk's child (what is the child's fate?), the fusion of the *pena de talión* and 'an eye for an eye' (the mechanism for this process is not explicit, but masquerades as Old Testament law and ritual), the canon's inherited property (what becomes of it?). The fusion of the secular and the sacred elements of popular and orthodox religious culture illustrates the practical applications of abstract dogma. In the *Milagros*, the direction of the Virgin Mary's intermediary activity serves to harmonize the contradictions inherent in the application of sacred concepts to secular circumstances. As secular cleric and servant of the Virgin, Berceo, in the words of Ramón Menéndez Pidal, "quiere . . . servir de intermediario entre la ciencia de los clérigos y la ignorancia del vulgo" ("Ramón Menéndez Pidal"). Berceo's text of *Los Milagros de Nuestra Señora* still stands as written documentation of the process of that intermediary service.

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Vita

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