

PARALLELS IN FIFTEENTH-CENTURY HAGIO-
GRAPHY: JOHN CAPGRAVE'S LIFE OF ST.
KATHARINE OF ALEXANDRIA AND VINCENT FER-
RER'S CATALAN SERMON
ON SANTA CATERINA

John Capgrave (1393-1464) finished writing his *Life of Katharine of Alexandria* by 1445.¹ This lengthy Middle English compilation, written in poetry, contains a vast amount of material on Catherine's life which Capgrave included in five books. Recent studies have attempted to ascertain his sources, a task complicated by the author's revelation that he consulted an incomplete English version by a priest named Arrek, whose translation of Catherine's life from the Greek of Athanasius to Latin Capgrave also used (*Life*, Prolog., p. 21: 197-210).

Vincent Ferrer's (1350-1419) Catalan sermon on Catherine of Alexandria² is structured and combines the language of the common people with speculative theological doctrine ("moltes bones doctrines speculatives") [very good speculative doctrines] (*Sermons*, 6, 129). In this analysis of his sermon, we found that St. Vincent deviated from his preferred sources, including the *Legenda Aurea* (LA), and relied on other sources, including an unspecified work that appears to be similar to one used by John Capgrave.

Both Capgrave and Ferrer structured their hagiographical accounts of Catherine. Capgrave chose to divide his poem into five parts, or books, preceeded by a prologue, perhaps because he intended it to form part of an "edifying or devotional exercise and to be read in sections to a gathered assembly."³ His divisions reflect a chronological sequence: 1. Catherine's birth to her coronation; 2. the marriage parliament; 3. her conversation and marriage to Christ; 4. the so-called second debate (i. e., Catherine's debate with fifty philosophers); 5. Catherine's and the philosophers' martyrdom.

¹ We chose to cite the recent edition: John Capgrave, *The Life of Saint Katherine*, ed. Karen A. Winstead (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Medieval Institute Publications, 1999), which in the text we refer to as *Life*.

² Ferrer's sermon on Catherine appears in his *Sermons*, ed. Gret Schib (Barcelona: Barcino, 1988), 6, 129-40. Hereafter referred to as *Sermons*.

³ Jane C. Fredeman, "Style and Characterization in John Capgrave's *Life of St. Katherine*", *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester* 62 (1980), 355.

St. Vincent followed a common procedure in his hagiographic homilies by applying a biblical passage to the saint's life. Given the tradition of Catherine's erudition and reputation as patroness of students of philosophy, Ferrer chose to unite her learning with the passage in Matthew 13,52: "every scribe who becomes a disciple of the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out from his storeroom things both old and new (*Sermons*, 6,129)." He goes on to interpret this passage in these terms: the old law (Old Testament) of Moses was but a "figura" (image/foreboding) of the new law (New Testament) of Christ, the Messiah. The Dominican then insists on the sole validity of biblical knowledge. Referring to the "old and new fruits stored for my Beloved" (Song of Songs, 7), he specifies that these fruits do not contain the ideas of Aristotle, Plato, or Dante (*Sermons*, 6,130).⁴

Having explained the "tema" of his sermon, St. Vincent can now elaborate the "materia" [i. e., the life of Catherine (*Sermons*, 6,130)]. As with his other hagiographic sermons, the details of the saint's life are subordinated to the doctrine St. Vincent teaches. He introduces a tripartite division to describe Catherine's subtle disputations: 1. secretly domestic; 2. publicly philosophic; 3. forcefully tyrannical. The choice of these three narrative details caused St. Vincent to eliminate salient parts of legends found in traditional accounts of Catherine's life and contained in the Greek and Latin versions, and to a lesser extent, the *LA*.

Using traditional information from Catherine's life, St. Vincent first had to convince the faithful of her esteemed qualities. To do so he briefly mentioned her "quatre excel.lències" [four excellences]: 1. high lineage, 2. physical beauty, 3. knowledge, and 4. wealth (*Sermons*, 6,131).

Despite differences in genre and the length of both works, we believe that Capgrave and Ferrer used similar sources or manuscripts based on the same sources. Their lives of Catherine also differ from thirteenth- and fourteenth-century accounts because their audience differed from those addressed in the previous centuries (i. e., religious orders, clergymen, and the aristocracy). Their use of dialogue and fifteenth-century social reference also give their compositions on Catherine's life a more modern tone and sense.

