

**URRACA OF LEÓN-CASTILE AND TERESA OF PORTUGAL:
THE IBERIAN PARADIGM OF FEMININE POWER REVISITED
BY THIRTEENTH AND FOURTEENTH CENTURY
HISTORIOGRAPHY**

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The medieval Iberian narrative tradition of historiography and balladry displays a remarkable gallery of powerful women who seem to harken back to a time when History and Legend were one. They emerge from the texts wrapped in an aura of evil, and some specific features of their stories suggest that collective memory has typified their representation under an all-inclusive imagetic pattern. Within it, feminine power, lust and transgression act as symbolic and functional equivalents¹. These elements encode the demoniac nature of the women who exhibit them and who are perceived as a menace to the instituted order and to those who stand for it. Mastery of intrigue and an impudent use of their own bodies are their main weapons, by means of which they weave death or ruin for the men around them – their closest kin or in-law relatives. To illustrate this stereotypical pattern, one needs only remember the blood stained hands of Lambra, the aunt of the «Siete Infantes», who instigated

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¹ Martha Krow-Lucall (1995) studies this feminine typical representation of powerful women, which she names “the Jezebel paradigm”.

her husband to take their lives; of Sancha, the wife of Count Garci Fernández of Castile, who caused her father's and her husband's death, and almost succeeded to kill her own son; or of Urraca, the sister of Alphonso VI of León, who was, according to legend, responsible for the murder of another of her siblings, Sancho II of Castile.

The misdeeds of such figures, of a mostly legendary nature², are first recorded in Hispanic written memory in late twelfth and thirteenth centuries' historiography³. As opposed to oral balladry, historiographic texts tend to conceal all objective signs of feminine power. I argued elsewhere⁴ that such a feature was ideologically in tune with the ongoing imposition of patrilinearity – already an accomplished fact to the east of the Pyrenees by the twelfth century – over the less rigid Iberian family structure⁵. Here, I will deal in some detail with the medieval historiographic representation of two real women who embodied that same imagetic pattern: the notorious daughters of Alfonso VI⁶, Urraca,

² Doña Lambra and Countess Sancha are purely fictional characters. As for Infanta Urraca, although her existence is historical, the accounts of her implication in her brother Sancho's death, as well as the rumors of her incestuous relations with Alfonso, are rooted in a legendary background. For a discussion of these episodes, see Fernández Luis Corral (2006), Teresa Catarella (2007) and M. R. Ferreira (2011).

³ Countess Sancha made her historiographic debut by mid twelfth century, in the Latin *Chronica Najarensis*, while Doña Lambra had to wait for the decade of 1270 to be featured by the vernacular *Estoria de España*. As for Infanta Urraca, the first historiographic hints on her responsibility in her brother's death can be read in the *Chronica Najarensis*.

⁴ See Ferreira (2009).

⁵ Online journal of medieval Iberian interdisciplinary studies *e-Spania* has dedicated its eleventh issue, June 2011 (<http://e-spania.revues.org/20246>), to the theme of "Legitimation and lineage". The works there presented can enlighten many particular aspects of this more fluid system of kinship where women were often of paramount importance in the transmission of blood charisma.

⁶ The number of studies dedicated to these women, from full biographies to articles dealing with specific aspects of their political action, is far from scarce. About Urraca, see the works of B. Reilly (1982); M. C. Pallares and E. Portela (2006); T. Martín (2006); C. García (2006, 2007); M. J. Gomes (2011). On Teresa, T. S. Soares (1974, 1975); A. R. Oliveira (2007); M. Cassoti (2008); the long awaited biography of Queen Teresa, by historians M. Barroca and L. C. Amaral, is scheduled for publication by Círculo de Leitores in the series «Rainhas de Portugal», during the course of 2012. Some papers survey the relationship between the two sisters and their political actions, or look into the parallel construction of their historiographic representations: M. J. Branco (1993); G. Cavero Domínguez (1997); I. B. Dias (2001); M. J.

Queen of León-Castile and Teresa, Queen of Portugal, who sought power by their own right and in their own name in a yet not hegemonically patrilineal Iberia.

Both Urraca and Teresa played paramount roles on the complex chessboard of Hispanic politics during the first third of the twelfth century. Since their father, Alfonso VI, left no male offspring, Urraca succeeded to him in the throne through a perfectly legal procedure⁷, and was Queen of León and Castile for seventeen years, from 1109 to 1126; as for Teresa, she was bequeathed the County of Portugal as an heirloom in 1095, when, still a child, she married Henry of Bourgoigne⁸ – a French second-born nobleman who had come to the Iberian Peninsula to serve king Alfonso in the wars against the Muslims –, and ruled it single handed from her husband's death, in 1111, until 1128, shortly before her own. Her documentation shows that by 1117 she had adopted the title of “queen of Portugal” which she was never to relinquish⁹.

In both cases, the dates and circumstances concerning most of the major events in the lives of the two sisters (such as birth, marriages or public liaisons,

Branco and I. B. Dias (2007); M. R. Ferreira (2010). All basic facts about Urraca and Teresa's lives provided in this study without further specification are mentioned in the biographical works cited above.

⁷ For a thorough discussion of Alphonso VII's succession process as contemporary chronicles accounted for it, see M. J. Gomes (2011).

⁸ See note 47.

⁹ In a letter dated from the previous year, pope Paschal II had addressed her as “T. Regina” – “Papsturkunden in Portugal”, ed. Karl Erdman (1927: 169-170), *apud* B. Reilly (1982: 117 e n. 102). In charters dated from May and November 1117 she entitles herself “ego regina Tarasia” and “ego [...] Tarasia regina de Portugal”, a formula that in 1124 will become “Ego, Tarasia, Portugalensium regina” (*Documentos Medievais Portugueses*, vol. 1, t. 1, ed. Ruy Pinto de Azevedo (1958: 59-60, nº 48-49; 82, nº 67). From 1117 on, her documentation will consistently attire her with the royal title. It is interesting to recall the testimony of the first anonymous *Crónica de Sahágun*, which reports, in the voice of a contemporary redactor, events that took place between 1109 and 1117. In the context of a situation occurring in 1110, the *Crónica* notices that the wife of count Henry was called “queen” by her attendants and armed man, and that her sister was annoyed by that treatment – ed. Antonio Ubieto Arteta (1987: 41). Unless we challenge the credibility of this source – see note 18 in the present study –, we have to consider that Teresa's claim to the royal title dates back to the period before her widowhood, and that its use must not have been a matter of innocuous conventionality, since queen Urraca resented it.

