THE CHANCELLOR'S CHAINS: EX-VOTOS AND MARIAN DEVOTION IN THE *RIMADO DE PALACIO*

Ryan D. Giles
Indiana University, Bloomington
rdgiles@indiana.edu

Resumen
El propósito de este artículo es analizar los poemas de Pero López de Ayala en el *Rimado de Palacio* que se refieren a la encarcelación del canciller en Portugal, e incluyen plegarias de liberación, además de votos en los cuales el poeta promete visitar santuarios marianos para venerar a la Virgen. En esta parte del libro, López de Ayala utiliza la imagen de cadenas, no solo como un símbolo tradicional de la prisión del mundo pecaminoso, sino también en el contexto de su encarcelación real y con la intención de presentar este objeto material como un exvoto. Por lo tanto, estos aspectos de la sección mariana en el *Rimado de Palacio* se pueden comparar con textos recogidos en las colecciones de milagros y sermones que recordaban la intervención de la Virgen en la liberación de presos, la realización de votos de peregrinaje, y la presentación de exvotos. Por un lado, el canciller expresa su devoción personal desde una perspectiva autobiográfica; por otro, evoca la experiencia colectiva de peregrinos pasados y presentes en los santuarios de Montserrat, Guadalupe y otros lugares sagrados. Al mismo tiempo, el poeta asocia sus cadenas con las de San Pedro, y apela a la unidad del papado y la Iglesia.

Palabras clave
Devoción mariana, *Rimado de Palacio*, Pero López de Ayala, cultura material, milagros, votos, exvotos, peregrinaje

Abstract
The purpose of this article is to analyse poems in the Pero López de Ayala's *Rimado de Palacio* that refer to the Chancellor's imprisonment in Portugal, and include pleas for deliverance as well as vows in which the poet promises to visit Marian shrines to venerate the Virgin. In this part of the book, López de Ayala employs the image of chains, not only as a traditional symbol of imprisonment in

a sinful world, but also in the context of the poet's real imprisonment and the intention to present this material object as a votive offering. Aspects of the Marian section of the *Rimado de Palacio* can therefore be compared to texts found in collections of miracles and sermons which recorded the Virgin's intervention in the deliverance of prisoners, the fulfilment of pilgrimage vows, and the presentation of ex-votos. The Chancellor on the one hand expresses his personal devotion, from an autobiographic perspective; and on the other he evokes the collective experience of past and present pilgrims at the shrines of Montserrat, Guadalupe and other holy places. At the same time, the poet associates his chains with those of St. Peter, and appeals for the unity of the papacy and the Church.

Key words
Marian devotion, *Rimado de Palacio*, Pero López de Ayala, material culture, miracles, vows, votive offerings, pilgrimage

In the summer of 1385 João I of Portugal prepared to defend his kingdom from the invading Castilian army of Juan I. Prior to the battle of Ajubarrota the Portuguese king famously made a vow to Mary, promising to construct a monastery in honor of the Virgin should his outnumbered army be granted victory (Vieira da Silva and Redol, 2007, p. 13). The subsequent encounter proved disastrous for the invaders, who were forced to carry out exhausting maneuvers in the heat of the day, and whose advance was frustrated by volleys of longbowmen and a well-planned defensive position. A triumphant João I, soon after, fulfilled his vow to the Virgin by starting work on Santa Maria da Vitória in the newly founded town of Batalha. Thousands had been slaughtered in the battle and its aftermath, and among the noblemen taken hostage was a future Chancellor of Castile, Pero López de Ayala.

López de Ayala was imprisoned for years, awaiting payment of a hefty ransom, in the fortified towns of Leiria and Óbidos, where he managed to complete a treatise on falconry and wrote a series of poems dedicated to Mary. Over a decade later, after returning to his family estate at Quejana in the Basque province of Álava, the Chancellor included these verses in his *Rimado de Palacio*. This part of his book has received comparatively less attention than other, more well-known passages which expose societal ills and threats to the court as well as the Church. To date the most extensive study of López de Ayala's lyrics has been carried out by Germán Orduna. The Argentine critic noticed how the poetic voice in this section of the *Rimado* moves from first-person verses written by a prisoner to stanzas