In St. Vincent's sermon, Catherine's mother, upon the Emperor's request, pleads with her daughter to marry the Emperor's

⁴ Both Capgrave (*Life*, 4, 1324-1350) and Ferrer insist that they shun classical philosophers and, in the case of the Spaniard, Dante. In Ferrer's sermons, this attitude becomes a motif.

son. The ensuing conversation, which I believe St. Vincent created to captivate his lay audience, reflects the colloquial language of late medieval Valencia:

Mother: "Daughter, I know you'll be very happy. You know the Emperor wants you to be his son's wife. It's a great honor to be the Emperor's daughter-in-law."

Catherine: "Mother, for the good and future of my kingdom, I would gladly consent to it, but first I must see this husband, so that I'll know if he is handsome or ugly, learned or a fool."

Mother: "Oh, daughter, it has never been the custom to first see the Emperor's sons, for people always believed the royal ambassadors."

Catherine: "Mother, didn't you say he chose me because of my good name? Well, then, am I to buy a cat in a sack? Matrimony doesn't last only a day. And I have no idea if the man is a leper or blind, or if his breath stinks?"

Mother: "Oh, daughter, there is no need for you to go to Rome or for him to come here."

Catherine: "Oh, mother, am I to believe the words of others? I'd rather take a simple man who is discreet, knowledgeable, adroit, handsome, etc. Did God give us knowledge in vain that we might dive into things head first? Don't talk to me any more about it!"

Mother: "Well, you wretch, what am I to tell him?"

Catherine: "Tell him I'm too young, or that it's not possible" (*Sermons* 6,131).

Dialogue is also an essential feature of Capgrave's *Life*, although it is usually set in the context of a debate in which it becomes more lengthy and less spontaneous, vis-à-vis Ferrer's sermon, due in part to its inclusion in seven-line verse stanzas. Also, in Capgrave's rendition, the confrontation between Catherine and her mother is not private, but rather takes place within the context of the debate between Catherine, the barons, and the dignitaries of Alexandria, who try to convince her to marry:

The qween hir modyr gan to syghe and grone.

Sche seyde, "Doghtyr, this noght your avayle;

Put not your purpos in swych grete perayle.

"Your dotyng dayes, I trow, now be come!

What wold ye hafe? Wote ye what ye say?

Thorowoute the worlde, in Grece ne in Rome,

Is no swych man that this thyng do may,

Schuld kepe a londe of so gret aray,

It is impossible that ye desyre and crafe!

"Avyse yow bettyr and take another day
 Tyll that your witte is chaunger and your thowte.
 Is your wysdam now turned to swech aray
 For to desyre swych thing as is nowte?
 Cursyd be thei that yow here-to browte
 Onto this errour, to do as no man dothe,
 That every poynt thei varye fro the sothe."
 "Madame," sche seyde, "this thing which I schall doo,
 I not who sett it in myn hert, treuly:
 It is so fast I may not fle ther-froo;
 I clevyth so sore it wyll not slyde forby;
 Wheythyr I goo, sytte, knele, or elles ly,
 For noo counseyll I may it not forsake,
 Ne for noo crafte away I can it schake."
 (*Life*, 2, pp. 88-89:1013-1029)

Auvo Kurvinen found similarities between Capgrave's Books 1-3 and a Middle English work written a few years before Capgrave's *Life: Life and Martyrdom of Saint Katherine of Alexandria, Virgin and Martyr*.⁵ Capgrave, however, went beyond this version, elaborating a great deal, – especially the number of speeches, details, names of speakers, – and introducing digressions. She concluded that both versions stem from a common source.

The first of Catherine's debates, one involving "domestic secrecy" (i. e., her refusal to marry the Emperor's son or any earthly king), is not found in most medieval Vulgate versions of Catherine's "vita," including the *LA*. However, the basic narrative details are contained in the Latin MS7954 (313v-316v) of the Staatsbibliothek of Munich.⁶ Catherine's legend in the *Der Heiligen Leben*, which Bruce Beatie described as the longest single *vita* of this compilation, includes many details found in the Munich manuscript.⁷ However, in the Middle High German version, Catherine is married to Christ and awakens to find a ring on her finger, a feature included in some English versions but not in Ferrer's sermon nor in Capgrave's poem. In both versions Mary asks Christ to give the wedding ring to Catherine (*Life*, 3, p. 144:1274; *Sermons*, 6, 133). Lastly, Catherine's

⁵ "The Source of Capgrave's *Life of St. Katharine of Alexandria*", *Neuphilologische Mitteilungen* 61 (1960), 73-74.