children and death) are well attested¹⁰. Furthermore, coeval documentation testifies that they were politically as energetic and wilful as any of their male contemporaries in those turbulent times in Iberia. Urraca and Teresa seem to have been competent and determined rulers. Were they men, History would most likely have held them in honour amongst their peers; instead, throughout the centuries, their sovereignty has been labelled with illegitimacy. Their authority tends to be understood as an appropriation of the masculine prerogative to rule that is assumed to be their sons' by right; and their use of power is appraised as destructive and contrary to the welfare of the land¹¹. History seems to resent them as embodiments of obscure forces ever threatening the unimpaired existence of the countries and the states that evolved from the territories that were once their realms.

¹⁰ All basic facts about Urraca and Teresa's lives referred to in this study without further specification are mentioned in the biographical works cited in note 7.

¹¹ In his *Memorias de las reynas católicas*, Enrique Flórez testifies to the "mala fama" Urraca had earned when he elliptically refers that this queen "no mostró los fondos que engrandecieron a otras" Flórez (1761: 262). The interesting study by Beatriz Antón (2005) on the seventeenth century engraved representation of the undignifying legendary death of Queen Urraca further elucidates the construction of a very negative perception of this queen in post medieval historiography. In what concerns Teresa, the way modern historiography treated her is well illustrated by the overall perspective that permeates Alexandre Herculano's mid nineteenth century account of the period of her government. The righteous and patronising attitude towards Queen Teresa surfaces clearly in some moralistic commentaries, such as: "Como a de D. Urraca, a desgraçada afeiçãõ de D. Teresa [por Fernão Peres de Trava] tinha dado ou motivo ou pretexto a uma guerra civil e à quebra dos laços da natureza que a deviam prender a seu filho [...]. Nesses tempos, a desordem dos costumes fazia com que semelhante procedimento não estampasse um ferrete de indelével ignomínia na fronte dos príncipes que assim calcavam aos pés o amor filial, até porque lhes serviam de desculpa – se tais factos podem em tempo nenhum merecê-la – [...] as conveniências, bem ou mal entendidas da pátria", A. Herculano (1980: 381-382). But even in the twenty first century there seems to prevail a prejudice against these women, a doubt upon the soundness of their political judgment and the independence of their decisions, that impairs historic discourse: "Mas Teresa, mal aconselhada por um perigoso jogo de alianças com os Travas da Galiza, de onde recrutou os seus dois amantes e o marido para sua filha, em frontal oposição aos interesses da nobreza portuguesa de entre Douro e Minho [...] viria a ser derrotada pelo seu próprio filho [...] quando, em 1128, foi deposta do seu «cargo» como governante do condado portugalense. Também Urraca encontrara nos seus dois amantes [...] dois dos seus mais fiéis nobre e conselheiros políticos, [...] cujos conselhos a afastavam sistematicamente da nobreza que apoiava seu filho [...]. Quando a altura chegou, o infante defrontou e apaziguou sua atribulada mãe [...]", Branco and Dias (2007: 336). One wonders if this is the voice of a modern historian reasoning critically, or an echo of a judgmental tradition of feminine ignominy and minority.

The negative judgment passed on the lives and deeds of these two women is rooted in the foul image medieval historiography has conveyed of them¹². In fact, they are portrayed as women who knew no bounds for either desires or actions: wicked, ambitious and lecherous, they sought dominion over the land that had once been their father's, and contended fiercely over it with their own sons. Adulterous wives and unreliable mothers, they could not, or would not, subdue the political and erotic passions they engaged in.

From early days, historiography has chosen to emphasise the many similar circumstances that marked the lives of this twosome¹³. The two sisters were married, very young, to French aristocrats, Raymond of Toulouse and Henry of Bourgogne, reputed warriors who came to the rescue of their father, at odds to contain the Almoravid pressure upon Christian Hispanic territories. Having soon become widows, both Urraca and Teresa kept up long term liaisons¹⁴ with powerful noblemen of the most important families in or around their respective domains. They both had sons, named after their grandfather, who would eventually take from their mothers hands the power over the territory, becoming Alfonso VII, Emperor of Hispania, and Afonso I, King of

¹² The ill willed and undermining characterisation of the two queens in medieval chronicles is patent in Dias (2001), Branco and Dias (2007) and Martin (2006: 1-30).

¹³ This consistent procedure dates back to the coeval *Historia Compostelana*. There, in a moment of the narrative already posterior to queen Urraca's death and to queen Teresa's demotion, a clear parallel is drawn between the liaisons of the two sisters with the most powerful counts of the territory under their respective political influences. The two situations are disclosed only a few lines apart and are, in both cases, presented from the counts' perspective rather than from the queens': Pedro de Lara «adulterine concuberet» with Urraca, and Fernão Peres de Trava «adulterabatur» with Teresa (ed. Falque, 1988: 458, III. 24). But the juxtaposition aims further, and develops into the consideration of the long lasting negative effects of the mothers' sexual misconduct on their sons' paths to power – see Pallares and Portela (2006: 48), Ferreira (2010: 211, n. 18).

¹⁴ The status of those liaisons is yet unclear, and they may or may not have been regarded as marriages under customary law. The question has been largely overlooked by her biographers, in the case of Urraca, but for Teresa it is a long disputed issue. José Mattoso (2006: 30-32) considers that she did marry Fernão Peres de Trava, even though the church never acknowledged the marriage. The fact that, in thirteenth and fourteenth century sources derived from an older textual tradition, both counts, the Trava and the Lara, are referred to as stepfathers of the queens sons is in and of itself telling. See notes 47 and 50.

Portugal. One single major fact individuates Urracas's minimal biography: the queen's second acknowledged marriage, an alliance with the king of Aragon that proved disastrous, since it brought havoc on the territory under her rule and ended in a clamorous divorce that closed the most unstable period of her reign. It is curious to notice, however, that in spite of the similarity of many of their private circumstances, their conflicting territorial interests and contrary political options made them more often enemies than allies.