in which the Chancellor looks back retrospectively on his experience of captivity (Orduna, 1998, pp. 91-92). Marian poems written during his imprisonment include repeated vows to go on pilgrimage to Santa Maria la Blanca ("prometí"), the shrines of Guadalupe and Montserrat ("te loaré / [...] vesitaré / [...] e allí te seruiré / [...] graçias te daré"), and to honor a reliquary owned by his family and believed to contain a hair from the Virgin's head (López de Ayala, 1987, sts. 760a, 800b, 870c, 757).[1] Another scholar, Soledad Silva, has suggested that this final pledge refers to a vow that was fulfilled by the freed López de Ayala. Together with his wife, the Chancellor commissioned an altarpiece depicting the life of Mary and her Son and had it placed in a funerary chapel at San Juan de Quejana that could have been meant to house the "Virgen del Cabello" reliquary.[2] López de Ayala and other family members are shown praying before the family's patron saints Blaise and Thomas Aquinas, who appear as mediators together with the Queen of Heaven. Drawing on the insights of Orduna and Silva, the present study will examine recurring votive imagery in López de Ayala's prison lyrics. We will see how the Chancellor evokes chains and irons as material and figurative objects: they bind the author during his incarceration, but are loosed through the intervention of the Virgin, who helps to bring about his ransom. In this way I will consider how these objects can be understood as ex-votos pledged to Marian shrines and come to symbolize personal as well as collective notions of Christian redemption.

There has been some disagreement over whether, as Silva and others have argued, the altarpiece for the chapel at San Juan de Quejana —which formed part of a Dominican convent that had been established there by the Chancellor's father, Fernán Pérez de Ayala— was created expressly to house the family's reliquary. In any case, the *Rimado* contains an intriguing vow to make offerings to the "imajen de la Virgen del cau[ello] muy santo, / Tú me ayuda e me libra en este grant espanto," "que pueda con seruiçio, sienpre gualardonar / a uos e al monesterio, e

[1] All quotations of the poem are from the critical edition of Orduna (1987), cited by stanza number with letters to indicate particular verses. I am grateful to one of the anonymous readers for this journal, who reviewed an earlier draft of this article, read it with great care, and made a number of helpful suggestions.

[2] Scholars have not been able to determine definitely whether or not the chapel was designed for the reliquary. For a summary of arguments for and against this theory, see Melero-Moneo (2001, p. 35, n. 6). For a study of the efficacy ascribed to representational votive offerings, see Freedberg. Smaller pictoral ex-votos could also be found at popular shrines, painted on wood or other media, sometimes depicting the miraculous event connected to a pilgrim's vow. These seem to have been uncommon in Spain until later in the sixteenth century (Christian, 1981, p. 85).

muchas graçias dar: / lo que mi padre fizo muy más acresçentar" (López de Ayala, 1987, sts. 880ab, 886bcd). At stake is what Hugo van der Velden has called a "votive complex" consisting of the words of praise and promises offered to the Virgin, together with a series of actions, spaces dedicated to the cult, as well as material objects provided for her veneration (Velden, 2000, p. 420). Historians have shown that other paintings from the period similar to the one created for the convent chapel were sometimes donated as ex-votos and also depicted their high-profile donors venerating patron saints.[3] They functioned in this way as visual, material expressions of gratitude for prayers and petitions that had been answered and granted. As in the case of the Portuguese king, contributing in different ways to the building of Marian sanctuaries could also be understood as a votive act.

Silva points out that, prior to López de Ayala's imprisonment in Portugal, the future chancellor had already donated particular objects to the convent that might have been intended as ex-votos: specifically listed in the will of the author's father are some "candeleros [...] y una cruz con piedras toda de plata dorado" (Silva, 2000, p. 776). The "Virgen del Cabello" relic had almost certainly been preserved there since 1375 (Melero-Moneo, 2001, p. 45, n. 28), ten years prior to the battle of Aljubarrota, having been first acquired by the Chancellor's great uncle, Cardinal Pedro Gómez Barroso, who had served in the Papal court at Avignon during the previous century (Martín Ansón, 2005, pp. 145-48). Further evidence of Pero López de Ayala's intentions to offer ex-votos to the Virgin Mary, reminiscent of his bejeweled donations to the convent, can be found once again in the *Rimado*. Writing from his prison cell at Óbidos, the poet vows to one day present "joyas e donas" to the Toledan image of Santa María la Blanca (López de Ayala, 1987, 760d).