⁶ H. Varnhagen, *Zur Geschichte der Katharina von Alexandrien* (Erlangen: F. Junge, 1891), pp. 18-23.

⁷ "Saint Katharine of Alexandria: Traditional Themes and the Development of Medieval German Hagiographic Narrative", *Speculum* 52 (1977), 785-96.

resolve not to marry any earthly noble forms part of Capgrave's *Life*, although the English author chose for his narrative a different setting and changed several features.

Aside from the prolixity of Capgrave's rendition of Catherine's union with Christ and Ferrer's selective prose version, the basic differences in both versions are the setting and initial motivation: the meeting between Catherine and the hermit Adrian is arranged by divine intervention in Capgrave's *Life* (3, p. 116ff: 358ff) and in the Catalan sermon by Catherine's mother, who hires the hermit to convince her to marry a man to lead her country (*Sermons*, 6,132). The union between Jesus and Catherine takes place in a mythical palace in which Christ reigns as lord. St. Vincent's hermit, unlike Adrian, acts on his own initiative, orchestrating the meeting between the two spouses and baptising the "unclean" virgin. Also, unlike Capgrave's seigneurial figure, Christ appears as a handsome fifteen-year-old boy who allows Mary to initiate the proceedings (*Sermons*, 6,132).

The details of Ferrer's sermon on Catherine's mystical marriage to Christ are similar to the traditional legend found in the Munich manuscript. She refuses to marry any man when asked to do so by the hermit. He then asks her to marry his master, who is richer and more honest than all men, and whose excellence will bring her glory. In the Catalan version Mary presents Catherine to Christ, who refuses to marry her, for she is "molt ... légea e sútea" (very ugly and dirty), words that St. Vincent reminds his audience signify that Catherine, a pagan, has the blemish of original sin. After she declares herself a Christian and is baptized, Christ accepts her as his spouse. The Spaniard, again conscious of his humble listeners, gave this scene and dialogue a popular character and tone (*Sermons*, 6,133-34).

More interesting, from a medieval perspective, is the second debate in which Catherine participates. Although St. Vincent may have drawn the events leading to this "publicly philosophic" disputation from the traditional Vulgate narrative, its components come down to us from another manuscript tradition of her life. In the early Greek and Latin manuscripts the Emperor summoned fifty scholars to debate with Catherine. They began by arguing the importance of classical and biblical learning, including the works of Aristotle and Plato, whose beliefs the Dominican had previously rejected. Given his disapproval of classical works and his selection of this sermon's primary theme – the superiority of the Bible over classical philosophic works –, we believe St. Vincent must have been familiar with this traditional

version of Catherine's *vita*. As with the account of Catherine's espousal to Christ, the preacher preferred the *Leggendarios* version.

Most versions of Catherine's disputation with the learned men contain brief references to the Incarnation (ex. the Arabic text and the *Acta Sanctorum Hiberniae*),⁸ Christ's human and divine nature, death, and resurrection.⁹ However, in the topics discussed, which form the core of St. Vincent's sermon, the Dominican must have consulted a lost manuscript version of Catherine's life. We make this assumption based on the close affinity between this Catalan sermon and Capgrave's *Life*. The first common element is the insistence of both authors on the "figura," which they use to introduce their doctrinal debates. Capgrave, however, chose more specific examples, such as the Old Testament term "god" to refer to Baal (pp. 326-28), a discussion that goes beyond St. Vincent's motives.

Both Capgrave and Ferrer include Christ's Incarnation as part of their debate, and both begin with the question: Did Mary give birth to Christ under hereditary corruption? And both rely on the same metaphor to prove Mary's virgin birth: the passing of the sun's rays through a stained-glass window without causing any damage to it (Capgrave, 4: 2178-2191; Sermons, 6, 137). A common image in fourteenth- to sixteen-century Spanish and Catalan literature, the image appears in the works of the Valencian preacher's contemporary, Francesc Eiximenis,¹⁰ in the poetry of Luis de León and the writings of mystics Theresa of Avila and John of the Cross; it is equally common in medieval and Renaissance French letters.¹¹ Jean Dagens, who traced the metaphor to the Bible, cited examples of it in Augustine, Gregory of Nyssa, and Adam of St. Victor, to whom we owe its popularity from the Middle Ages to the seventeenth century,¹² along with the vernacular translations of the *Elucidarium*.¹³ Ferrer was fond of the

⁸ *Passions des saints. Écaterine et Pierre d'Alexandrie, Barbara et Anyisia*, ed. Joseph Viteau (Paris: Émile Bouillon, 1897), 12-15.