The lens of medieval historiography takes these factual coincidences even further and presents Urraca and Teresa as entwined characters, whose life stories enlighten and intensify each other by the repetition and interweaving of motives and images. In fact, if one endeavours to track down the presence of a given episode in the succession of historiographic texts, in order to establish to each of the sisters had its first occurrence been ascribed, the result can be inconclusive¹⁵. Such feature leads us into thinking that we are not dealing with independent characters but rather with a double projection of a single preconception of the woman as ruler.

This perspective is mostly noticeable in thirteenth and fourteenth century chronicles, composed when Urraca and Teresa had been dead for over a hundred years¹⁶. A few texts remain, however, that were written while the two

¹⁵ The most accomplished example of this lack of definition is the reference to the imprisonment of the mother by the son. In an article published in the present volume, Filipe Alves Moreira (2011), considers a textual tradition of thirteenth and fourteenth century sources where this motive concerns Urraca and Alfonso Raimúndez, with the participation of Pedro de Lara; but one of those sources also refers it to Teresa, Afonso Henriques and Fernão Peres de Trava, in strikingly similar words even if other aspects of the narrative differ. It is not easy to discern to which of the two queens was ascribed in the first place the imprisonment episode, which seems to be of a legendary nature. One has to go back to the *Historia Compostelana* to realise, after close comparison of the circumstances, motivations and characters involved, what may have been the historical cluster from which the above mentioned narrative tradition has sprung: the imprisonment of Pedro de Lara by Guterres Fernández de Castro – ed. Falque (1988: 234-235, II. 8. 3); Reilly (1982: 137) – and consider that the legendary motive of imprisonment must have been original to Urraca's tradition and was then borrowed by Teresa's.

¹⁶ Attention to this point has been called by Martin (2006: 15-27), who shows how «the "mala fama" [...] began to develop more than a century after Queen Urraca's death», Martin (2006: 27).

sisters were still alive and ruling, and whose scribes claim to have known them in the flesh. The most telling are the Latin *Historia Compostelana* (1100-1139) and the first anonymous *Crónica de Sahágún* (1109-1117)¹⁷. Although the Latin original of this text was lost, a late medieval Castilian translation is preserved which is credited not to be a forgery¹⁸. Both chronicles cover local events in which Urraca was a leading participant, and to which Teresa was, although to a lesser extent, also concerned. In fact, the Episcopal town of Santiago de Compostela and the monastery of Sahágún were strategic locations in Urraca's kingdom. Both played an important role in the strife for dominion between Urraca and her husband, the king of Aragon Alphonso I, on the one hand, and between her and the powerful archbishop of Compostela, Diego Gelmírez, on the other. In both cases, Teresa, as ruler of neighbouring lands of Portugal, could not be indifferent to the ensuing redistribution of power¹⁹.

It is important to notice how flagrantly the image of Urraca and Teresa depicted by these early texts contrasts with the ones conveyed by later chronicles. It would be naive to assume that a contemporary written account of events by someone who took part in them could give an objective picture either of the facts or of the persons involved. Historiography, like all writing, complies with culturally determined ethical and esthetical patterns, which act as mediators between referential elements and literary representations. It is through this process of encoding that stories and characters are endowed with meaning. Admittedly, it is impossible to find the authentic Urraca and Teresa in the texts; but one may expect to retrieve the image of the two sisters as they

¹⁷ A more accurate study of the representation of the two sisters in these twelfth century texts can be read in Ferreira (2010).

¹⁸ In its extant vernacular translation, this chronicle was edited by Antonio Ubieto Arteta (1987) with a large number of invaluable historical notes. The high rate of factual accordance of this chronicle with a wide range of twelfth century documents, determined by Ubieto (1987: 5-6, and notes *passim*), leads to conclude that the alterations produced by the translator must have affected the form rather than the meaning of the text and to accept by enlarge the authenticity of the information it provides.

¹⁹ See T. S. Soares (1974, 1975), M. J. Branco (1993) and G. Cavero Domínguez (1997).

could be perceived and conceived by their contemporaries. Indeed, the chronicles convey such portrayals of Urraca and Teresa as a coeval peninsular church scribe was able to devise, and saw fit to express and preserve, concerning the political action, the social role and the personal circumstances of these two very powerful women. We can perhaps infer from these twelfth century renderings the parameters of the representation of a woman ruler in Iberia at that period.

In their moral appraisal of the two sisters, the *Historia Compostelana* and the *Crónica de Sahágún* contradict each other. One must bear in mind the political issues of the time. While Sahágún strongly supported queen Urraca's sovereignty, Compostela fiercely opposed her attempts to subdue the ecclesiastical power of the town's mighty archbishop. As for Teresa, her political interests often made her side with her sister's foes. Thus, the monk of Sahágún praises Urraca's nobility, beauty, prudence and eloquence, while the clerk of Compostela chooses to avoid openly disparaging her, but still discusses at length the vices, passions and weaknesses of female nature, of which the queen necessarily partook. In spite of that, the chronicle regards Urraca as a fit adversary to the archbishop, and the scribe dedicates many a page to the depiction of her effectual political actions – presented as stratagems, intrigues and treacheries – and of her cunningly false repentance for such “misdeeds”. Conversely, Teresa is shrewd and perfidious in the text from Sahágún, while in the Compostelan narrative she is protective and providential. Even if the texts disagree on the polarity of good and evil ascribed to each of the sisters, they are consonant in that they portray them as preeminent players on the stage of History, potent figures to be reckoned with in the destiny of the land. Their actions may be deplored by the scribes; but their authority is nevertheless legitimate. Neither Urraca's right to the throne, nor Teresa's ruling status are ever questioned or challenged²⁰.

²⁰ This paragraph conveys a synthesis of the appraisal by Ferreira (2010).

Likewise, on the Portuguese side, the hagiographic texts regarding contemporary monks and abbots in and around Santa Cruz de Coimbra, written by mid twelfth century²¹, repeatedly mention Teresa's political decisions and never dispute the legitimacy power.

It is worth noticing that, even though the erotic liaisons of both sisters were common knowledge at the time²², the scribe of Compostela scarcely mentions them²³, and the monk of Sahágún disregards them completely. Could it be that sexual morals were a non-issue as far as the characterisation, good or bad, of ruling women was concerned, as indeed it tended to be for ruling men²⁴?