Scholars have shown how earlier first-person allusions to imprisonment in literary texts such as Juan Ruiz's fourteenth-century *Libro de buen amor* (Ruiz, 1988, sts. 1-10) relate to a Latin prayer known as the *Ordo commendationis animae*. They find that such petitions are not necessarily indicative of actual incarceration, but must be understood first and foremost as a conventional way of representing the soul's figurative deliverance from chains of sin.[4] López de Ayala draws on this same tradition of metaphorical captivity (López de Ayala, 1987, sts. 782-792), but

[3] For example, Silva cites a number of analogous paintings made for the chapels of aristocrats and royalty (Silva, 2000, p. 763).

[4] Critics have related this imagery to a popular narrative prayer found in a number of hagiographical and heroic works written during the Middle Ages (Baños Vallejo, 1994), including *Milagros de Nuestra Señora* (Berceo, 1985, sts. 500-527) and *Poema de Fernán González* (1981, sts. 105-110).

does so in a way that relates to his own experience as a prisoner (Orduna, 1998, p. 92). The Chancellor, in his Marian *plegarias* and *cantigas*, expresses how it feels to be bound by real chains and irons, and describes the misery of his confinement in Portugal at length. The poet moves back and forth from the perspective of imprisonment to his later point of view as a freed prisoner:

> Monserrad, Guadalupe e allí te seruiré,
> alçando a Ti las manos, muchas graçias te daré.
> Después de estas saludes aquí fui escriuir,
> a la Virgen María, que sienpre amé seruir. (sts. 757c-758b)
>
> Otrosí prometí luego mi rromería
> a la imajen blanca de la Virgen María
> que estaua en Toledo, e allí me ofreçía
> con mis joyas e donas, segunt que yo deuía. (st. 760)
>
> [...] yo iua padesçer
> en prisión tan dura que omne non podría creer.
> Yo estaua ençerrado en una casa escura. (sts. 767c–768a)
>
> Me dexaron oluidado en una prisión escura,
> do cuidado e tristura me fallaron muy penado. (st. 774ab)
>
> Tú me libra, Señor, destas duras prisiones,
> en que ha muy grant tienpo que paso enojado (st. 790cd)
>
> prometí de tener e ir en rromería. (st. 800b)
>
> por ende en mis cuidados e mi prisión atán dura,
> vesitar la tu figura fue mi talante primero.
> Señora, por quanto supe tus acorros, en Ti espero,
> e a tu casa en Guadalupe, prometo de ser rromero. (sts. 802c–803)
>
> en estas grandes priesas, mostró su caridat:
> libróme de prisión e de la crüeldat. (st. 808bc)
>
> Sienpre fue mi deuoçión las sus casas vesitar. (st. 869a)
>
> voto fago desde agora de te ir seruir allí (st. 872b)

As can be seen in these verses, López de Ayala on the one hand poignantly evokes his long and harsh imprisonment through repeated pleas to the Virgin in

the present tense and the *aquí* of his jail cell, vowing to give thanks at the earlier-mentioned Marian shrines located in Castile, Extremadura, Catalonia and the Basque Country; and on the other indicates that vows to go on pilgrimage have now been fulfilled and attributes his deliverance to the Mother of God, whose intercession, he believes, made possible a successful ransom. This combination of perspectives also characterizes descriptions of chains and irons binding him in the past and present, as he seems to be describing these material objects before and after they have been loosed: "Yo estaua [...] / trauado de una cadena asaz grande e dura," "ca yago muy penado, / en fierros e cadenas e carçel ençerrado," "Tú me libra, Señor, desta dura cadena" (López de Ayala, 1987, 768ab, 782, 789c). This can be contrasted with the poetry of earlier pilgrims who commemorated their journeys to specific Marian shrines after the fact. For example, the Archpriest of Hita includes in his poem a "ditado" that he once offered at the mountain sanctuary of Santa María del Vado (Ruiz, 1988, sts. 1043-1048). Unlike the Chancellor's *Rimado*, his *Libro de buen amor* only refers to fictional chains (Ruiz, 1988, sts. 1043-1048).