⁹ Paul Peeters, "Une version arabe de la Passio de sainte Catherine d'Alexandrie", *Analecta Bollandiana* 26 (1907): 21; Viteau, p. 12; *Acta Sanctorum Hiberniae*, ed. C. De Smedt and I. De Backer (London: Blackwood and Sons, 1888), 698; H. E. Todd, "La vie de sainte Catherine d'Alexandrie as Contained in the Paris MS La Clayelle", *PMLA* 15 (1900), 37-38.

¹⁰ Julio Rodríguez-Puértolas, *De la Edad Media a la Edad Conflictiva* (Madrid: Gredos, 1972), p. 30; David J. VIERA, "A Repeated Image of Light in the Sermons of Vincenç Ferrer", *Catalan Review* 7 (1993): 97-102.

¹¹ Robert Richard, "Cristal, vidrio, vidreira", *MLR* 40 (1945), 216-17; "Paravicino, Rablais, le soleil et la vidreira", *Bulletin Hispanique* 57 (1955), 327-30.

¹² "La métaphore de la verrière: de l'Apocalypse à Rutebeuf et à l'École Française", *Revue d'ascétique et de mystique* 25 (1949), 524-31.

image, as was a contemporary preacher John Bromyard.¹⁴

Both Capgrave and Ferrer reproduce Catherine's debate concerning the two natures of Christ, the Trinity, and the distinction between the three persons of the Trinity to further underscore Christ's humanity. However, Capgrave preferred a biblical image (2 Kings 23,14-17); the Dominican cited examples from nature: the sun, its rays and heat, and the boat (a finite object) being supported by the sea, which at the time was believed to be infinite.

Capgrave states that Catherine also debated with a scholar, Aryot, concerning Adam's sin, but chose not to reproduce this argument because it was too lengthy. St. Vincent also alluded to Adam's sin to insist that Christ came to save all humankind, not just Christians. However, in a previous section in which Capgrave discussed Adam, he recalls the fruit of the tree of life:

Toke this jorney and deyed on a tre,
That, evene as synne in the tre was doo,
Rith so on the tre deth suffered He.
It was convenient He shuld fyte so:
In the tre was joy bore and in the tre woo;
Woo be Sathan, joy be oure Lorde Jhesu –
Out of that tre a blyssyd frute grewe!
(*Life*, p. 213: 1968-1974)

St. Vincent also recalled this image: "e féu sobirana misericòrdia que no.u merexia, e gran justícia quan volch morir, per tornar lo fruyt que Adam havia pres de l'arbre de vida" (*Sermons*, 6,138) [He showed us this great mercy, which was not merited, and great justice when he chose to die in order to return the fruit that Adam took from the tree of life]. Other features exist in common between the two works: Catherine's need to know the man she is to marry (*Life*, 2, p. 84: 862-68) is likened, in the Catalan text, to her insistence on seeing him. Also, Capgrave's classification of the "four things" of Catherine (lineage, beauty, knowledge, riches) conform, even in the order in which they are given, with the Dominican's "quatre excel.lències" of Catherine.

St. Vincent's last division, the "tyrannical disputation," involves four contrastive traits, in which the first element of the contrast refers to the Emperor and the second to Catherine: pain and patience, error and great faith; terror and constancy; fear and perseverance.

¹³ See the thirteenth-century translation attributed to Sancho IV: *Los "lucidarios" españoles*, ed. Richard Kinkade (Madrid: Gredos, 1968), p. 113.

¹⁴ *Summa Praedicatorum* (Antverpiae, 1614), p. 9: 2, 14, 17.

The Dominican's description of Catherine's tortures, martyrdom and burial conforms to the traditional account. However, salient details in the Catalan version, including the oil that runs from Catherine's tomb and heals the sores of the infirm,¹⁵ appear in a Latin sermon St. Vincent gave of Catherine's *Life*.¹⁶ Perhaps the "reportadores" scribes transcribing this sermon as St. Vincent preached omitted these miracles.¹⁷

The many parallels between Capgrave's and Ferrer's versions, especially her confrontation with her mother concerning marriage, or with the sages on doctrine, and the tripartite division of both works, indicate they consulted an intermediate source "in which the account of Catherine's martyrdom was based on the Vulgate".¹⁸ Auvo Kurvinen supports her conclusion that "Capgrave knew more than one version of the legend of St. Catherine" by Capgrave's own admission and by her comparison of Capgrave's version with the Staneborn version.¹⁹ The few significant similarities indicate that St. Vincent used a source closely related to or derived from the same "stemma." He traveled throughout Europe, where he could have consulted a source similar to the one on which Capgrave relied.