This short appraisal makes plain that, during the first half of the twelfth century, historiographic representation of power held and exerted legitimately by a woman in her own name²⁵ was a possibility in Iberia – even if that representation was, in its substance, negative²⁶. Soon afterwards, however, the model of masculine supremacy based on a strict policy of patrilineal descent

²¹ The reference edition of these hagiographies is by Aires Augusto Nascimento (1998).

²² I refer to the historically recognized liaisons: Urraca's with count Pedro Gonzalez de Lara and Teresa's with count Fernando Peres de Trava. As will be discussed further (see note 39), Count Gomes de Candespina seems to have been a late addition to Urraca's love life.

²³ He will mention them later in the *Historia...*, when the political power that had been held by the two sisters was already in the hands of their respective sons, Alfonso VII of León-Castille and Afonso Henriques of Portugal. Those liaisons, labelled as adulterous, are brought to the readers' attention in the context of the struggles between the young rulers and their mothers' former lovers. See above notes 13 and 14.

²⁴ There is a clear reference to Teresa's misconduct with Fernão Peres de Trava in the *Vita Theotonii*. However, the hagiographies of Santa Cruz de Coimbra are not strictly contemporary with Queen Teresa. They were written in mid twelfth century or a little later, that is to say at least two decades after the Queen's death (1130). Moreover, the *Vita Theotonii* was partially rewritten in the last decades of the century in a political context widely different from the ideological frame of its original redaction – Cintra (1951: CCCXCII-CCCXIV e n. 214), Nascimento (1998: 222) and Miranda (2010, p. 57, n. 76). Any dissonant feature of this text should be considered carefully prior to interpretation.

²⁵ As opposed to the surrogate power exercised by a queen mother or queen consort on behalf of a king who cannot temporarily fulfill his royal function.

²⁶ For further details, see Ferreira (2010: 208-214).

would take over²⁷. The handling of the characters of Urraca and Teresa by thirteenth and fourteenth century chronicles is one of the many examples of the ensuing need to debase women and make the very idea of feminine power unseemly, effectively excluding them from political roles. This goal was to be accomplished in an elaborate two step process from occultation to demonization.

In his *Chronicon Mundi*, dated from 1236, Lucas de Tuy turned Urraca and Teresa into shadows of their former historiographic selves. After reporting in some detail the death of Alfonse VI, Urraca's father, the chronicle immediately jumps to Alfonso VII, her son, and tells how he became king of Galicia, creating the illusion of a direct succession²⁸. No reference is made either to the succession of Alfonso VI in her daughter or to the succession of Urraca in her son. The seventeen years of Urraca's reign are thus erased, as if there had never been a time when León and Castile fared under the rule of this woman. Lucas does consistently call her "Vrraca Regina"; however, through one of those stratagems so dear to him, the regal and legal value of her title is diluted in a swirl of other so called "reginae", king's daughters whose head had never held the crown of sovereignty²⁹. This seemingly indiscriminate bestowing of the queenly title creates the impression that it corresponded merely to an honorific distinction devoid of political meaning and masks the uniqueness of Urraca's position in the medieval History of León and Castile: a woman in a man's function, a queen in the throne of a king.

²⁷ For the Leonese and Castilian context, see I. Beceiro Pita and R. Córdoba Llave (1990); for the Portuguese context, see José Mattoso (1981a: 371-86), (1981b: 387-415) and (1986: 80-99).

²⁸ *Chronicon Mundi*, ed. Falque (2003: 309-309, IV. 73-74). Lucas does not actually state that Alfonso Raimúndez becomes king of León-Castile upon his grandfather's death; be as it may, since this is the only reference made by the *Chronicon* to the circumstances of his rise to the throne, the illusion stands. See António Resende de Oliveira and José Carlos Miranda (2010).

²⁹ The cases of her aunt Urraca Fernández and her daughter Sancha Raimúndez are particularly interesting as far as queenship goes. See Ferreira (2011: §22-25, 38-40) for a discussion of the origins and the implications of the title bestowed on these two women.

Concocting facts concerning the succession of Alfonso VI with dissensions with the future Alfonso VII that were to take place by the end of Urraca's reign, Lucas reports briefly how she wanted to rule in the place of her son³⁰, how, under the influence of two ambitious men – the king of Aragon, her husband to be, and count Henry of Portugal – she planned to rob the treasures from the rich leonese church of Santo Isidoro de León in order to support her army against the young Alfonso Raimúndez, and how he sieged her and she surrendered to him³¹. The text mentions Urraca a few other times, for genealogical reasons – which are the only ones that allow her sister Teresa into the text.

Two other widely read Latin chronicles helped to debase these personages but, rather than wiping them out, they took the demonizing approach. First, the *Chronica Regum Castellae*, by Juan de Soria, Bishop of Osma and Chancellor to King Fernando III of León (the section including Urraca was written between 1223 and 1226); then, in 1243, Rodrigo of Toledo's *Historia De Rebus Hispanie*. The strategies of both authors coincide in that they do not go as far as Lucas in denying Urraca her place in the dynasty of monarchs of León-Castile. In fact, Juan briefly concedes that Urraca did succeed to her father and did, in fact, rule, although in a lousy way³². Similarly, rather than completely obliterating her seventeenth years' reign, Rodrigo shrinks

³⁰ According to the *Chronicon Mundi*, ed. Falque (2003: 309, IV. 73), “regina Vrraca regere uolebat regnum paterno sine filio Adefonso”. The same misdeed had already been explicitly held against Teresa four decades before by the *Annales D. Alfonsi Portugallensium regis*, ed. Blocker (1966: 152): “mater eius [de Afonso Henriques] regina D. Tarasia [...] volens et ipsa superbe regnare loco maritis suis, amoto filio a negotio regni”. See Miranda (2009). In both texts, the illegitimate pretensions of the mothers are reported to cause deep trouble in the territory and lead to armed conflicts in which the sons will eventually achieve victory.

³¹ “Adefonsus [...] obsedit matrem suam reginam Vrraca in turribus Legionis, que post paucos dies filio se tradit”, *Chronicon Mundi*, ed. Falque, 2003: 310, IV. 74). This episode constitutes yet another variation of the motive of the imprisonment of the mother by the son that was briefly discussed above in note 15.