In keeping with countless other freed prisoners and pilgrims during the Middle Ages and beyond, it is likely that López de Ayala physically brought his real chains and irons to Mary as votive offerings, in addition to memorializing his vows together with the objects themselves in the *Rimado de Palacio*. This practice can be seen in a sermon given at Montserrat during the fifteenth century urging pilgrims to contemplate the many diverse ex-votos left for the Virgin, to consider the story of healing or deliverance behind each object, from crutches to wax figures of human body parts. The homily recalls how past visitors to the Catalan mountain top also prayed to Mary in their time of need and, promising to serve her at this site, experienced her miraculous intervention in their lives. The preacher at one point asks his listeners to imagine these earlier pilgrims, "con sus ofrendas al cuello," emphasizing the many who, "habiendo caído cautivos [...] por ella han sido milagrosamente librados [...] vienen aquí con sus grillones de hierro, manoplas y cadenas para ofrecerlas a la celestial Señora [...] muchas argollas y cadenas, grilletes y manillas y demás instrumentos de horror de diversas personas milagrosamente libertadas de la cautividad y la cárcel" (Vizuete Mendoza, 2013, p. 267). Similarly López de Ayala depicts Montserrat as a place where, "En una sierra alta la santa eglesia vi / [...]; en mis grandes prisiones, allí me prometí," "do ya vi tu imajen e figura" (López de Ayala, 1987, 870ac, 872c). It seems probable that, by the time he was completing his *Rimado*, the Chancellor had brought an iron or a chain, perhaps wrapped around his neck, to leave at this shrine as an individual token that would then become part of the multitude of tributes to the Virgin's power. By describing the hardness, size, and enclosing

heaviness of the metal that bound him in Portugal, the poet asks his audience to consider its materiality as part of a larger, collective devotion to Mary at this and other sanctuaries, in a way that is similar to the later Montserrat preacher.[5]

Over the course of the fifteenth century the practice of liberated prisoners leaving the instruments of their captivity at Marian and other shrines continued to increase, as clerics identified a growing number of pilgrims who arrived with stories of their escape and ransom from Muslim captors. A prominent example of this tradition can still be seen at the Toledan monastery of San Juan de los Reyes, founded by the Catholic Monarchs in the 1470s. The exterior of this building is festooned, according to instructions given by Isabel I, with the manacles, chains, and shackles of devotees who were freed from captivity in the kingdom of Granada. In a recent study of early modern descriptions and literary allusions to ex-votos, Tyler Fisher has aptly called such accumulations of these objects an "anonymous [...] teeming profusion [...], a demonstrative array" of objects, all of which point to the individual "backstories" of devotees (Fisher, 2013, pp. 4, 11).

A later example —comparable to the homily pronounced by the previously-cited medieval preacher from Montserrat— can be found in a seventeenth-century text by the Franciscan Diego de Arce:

> Yd, os ruego, en espíritu, hijos de la Yglesia, peregrinando a Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe, de Monserrate, de Lorito en Italia, y a otros santuarios assí semejantes, [...] levantad los ojos, y veréys colgando del techo y de las paredes gran multitud de grandes cirios, mortajas, cadenas, pedaços de navíos, muletas, cabeças, piernas, braços, cuerpos, hechos unos de cera, otros de oro y plata, y otras offrendas desta manera. (Diego de Arce, 1606, fol. 265r).

These and other sources provide evidence of a cultural phenomenon, already well attested during the time of López de Ayala, of released prisoners making vows and leaving votive offerings at particular Marian shrines.[6]

Moreover, the Chancellor's text corresponds in important ways with eyewitness accounts of this phenomenon recorded in early Spanish collections of reported miracles. These were held at different shrines, continually added to over the centuries, and eventually printed and reprinted during the early modern period in texts like that of Jaime Prades (1596). The tradition of compiling these *Libelli miraculo-*

[5] Alternatively, he might have donated the weight of one of these instruments of his imprisonment in the form of wax, a practice that was not uncommon during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (López de Coca Castañer, 2013, p. 87; Christian, 1989, p. 95).

[6] González Modino (1989) has observed that the Virgin of Guadalupe first became widely known as the patron of freed captives during the fourteenth century.

rum can be traced back to the writings of Augustine, who insisted that the clergy should keep a written record of authenticated miracles experienced by the faithful (Augustine, 1954, pp. 445-46). According to age-old teachings of the Church, votive offerings had two approved functions: as "things offered to God or the saints in some trouble or crisis in life," and as "things presented in gratitude for a recovery or deliverance without having been previously promised" (Jarrett, 1912, p. 509). We have seen how these practices are conveyed in the *Rimado*, as the poem includes prayerful offers to serve the Virgin made prior to the poet's release from captivity, the fulfilment of his promises, and accompanying expressions of gratitude.