The choice of this non-extant intermediate source may have been based on the audience both clergymen wished to address, in Capgrave's case the middle-class lay readers, especially women. Also, Derek Pearsall described Capgrave's St. Catherine as his most popular work, which appealed to unsophisticated audiences. He based his opinion on the more popular poetic form of the work (metrical romances); its tone, which differs from that of his *Life of St. Norbert*; his abbreviation of complex doctrine, such as the Trinity and the two natures of Christ, especially in the arguments of the pagan scholars; and "frequent learned interpolations." He concluded that "there do seem to be some concessions to a kind of audience different from that

¹⁵ Varnhagen, p. 27; A. Poncelet, "S. Catharine transatio et miracula Rotomagensia", *Analecta Bollandiana* 22 (1903): 427; Vincent de Beauvais, *Speculum Historiale* rpt. (Graz: Akademische Druck, 1965), 4, 509.

¹⁶ "De sancta Katherina", *Sermones de tempore et sanctis*, 3 vols. Strassburg, 1488-1489, see vol 3: explicit: "de sepulcro ipsius oleum dicunt incessanter emanare".

¹⁷ The Catalan sermon which has come down to us consists of dictated notes taken by stenographers or "reportadores" who sat at the foot of the pulpit and transcribed St. Vincent's sermons. They omitted repetitious passages in the sermons and perhaps sections of these sermons, if we are to believe that some of Ferrer's sermons lasted two hours or more.

¹⁸ Kurvinen, pp. 272-73.

¹⁹ Kurvinen, pp. 312-17.

to which Capgrave is accustomed, that is, men of religion and learning like himself.”²⁰ Karen Winstead makes a particularly effective case arguing that Capgrave had middle class women in mind when he wrote his lengthy poem on Catherine.²¹

Vincent Ferrer also catered to a mixed audience, a fact that is more apparent than in Capgrave’s poetry, since St. Vincent delivered sermons on the same saint in the vernacular for his lay listeners and in Latin for clerics. Also, he often used popular language, images, and legends to hold the attention of his lay followers.²²

In general, popular works on women saints were wholly or partially directed to women. Historically, Catherine’s legend especially appealed to Beguins, who found it edifying. Also, female orders used her legend to convert non-believers.²³ Certainly both Capgrave and Ferrer intended that Catherine’s example and virtue be an inspiration for women. The Dominican particularly addressed his sermons on virgin martyrs Agnes and Margaret to the young women at his sermons, whom he hoped would model their lives on the example of female saints as well as on Catherine’s courage and love for Christ.²⁴ The more popular nature of Capgrave’s poem on Catherine may only partially be explained, since this is his only legend on a female saint.

In addition, we believe St. Vincent also addressed this sermon to a group that became a concern for the late medieval Spanish clergy of his time: the Jews. Civil laws were promulgated in which Jews and Moors were obliged to attend this Dominican’s sermons. Therefore, given the “tema” of this sermon, the relationship between the old and

²⁰ Pearsall, pp. 130-31.

²¹ Karen A Winstead, “Piety, Politics, and Social Commitment in Capgrave’s *Life of St. Katherine*”, *Medievalia et Humanistica* (Savage, Maryland: Medieval and Renaissance Society, 1991), 17:60, 65, 72-73; Mary-Ann Stouch, “Chaucer and Capgrave’s *Life of St. Katharine*”, *American Benedictine Review* 33 (1982), 281.

²² Martí de Riquer, *Història de la literatura catalana* (Barcelona: Ariel, 1964), 2,241. On St. Vincent’s preference for the common people see: Manuel Sanchis Guarner, “Les raons de la discrepància entre Francesc Eiximenis i sant Vicent Ferrer”, *Primer Congrés de Historia del País Valencià celebrado en Valencia del 14 al 18 de abril de 1971* (Valencia: Universidad de Valencia, 1980), pp. 669-70.

²³ Ernest W. McDonnell, *The Beguins and Beghards in Medieval Culture* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1954), pp. 436-37; Michael Goodish, *Vita Perfecta: the Ideal of Sainthood in the Thirteenth Century* (Stuttgart: A. Hiersemann, 1982), 179.