³² “Vrraca regina supradicta ipsi [Alfonso VI] successit in regno, quod postea pessime administravit”, *Chronica Latina Regum Castellae*, ed. Luis Charlo Brea (1997: 37).

it to four³³. However, this acknowledgment serves a very dubious purpose, since the chronicle proceeds to systematically disqualify Urraca's performance as a ruler. From the moment her father is buried³⁴, the kingdoms are shown to undergo a turmoil of internal dissensions that will only be appeased when the Queen is sieged in the towers of León by her son and agrees to abdicate in favour of him³⁵.

Juan de Soria and Rodrigo de Rada further concur to undermine Urraca's dignity by bringing out the issue of her sexual (mis)conduct. In an unprecedented decision, both clergymen chose to harp on the Queen's true or fictitious lovers – counts Pedro de Lara and Gomez de Candespina³⁶. Moreover, those liaisons are in both chronicles presented as adulterous, since they are said to take place in the course of the Queen's second marriage. The Bishop of Osma presents her affairs with the counts of Candespina and of Lara as successive³⁷. Once again, the Archbishop of Toledo proves craftier in his effort to enhance Queen Urraca's depravity and perfidy. He depicts her affairs

³³ “Mater autem eius [Alfonso VII] regnauerat post mortem Aldefonsi, qui cepit Toletum, Illlor annis”, *De rebus Hispanie*, ed. Juan Fernández Valverde (1987: 225, VII. 4).

³⁴ Rodrigo refers Alfonso VI's death and burial as the immediate antecedent of the episode of Pedro Ansures, the queen's tutor whom she deprives of his lands, in a whimsical act of tyrannical ungratefulness that will become emblematic of Urraca's incapacity to act as a just ruler and to fulfill the duties essential to the political status she had inherited from her father – see *De Rebus...*, ed. Fernández Valverde (1987: 220-221, VII. 1).

³⁵ Rex autem matrem suam reginam Vrracam obsedit in turribus Legionis, set [...] regina [...] filio resignavit, et intestinis discidiis iam sedatis cepit rex [...] potenciam Aragonum atemptare”, *De Rebus...*, ed. Fernández Valverde (1987: 223, VII. 3).

³⁶ The Queen's long-lasting relationship with Pedro de Lara, of whom she had several children, is a well established historical fact discretely acknowledged the coeval source *Historia compostelana*; the same sources, however, does not contain a single reference to an affair with Gomes de Candespina. See Reilly (1982: 46-47) and Ferreira (2010: 211, n. 18). For the refutation of the pseudo-reference to this affair in *Crónica Anónima de Sahágún*, see also Ferreira (2010: 211, n. 18). Since absolutely no documental corroboration has been found to support the existence of this liaison, recent studies tend to conclude that it was a late incorporation in Urraca's biography, lacking any historical base. José Maria Canal Sánchez-Pagín (2003) presents a well informed discussion of this question.

³⁷ The chronicle reports that “comite Gomicio, qui dictus est de Campo Spine, qui nimis familiaris erat regine ultra quam decuit [...] interfectus est. Ipsa uero regina recipit comitem Petrum de Lara [...] in nimiam familiaritatem suam, et ex ea dicitur suscepisse filium [...]”, ed. Charlo Brea (1997: 37).

with her powerful lovers as simultaneous and, beyond that, insinuates she plotted with the Counts against her estranged husband's and her young son's political and territorial interests³⁸. The conspiracies, treasons, and devastating rebellions that tinge with sombre hues the four years of reign the Archbishop ascribes to her are orchestrated by her lovers, each moved by the conviction that he would eventually become her husband³⁹.

Just as Lucas de Tuy, both Juan de Osma and Rodrigo de Toledo were interested in issues of political precedence between León and Castile which they understood from a patrilineal perspective. In their view, the character of Teresa de Portugal had therefore lost relevance, so they swept her under the rug of History with a couple of genealogical references. Not so with Portuguese texts, where her representation suffers an evolution akin to her sister's, but quite earlier. It is revealing of the particular problems of legitimacy faced by the Portuguese crown⁴⁰ that by the late twelfth century Teresa's debasement had

³⁸ The Queen's alleged double adultery takes place after her estrangement from her husband, mainly motivated by her unjust treatment of Pedro Ansures. The separation of the royal couple resulted in a strife for dominion over León and Castile that had vast repercussions, causing dissensions amongst the Castilian noblemen compelled to take sides and spreading conspiracy and violence throughout the kingdom. According to the Archbishop's chronicle, "Interea comes Gomicius ad regine connubium anelabat [...] set regina Vrraca clamoculo, non legitime, comiti Gomicio satisfecit"; "Interim autem quidam comes Petrus de Lara regine gratiam clandestine procabatur, et quod uoluit, impetrauit, ut exitus comprobauit" and "comes Petrus [...] ad regine conubium anelabat", ed. Fernández Valverde (1987: 221-222, VII. 2). When the king of Aragon invades the divided and debilitated Castile ("regnum discidio et cladibus uexaretur"), Urraca's lovers are entrusted with the command of the Castilian army, but they are defeated. Count Gómez is killed and Count Pedro flees to join the Queen at Burgos.

³⁹ The chronicle is very explicit about the Counts' motivations and actions: "unde et comes [Gómez], quasi de matrimonio iam securus, cepit agere bella regni et pro uiribus Aragonis propulsare"; "Petrus autem comes Lara cum familiare commercium cum regina indebite propalaret sperans illud matrimonio confirmare, omnibus preminebat, et cepit regis officium exercere et quasi dominus omnibus imperare", ed. Fernández Valverde (1987: 221-222, 223, VII. 2).