Over the course of the Middle Ages the procedures for how to welcome visitors to shrines and how to add new miracle accounts to existing collections became well established in Iberia, as elsewhere in Europe. On the Peninsula, this tradition dates back to the tenth century when pilgrims arriving at Compostela would relate miracles to be recorded at the shrine (Ward, 1987, p. 110). Juan Carlos Vizuete Mendoza has studied manuscripts and later printed editions from Guadalupe, Montserrat and Peña de Francia which attest to specific miracles reported by pilgrims, beginning in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. He finds that pilgrims arriving at these sanctuaries were expected to relate orally what they considered to be the miraculous event that resulted in their restored health or liberation. According to Vizuete Mendoza, a local clergyman was given the responsibility to "examinar y escribir los milagros. Éste pedirá pruebas de su autenticidad: [...] pruebas materiales, desde marcas corporales a los grillos de los cautivos. Luego lo inscribirá en el libro" (Vizuete, 2013, p. 269). This suggests that when the Chancellor initially offers his verses to the Virgin, "rresçibe estos versos," (López de Ayala, 1987, 755c), the poet is anticipating his arrival at a sanctuary where he will be asked to relate his experience of captivity and release, likely offering his chains as tangible proof of the event. María Eugenia Díaz and Gerardo Rodríguez have outlined the structure of the first codex of the *Historia y milagros de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe* (BNM 1176), which contains miracles dating back to 1407, the year of the Chancellor's death (Díaz, 2008, pp. 246-48; Rodríguez, 2008, pp. 2-4). Entries identify pilgrims by name and place of origin, relate stories of how they were held captive and freed from their chains, record prayers made to the Virgin. Formulas used in these records correspond with what Orduna calls "el lapso que va desde el cautiverio [...] hasta el momento de la redacción" in López de Ayala's autobiographic *plegarias* and *cantigas* (Orduna, 1987, p. 46). It seems likely that López de Ayala's Marian texts reflect and participate in some of the conventions and aims of such miracle records. His perspective not only parallels that of the captive and the pilgrim, but also the recorder

whose task was to reframe personal experiences and material proofs to be read or retold in sermons: "se realiza mediante la lectura pública de algunos de los milagros asentados en los libros o, como vimos en el caso de Montserrat, en la predicación a los peregrinos" (Vizuete, 2013, p. 271).

In recent years a number of scholars have shown how the study of these kinds of experiences and proofs can provide crucial insights about medieval culture. For instance, the historian Simon Yarrow has examined how the *libelli miraculorum* sought to dispel possible doubts and in this way continually reaffirm belief in the power of the Mary and other saints venerated at pilgrimage sites, along with the efficacy of relics like that of the Virgen del Cabello. Yarrow points out that these books were used to remember and "hold many fragments and threads together in arguments for belief [...] in the face of potential uncertainty [...]. Miracle narratives were compressed meditations on doubt that piled on rhetorical pressure so that their audiences might absorb prescribed beliefs" (Yarrow, 2011, p. 53). I would suggest that López de Ayala's Marian poetry has a similar function. In the midst of commemorating the Virgin's redemptive intervention in his life, the Chancellor at one point confesses to readers that he remains plagued by the same despair that oppressed him in his prison cell back in Portugal,

> do cuidado e tristura me fallaron muy penado;
> [...] nunca se parten de mí; /
> desde estonçe fasta aquí, dellos ando acompañado.
>
> Tristura e grant cuidado son conmigo todavía, /
> pues plazer e alegría así me han desanparado.
>
> Dellos ando aconpañado en mi triste coraçón;
> sienpre e en toda sazón. (López de Ayala, 1987, 774b-776b)

He deals with this sadness by redoubling his devotions to the Virgin and returning to his pilgrimage vows, again recollecting his liberation.

Part of this process involves what Yarrow calls "the weaving of personal memories" and "acts of giving, of remembering and of projecting ones desires" onto objects like the Chancellor's chains and irons from his time as a prisoner (Yarrow, 2011, pp. 58, 62). Ex-votos were, in other words, metonymic parts of (and connections between) a person's old and new life, but also what Caroline Walker Bynum calls, in a recent study of material culture during the Middle Ages, "physical presences" that gave "something of the healed self back to God" (Bynum, 2011, p. 112). Christopher Wood has similarly described the typical ex-voto, often a

representational offering or "chains and manacles and other relics of a crisis," as a material object that "registers an autobiographical impulse" (Wood, 2011, p. 226). Significantly, such a connection between votive objects and life-telling can be found in a Spanish narrative that is roughly contemporaneous to that of the Chancellor, Leonor López de Córdoba's *Memorias*. As Frank Domínguez has shown, the physical chains that bound López de Córdoba's family in the shipyards of Seville are not only associated with ex-votos, but also a rosary of prayers in which she calls on the Virgin to intervene in her life. In addition to the autobiographic inspiration behind the offerings of devotees and authors, scholars have found that ex-votos were understood as gifts that "invited" a "reciprocal gift" in the form of a miracle, "as a ritual redescription of the world that accommodates the divine counter-gift" (Maniura, 2009, p. 422).

As noted earlier, Christian doctrine defined ex-votes as things promised in advance and things presented at shrines, whether or not Mary or other divine helpers were understood to have miraculously answered the petitions of believers who in this way made and fulfilled their vows. Built into votive practice, however, was the expectation of a gift-exchange between the saint and devotees or, as it were, a kind of anticipatory *quid pro quo*.[7] This can be seen when the imprisoned López de Ayala makes promises to the Virgin in exchange for his freedom:

> e me libra de cuitas e cárçel e tristura;
> entienda que me vales después que a Ti gemí.
> Señor, si biuiere, por sienpre contaré
> tus grandes marauillas e a Ti loaré,
> e si yo aquí muero, todo lo callaré. (sts. 738e-739c)
>
> Si de aquí Tú me libras, sienpre te loaré;
> las tus casas muy santas, yo las vesitaré. (st. 757ab)

As we have seen, his text accommodates Mary's "counter-gift" by including the perspective of the freed poet. The Chancellor's poeticized chains are, in this sense, meant to make something happen, in accordance with J. L. Austin's influential theory concerning speech acts. He presents the verses and material objects to the Virgin not primarily as a means of communicating his personal experience, but more importantly as part of a growing multitude of offerings that collectively

[7] This has been studied by Maniura (2009) as well as by Velden (2000), who draws on the work on gift giving by the sociologist Marcel Mauss.

hold together belief in Mary's power to reciprocate fulfilled vows indefinitely into the future. The poet, for this reason, views his liberation in the context of an indefinite efficacy of exchange between the Virgin and grateful visitors to shrines like Montserrat: "do muy muchos miraglos dizen fazerse allí" (López de Ayala, 1987, 870b). Accordingly, the story behind the poet's chains —that is, the circumstances and details of his imprisonment— are left out of the *Rimado* in a way that is once again not dissimilar to the formulaic, undifferentiated retellings of miracles compiled in the *libelli miraculorum* and their vernacular offshoots.[8]

Viewed within the larger context of López de Ayala's book, the meaning of these objects can be extended beyond the autobiographic nature of the poet's lyrics, and even how these relate to votive traditions and cults developed at shrines where he vows to make offerings. Inserted into this section of Marian *plegarias* and *cantigas* are two lengthy reflections on the Western Schism of the Church between popes in Avignon and Rome. These texts form part of the poem's overall preoccupation with corruptions and divisions of society during a time of civil wars, plague, and other calamities. López de Ayala draws on the allegory of the *Ecclesia* as ship, condemning needless disputes that continue to split and fracture the institutional body of the Church, leaving it divided between two popes and in need of Conciliarism and unified leadership (López de Ayala, 1987, sts. 820, 828, 836, 839, 849). In the context of this ongoing threat to the authority and succession of St Peter, to whom Christ first promised the keys to the Kingdom in the Gospel (Matt. 16:18-19), the poet again places his hope in the Virgin as the purifying key or "pura llaue del paraíso", before continuing with his Marian praises and vows (López de Ayala, 1987, sts. 850, 854-908). What is most significant for the purposes of this study is that the poet evokes the liberated first Bishop of Rome in a litany for deliverance pronounced from his own prison cell: "Señor, Tú non me oluides, ca yago muy penado, / en fierros e cadenas e cárçel ençerrado [...] que a Sant Pedro libraste de prisión, / de las grandes cadenas e grant tribulaçión" (López de Ayala, 1987, sts. 782, 791ab). This is followed by the Chancellor's pledge to visit the Guadalupe Marian shrine, and the later stanzas that reflect on dissent within the Church and on the papal division.