⁴⁰ The recent severing of Portugal from the dominion of León entailed the need of arguments in favour of the existence of the new kingdom that went beyond the mere genealogical adequacy of its first king, Afonso Henriques, and bound him to the territory he claimed as his by another kind of legitimating charisma, of a seemingly higher order: the right of conquest. Indeed, the right of conquest determined that a substantial part of Afonso Henriques's authority derived from his father's political and military action, and brought the need to stress the value of his paternal inheritance over the maternal one. For a perspective of how this

already begun. In fact, the *Annales D. Alfonsi Portugallensium regis*, dating from approximately 1195, accused her of wanting to rule instead of her son⁴¹. Within the vernacular historiographic revival, the *Primeira Crónica Portuguesa*, written before 1282⁴², contains information about Teresa that seems to have already been present in a previous source, now lost⁴³. There, we can see the Queen in league with her lover, the mighty count Fernando Peres de Trava, confronting her son in a battle for sovereignty over the territory of Portugal. She is defeated and imprisoned, but, still according to the *Primeira Crónica Portuguesa*, she keeps on plotting against the her son's interests, so that she eventually becomes the cause of his doom⁴⁴. Latter, in the first half of the fourteenth century, Count of Barcelos' *Livro de Linhagens* entangles her in a sordid erotic-political affair with both Fernando and his older brother, Bermudo⁴⁵. No earlier source known, either documental or narrative, validates

political strategy was ideologically supported by a project of writing probably conducted from Santa Cruz de Coimbra in the years immediately following Afonso Henriques's death, see Miranda (2010, p. 57, n. 76).

⁴¹ See note 31.

⁴² For the date of redaction of this old chronicle, see Filipe Alves Moreira (2008: 67-80) and Francisco Bautista (2010: §55).

⁴³ This lost source, already mentioned on note 15 in relation to the imprisonment of the mother by the son, a motive that permeates both Urraca's and Teresa's legendary biographies, is known to us through a partial sixteenth century copy made by the chronicler Cristovão Rodrigues Acenheiro. For a thorough elucidation of the textual relations in question, see Moreira (2011), published in the present volume.

⁴⁴ After her imprisonment, she sets a curse on her son Afonso Henriques – “quebrantadas sejam as tas pernas com ferros”, ed. Moreira (2008: 129) –, so that many years later, in Badajoz, while leaving the castle in a hurry, he bumps his leg against a hinge in the gateway, falls from his horse and is made prisoner by the King of León – see ed. Moreira (2008: 135-137). All of the elements concerning Queen Teresa featured by the *Primeira Crónica Portuguesa* will be passed on to Alfonso X's *Versión Crítica* of the *Estoria de Espanha*, redacted in 1282-1284.

⁴⁵ According to the *Livro de Linhagens*, “Dom Vermuu Pirez foi casado duas vezes: a primeira com a rainha dona Tareija de Portugal, mulher que foi do conde dom Hanrique. E este conde dom Fernam Pirez, seu irmão, lhe filhou esta rainha dona Tareija, e casou com ela sem Deus e sem direito [...]. Este dom Vermuu Pirez, veendo esto, casou com a filha do conde dom Hanrique e desta rainha dona Tareija [...] que ele criava em sa casa [...]”, ed. José Mattoso (1982: 176-177, 13A2). This corresponds to a double instance of a practice strictly forbidden by canonic law that Françoise Héritier (1989: 100) defines as incest by contiguity: indirect contact of close kin mediated by sexual relations with the same partner. In the situation

this tale of incest⁴⁶; but it undoubtedly comes in handy to corroborate the wanton nature of yet another woman who, against the will of her son, dared to affirm her right to rule the territory that had been lawfully conferred to her by her father⁴⁷. What a sad fate for the matriarch of a nation!

As for Urraca's fall from queen to harlot⁴⁸, it did not yet satisfy the ill will of the ensuing late thirteenth and fourteenth century vernacular historiography. King Alfonso el Sabio's *Versión Crítica* of the *Estoria de España* (1282-1284), makes sure not to let Urraca stray from the path of doom. Queen Urraca's reign in this chronicle corresponds mainly to a translation of the corresponding part of Rodrigo de Rada's *De rebus Hispanie*. However, the baseline text was interpolated with two episodes that add to the Queen's wanton image. The first one is a colourful account of Urraca's intimacy with Pedro de Lara and of the

above, there is incest between two brothers and between mother and daughter. The incorporation of the above episode in the official *Crónica de 1419* contributed to endowed with authority the foul image of Queen Teresa.

⁴⁶ J. Mattoso (2006: 31-32), however, seems to give credit to this tale of double incest. His opinion takes into account the heavy penance the Queen and the two Trava brothers seem to have paid around 1122, which included the expiatory foundation of the important monastery of Sobrado, and a pilgrimage to the Holy Land by Fernão and Bermudo, in latter years.

⁴⁷ The *Chronica Adefonsi Imperatoris* states that her father "dotavit eam magnifice dans Portugalensem terram iure hereditarium", ed. Antonio Maya Sánchez (1990: 184, l. 73). Accordingly, in the *Primeira Crónica Portuguesa*, when Afonso Henriques disputes her power on the grounds that he was being expelled from the land of his father – "vós me queredes sacar da terra de meu padre", ed. Moreira (2008: 127) –, Teresa claims that "Minha he a terra e minha seera ca meu padre el rey don Affonso ma leixou", ed. Moreira (2008: 127-128). This exchange shows that, by the time the *Primeira Crónica Portuguesa* was written, there was an issue of legitimacy regarding the proprietorship of the territory. While Teresa considers herself to be in full possession of the land, the paternal right invoked by Afonso Henriques considers that the women's role is merely to legitimate the transmission of the land from one man to another, in the case of Portugal from Teresa's father to her husband, upon whose death the land should become the possession of the couple's son. The legitimacy by right of conquest (see note 40) is yet another factor that historically contributed to make the proprietorship issue over Portuguese territory unclear, but its relevance in the formulation above seems to be negligible.

⁴⁸ I half borrow this expression from T. Martin (2006), who, focusing on Urraca's bond with San Isidoro de León, entitles the first chapter of her book "From patron to harlot: how did Queen Urraca get here from there?".

imprisonment of the lovers by her aggrieved son Alfonso⁴⁹. It tells how Alfonso fearing that Pedro de Lara, whose power as the queen's consort had grown out of proportion, might deprive him of the kingdom⁵⁰, planned the removal of the ruling couple with the aid of some faithful nobleman. So, one evening, he broke into the Queen's abode, where she and her consort had just had dinner, and took them both. The Queen, imprisoned in the fatidic towers of León, is bereaved of her Count⁵¹, who goes to exile, and of her Crown, since her son, whom the nobility of the two kingdoms had already declared king, assumes the government. Patriarchal order is thus restored in León and Castile.