[8] For an overview of literary traditions that influenced the *Rimado* see Orduna, who observes structural parallels with the *Libro de buen amor*, and examines the Chancellor's adaptation of Gregory the Great's commentary on the Book of Job during the second half of the *Rimado* (Orduna, 1987, pp. 41, 47-50).

The connotations of Peter's chains in the *Rimado* correspond with meanings attached to this symbol and relic in well-known literature and representative visual art from the late Middle Ages. The best-selling *Legenda aurea* included a chapter which, citing the Venerable Bede, explains the significance and recounts legends surrounding the medieval feast of St Peter in Chains on August 1 (Jacobus de Voragine, 1993, pp. 420-25). According to Bede this day was initially set aside to celebrate the reuniting of the pre-Christian Roman Empire, after it was divided between Octavian in the West and Anthony in the East. In later centuries Eudoxia, daughter of the emperor Theodosius, made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem in search of relics, and upon her return to Rome reunited two sets of chains with which the apostle Peter had been bound, by Herod and by Nero. In the church thereafter known as Sanctus Petrus ad Vincula these chains were said to have miraculously joined together as one before the altar of St Stephen, the first Christian martyr, representing the unity of the Church as opposed to the pagan Empire. The scene was commemorated in a late fifteenth-century Iberian painting known as *La princesa Eudoxia ante la tumba de san Esteban*, which visualizes medieval votive practices of the kind we have seen in earlier-cited descriptions of Marian shrines. Apart from the princess and her imperial family, the altarpiece depicts a crippled pilgrim wearing a shell from Santiago and a hat embroidered with an image of St Peter's keys, as well as a series of ex-votos hanging above the altar.[9] These are identifiable as objects made to represent the healed body parts of visitors, heads with necks miraculously spared from the noose, along with a miniature ship presumably brought by the survivor of a storm at sea, among others (see fig. 1). Thus the altarpiece associates the chain offered to the Church by Eudoxia (hanging from her wrists in the painting) with ex-votos not unlike López de Ayala's "cadenas." The location of the chains was prophesized by a demon that possessed the princess, but this spirit is now expelled (exiting via her mouth), just as her hands —held together in prayer— will be symbolically unbound from an iron. The painting brings together objects representing multiple vows and votive offerings to form a unitary testimony to the power of the saints and to symbolize Christian unification in the spatial and thematic setting of St Peter *ad Vincula.*

[9] The painting, attributed to Joan Gascó, was for an altarpiece in the church of Sant Esteve de Granollers, near Barcelona. For a more detailed recent study of this painting, see Pérez Monzón (2012, pp. 472-73).

Fig. 1. Joan Gascó, *La princesa Eudoxia ante la tumba de san Esteban*, 1495. Barcelona, Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya.

At the end of his discussion of this feast, Jacobus de Voragine interprets the miracle of the chains as a reflection of the promise Christ made to Peter that his keys would have the power to bind and loose humankind from fetters of sin (Vulgate *ligare* and *solvere*), just as the Lord secured the release of Peter, the unifying Bishop of the Church, from imprisonment. He then illustrates the point by recounting a popular Marian miracle that is also found in Gonzalo de Berceo's *Milagros* (Berceo, 1985, sts. 160-181). A devotee of Peter from Cologne once faced damnation, but the Prince of Apostles interceded on his behalf, and through the mediation of Mary with her Son was able to free this penitent from his eternal bonds. In the case of López de Ayala, the real experience of a prisoner is associated with the captivity of the Church with its divided papacy, and the metaphorical fetters of sin that bind a fallen human race. The poet pleads for and receives liberation through the intervening "llave pura" of Mary, and expresses his hopes that the chains of worldly captivity will become signs of grace and unity —like the multitude of seemingly anonymous chains and irons presented to the Virgin as ex-votos, and donated individually as a gifted part of the self. His *plegarias* and *cantigas* can be fruitfully compared to early sermons and accounts of votive practice in vernacular versions of *libelli miraculorum* produced and recorded for Marian shrines at Guadalupe and Montserrat, among others. In a way that is not dissimilar to the painting of St Peter's chains, his poetry represents an efficacious process—brought about through language, actions, and objects of devotion—of shedding irons of inequity and uncertainty, attaining freedom from punishments in this world and beyond for the individual and for believers as a collective body. As a literary figure and material artefact, the Chancellor's chains make present memories of bondage, while at the same time signifying his hope for a redemptive future.

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