One might anticipate that Queen Urraca, thus stripped of the Jezebelian aura of lust and power that made her so formidable a character, would be discretely ignored by the vernacular chronicler, just as she had been brushed

⁴⁹ For this interpolation, the alfonsine chronicle follows a lost source that also circulated in Portugal and was partially transcribed in the XVI century by the chronicler Cristovão Rodrigues Acenheiro – see note 15 and F. A. Moreira (2011).

⁵⁰ “E teniéndolo todos [the noblemen of Castile and León] por bien alçaron rrey al sobredicho don Alfonso [Raimundez], mas contrallávalo su madre la rreyna e el conde don Pedro de Lara. El don rrey Alfonso, temiéndolo-se quel deseredaría del reyno el conde don Pedro, fabló com sus vasallos et díxo-les: «Cómmo podría aver derecho de mi padrasto?» E Gutierrez Fernandes de Castro le dixo: «Señor, prendelde [...] e avn a vuestra madre con el, e sy non nunca seredes señor de la tierra» [...] E aquella noche [...] finco el conde Pedro solo, muy segurado com la rreyna doña Vrraca. E [...] pues que ovieron çenado, entró el rrey don Alfonso por el palaçio, e priso luego a su madre, después a su padrasto, e echó la madre en las Torres de León. E el conde don Pedro, cuydando a ser muerto, fízole pleito e omenage que nunca tornase en su madre e qué saldría luego de la su tierra”, *Crónica de veinte reyes*, ed. Cesar Hernández Alonso (1991: 256-257, XI. 4). This episode, mainly the dialogs, presents remarkable similarities with the strife for power between Teresa and her son in the *Primeira Crónica Portuguesa*. There, after being defeated by his mother and her consort's army, Afonso Henriques is advised by his tutor and manages to reverse the result of the battle: “E Soeiro Meendez lhe disse: «Nom fezestes sisso que aa batalha fostes sem mim. Mais tornade-vos comigo, e prenderemos vosso padrasto e vossa madre co elle» [...] E ell disse: «Deus agisse que seja assim» [...] E tornou-se entonces com el a batalha, e venceo-a, e prendeo seu padrasto e sua madre. E o conde cuidou aa seer morto, e fez-lhe preito e menajem que nunca entrasse em Purtugal. E disi foi-se pera terra d'ultra mar. E Affonso Anrriquiz emtom meteo sa madre em ferros” ed. Moreira (2008: 128-129).

⁵¹ This expression, “her count”, referring to Fernão Peres de Trava, Queen Teresa's consort (“regina una cum suo comite”), is used in the *Vita Tellonis*, ed. Nascimento (1998: 58), a mid twelfth century hagiographic text from Santa Cruz de Coimbra which presents quite an encomiastic portrait of the first Portuguese queen. In that text, it bears a purely descriptive meaning, with no disparaging connotation whatsoever.

aside by his Latin predecessors after her capitulation in the towers of León. Indeed, this expectation proves to be false: Alfonso X' *Versión Crítica* did not see fit to leave the Queen be. The second of the above mentioned interpolated episodes, which concerns Urraca's death, proceeds to show her slide into utter degradation.

Earlier texts tend to be extremely vague about the circumstances of Queen Urraca's passing⁵². The *Historia Compostelana* reports her death took place in the Tierra de Campus on March 9, 1226, without further details or comments⁵³; the *Chronica Adefonsi Imperatoris* notes the date, the place of her burial and the duration of her reign as a starting point for its rendering of Alfonso VI's ruling times⁵⁴. Oddly enough, the Latin thirteenth century chronicles do not mention her death at all⁵⁵. As far as extant texts can document, the cause of her death was disclosed only by the concise twelfth century *Chronicon*

⁵² For a study of the representation of the death of Queen Urraca in historiography and iconology up to the eighteenth century, see Beatriz Antón (2005).

⁵³ During the course of a journey, the archbishop of Compostela was informed that Queen Urraca "VIº Idus martii debita natura in Iª.C.LXIII. in Campanie partibus persoluerat", ed. Falque (1988: 383, II. 80). And that is all the *Historia...* will report on her death.

⁵⁴ "Urraca regina in era CLXIV post milesimam, postquam regnavit annis XVI, mensibus VIII, diebus VII, idus martii mortua est et sepulta Legionis ciuitate cum patribus suis honorifice in sepulchris regnum", ed. Maya Sánchez (1990: 149, I. 1). This statement is not accurate, since her father and mother, Alfonso VI and Queen Constanza, were buried at Sahágún.

⁵⁵ The major historiographic works from the first half of the thirteenth century, *Chronicon Mundi*, *Historia Regum Castelae* and *De Rebus Hispanie*, pass her death under the utmost silence. One may infer that a mention to her death during her son's reign would call unwelcome attention to the discrepant short length of her own ruling years. However, in the *Liber miraculorum beatissimi Isidori* (at the end of chapter 25, where it is question of the robbing of the riches of the Saint by the King of Aragon and Count Henry of Portugal, with the consent, if not the direct participation, of the Queen), Lucas de Tuy briefly refers her death in an expiatory context. He informs of her dispositions to be buried in León along her forefathers, but once again silences the time and circumstances of her passing: "Reginam etiam Urraca tanti supradicti piacula gratia expiandi [...]. Praetera regina [Urraca] supradicta multorum sanctorum reliquias de diuersis Mundi partibus fecit studiosissime congregari, et in capsis argenteis et eburneis fecit honorifice collocari: eidem Ecclesiae regali munificentia multa contulit predia, et in ipsa Ecclesia [of Sanyo Isidoro] cum Patribus suis sibi fecit parari, dum adhuc uiueret, sepulturam". This passage, omitted in the sixteenth century translation by Juan de Robles, is edited by Beatriz Antón (2005: 176). It was also used to complement chapter 81 of the romanced text of Luca's chronicle, *Crónica de España*, ed. Julio Puyol (1926: 400).

Compostellanum that states she died giving birth to an adulterine child⁵⁶. Whether this information is true or false, it was kept out of historiographic renderings.

Alfonso el Sabio's *Versión Crítica* does not mention childbirth, but manages to impute the Queen a far more dishonourable death⁵⁷. The chronicle reports that Alfonso eventually made peace with his mother and set her free, but she soon started to make war against him and supported her military campaigns with riches taken from monasteries and churches. So, one day, as she was leaving the church of San Isidoro de León charged with the sacred treasure she was stealing, God struck her, breaking her body in two on the threshold while she had one foot inside and the other outside the church. The tombstone laid over her remains broke while it was being set, and nobody ever managed to mend it⁵⁸.

⁵⁶ The concise rendering of Urraca's reign in *Chronicon Compostellanum* is adamant: "Regnauit autem tyrannice et muliebriter X et septem annos et apud castrum Saldanii VI idus martii in era MCLXIII in partu adulterini fillii uitam infelice finiuit", ed. Falque (1983: 82). Though history does not acknowledge her a husband at the time of her death, Alfonso X's *versión crítica*, following an earlier lost source, refers to Count Pedro de Lara as Alfonso VII's stepfather (see note 50).

⁵⁷ Some of the information Alfonso X adds concerning the Queen's death was probably also included in the above mentioned lost source partly transcribed by Cristóvão Rodrigues Acenheiro. See the last section of Moreira (2011), published in the present volume.

⁵⁸ "Ella [...] tomó quanto thesoro falló, e saliendo ella com todo aquel thesoro que leuaua por la puerta de la iglesia, teniendo avun el vn pie dentro e outro fuera, quebro por medio del cuerpo e assi murió la rreyna doña Vrraca, madre del Emperador. E soterráronla y luego, e abrieron el luzillo de una laude e quebró aquella allaude luego por medio, e nunca quiso Dios que se mas çeerrase el munumento [...]", ed. Cesar Hernández Alonso (1991: 259, XII. 2). This effabulated version of Queen Urraca's death seem to be the result of a composition of punitive episodes related with the church of Santo Isidoro which are reported by Lucas de Tuy in the *Liber miraculorum*.... On the one hand, the story of the death of the horses that count Henry of Portugal had used in the pillage of the Saint's treasure's: struck by God's vengeance, "equi ventris rupti medio perierunt" Antón (2005: 176, n. 38, chap. 27). On the other hand, the death of a Queen Teresa – wife of Fernando II of León mistakenly identified by Beatriz Antón (2005: 177) with Teresa of Portugal –, who died painfully in childbirth because she wanted to throw the clerics out of Santo Isidoro: "Qualiter Regina Tharasia, eo quod persequeretur Canonicos Beati Isidori, uentris ruptione mortua est", Antón (2005: 177, chap. 45). The redactor of the lost source used by the alfonsine text must certainly have been aware of the tradition of Urraca's passing preserved in the *Chronicon Compostellano*, since the death of Queen Urraca reported in the *Versión Crítica* interweaves two vectors of sense: the offenses to the saint and the death

What human judgment could condemn her more than the ignominy of having suffered on her flesh the avenging wrath of God? What would disgrace her more than being forever denied a sound grave by His supreme will?

Her shameful crime and punishment were, from then on, handed down by historiography, and that was the image of Queen Urraca which posterity received and remembered⁵⁹. A wild and impious woman, dragged from Queen to harlot, and then cast into Hell.

It is interesting to notice that the Portuguese *Crónica de 1344*, by king Dinis illegitimate son Pedro Afonso, Count of Barcelos, chose to conform the account of Queen Urraca's reign, namely her death, to this alfonsine version, even though its main source for the corresponding section, the *Crónica de Castilla*, did not incorporate it. The new redactor reported faithfully the facts told by the version he had chosen. Indeed, there was no need for further derogation: the process of demonization of Queen Urraca was fully complete. Still, though the redactor added no new mischief to Queen Urraca's turbid life, he could not refrain from a few scorching judgemental comments on her character and the motivation for her deeds. He calls her a devilish and over proud woman, "mulher endiabrada e cheia de soberva"⁶⁰ and makes explicit that the sin behind her divine punishment was not the theft of the holy riches itself, but the ill-use of her pride commanded her to put those riches to⁶¹. That use, which the redactor

in childbirth, which culminate in the image of the impious ruptured body of the Queen laying on the threshold of the church of Santo Isidoro.

⁵⁹ See Beatriz Antón (2005).

⁶⁰ See I. B. Dias (2001)

⁶¹ "E chegou aa cidade de Leon e demandou aos monges de sancto Ysidro que lhe fezessem ajuda. E elles disseron que non tiinham que lhe dar. [...] E ella, *como molher endiabrada chea de soberva*, entrou dentro con suas donas e tomou quanto achou. E, en saindo con todo pella porta da egreja e teendo hũu pee fora e outro dentro, quebrou per meo do corpo e morreo *maa morte*. *E dizem que esto non foy por o tesouro que ela tomava, mas porque o queria pera maaos husos e o degastar en desonrra de Deus, ca deus mais se paga da alma de hũu justo que de todos os metaaes que son sobre a terra. Mas, por que ella cometeo grande soberva, deulhe Deus muy forte pãedença*", *Crónica de 1344*, ed. Cintra (1990: 207, DCC). The expressions in italics have no correspondent in the alfonsine text.

of *Crónica de 1344* declares offensive to God, “en desonrra de Deus”, had been made plain a few lines before: to feed the army she had assembled to fight her son and put her back in the throne. That was, after all her main guilt: not to be willing to relinquish her power into the hands of her son⁶². What the chronicle redacted under the patronage of Pedro de Barcelos shows is that, well into the fourteenth century, Queen Urraca still represented a phantasmatic menace to the masculine hegemonic political control over the territory of “España”.

Such as they stand before us, Urraca and Teresa stand not for themselves but for an entire tradition of feminine pre-eminence, outlawed by the ideology of lineage but nevertheless imprinted in the memory of Iberia. Eroded by a biting silence and distorted by the moral abuse of self-serving patriarchal righteousness, their representation still holds and attests a solid resistance to oblivion. They are the resilient cultural engram⁶³ of a forsaken Iberian paradigm of feminine power⁶⁴.

⁶² See Ferreira (2009).

⁶³ An “engram” (medical term coined in 1908), is a hypothetical change in neural tissue postulated in order to account for persistence of memory. The expression “cultural engram” has been used to signify “a trace of cultural memory that persists in symbolic cultural materials”, Marc Maufort and Caroline de Wagter (eds.) (2008: 12).

⁶⁴ On this archaic pattern of feminine pre-eminence, see Ferreira (2011).

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