²⁴ David J. Viera, “Vincent Ferrer’s Catalan Sermon on Margaret of Antioch”, *Actes del Vuintè Col·loqui d’Estudis Catalans a Nord-Amèrica* (Barcelona: l’Abadia de Montserrat, 1999), pp. 293-303.

new law, Ferrer would have insisted that Jews hear this sermon. Also, the disputations between Jews and Christians before and during St. Vincent's life centered around the so-called mysteries of the Catholic church: the Trinity, the dual natures of Christ, the Incarnation, and the Resurrection, all of which form part of Catherine's debate with the scholars in the Catalan sermon as well as Capgrave's English poem. These themes are also common in the numerous "adversus Judaeos", a prevalent genre in the late Middle Ages. St. Vincent added to this list of dogma that Jews contested the transubstantiation of bread into Christ's body, which he mentions in his Catherine sermon by having a pagan scholar protest that Christians worship bread ("adorau pa"). This theme is also common to medieval religious disputations and anti-Jewish religious treatises written by Christians. In fact, Francesc Eiximenis (an acquaintance of St. Vincent in Valencia), who wrote one of the last of the medieval encyclopedias, included transubstantiation and all the above mentioned mysteries in his *Primer del Crestià* (First Book of the Christian), in a treatise on the superiority of Christianity over Judaism and Islam.²⁵ His source was another medieval treatise, Nicholas of Lyre's *Postillae*. Therefore, St. Vincent's need to address Jews in his audience compelled him to introduce elements extraneous to the traditional Latin legends of St. Catherine.

The last section of Catherine's life, her passion – which Capgrave entered into Book 5 and Ferrer in the third and last division "tyrànica forçadament" (forced tyranny) – is again characterized by many scenes and much detail in Capgrave's *Life*, including digressions, for example, Catherine's prophecy of Emperor Maxentius' ultimate defeat "in storyes I am well avysed that I// have red of him ..." (*Life* 5,259: 1099-1100),²⁶ and by a carefully selective process in the Catalan sermon. Here St. Vincent excludes the death and burial of Christian martyrs by the angry Emperor; the conversion and deaths of the Emperor's wife and his military captain, Porphyrius; Maxentius' prohibition of food for Catherine during her imprisonment in a dark cell, as well as the nourishment and support angels gave the saint when she was confined.

Comparing the versions of the two clergymen to *LA*, we find added material in Capgrave's *Life*: Maxentius' constant pleas to convince Catherine to worship Jupiter; Christ's descent to comfort

²⁵ For more information on the disputation on Christ's divinity see David J. Viera, "The Rabbi Moises and the *Primer del Crestià* of Francesc Eiximenis", *Medieval Encounters* 5 (1999), 184-197.

²⁶ The source may be the *LA*, 1, 279.

Catherine in jail; and the mention of Curatus, Mayor of Alexandria, who devised the deadly cutting machine. Ferrer is not concerned with details nor providing his listeners with a full account of the Catherine legend. Rather, his main goal is to draw examples from her life to reflect biblical passages as well as their moral-didactic message. For example, his short additions to the last division of Catherine's life concern purity and the condemnation of lust. Maxentius takes great pleasure in seeing Catherine stripped naked and tortured because he is a lecher: "era luxuriós" (6,139). Right before Catherine is decapitated, she thanks God for guarding her purity during the time she was apprehended. Ferrer also insists that the milk that poured from Catherine's head at decapitation was a sign of her purity, as does Capgrave (*Life*, 5,284: 1899-1900).

In terms of specifics Capgrave's rendition is closer to the *LA* version. Capgrave and Jacob of Voragine agree that 4,000 pagans were killed when angels destroyed the killing wheel; Ferrer put the number at 7,000. Capgrave and the *LA* version also estimate the distance from Alexandria to Mt. Sinai to be twenty days travel, compared to Ferrer's fourteen days; however, they disagree on how many days Maxentius left Catherine to starve in the dungeon: twelve in the *LA* and forty in Capgrave poem. Despite some numerical agreement between the last two hagiographies, we believe that Capgrave and Ferrer did not rely much, if any, on the *LA* version.

Differences between Ferrer's and Capgrave's hagiographical accounts stem mainly from the literary form they used, prose and poetry, and especially because of St. Vincent's subordinations of the details of Catherine's life to the doctrinal content of his sermon and the biblical passage he must elucidate. Therefore, he holds details to a minimum and discards entire episodes. In short, Ferrer's selective process makes it difficult to specify his sources, as does his "pleasure" to add extraneous elements to his sermons in order to reach commoners in his listening audience.

Both Capgrave and Ferrer succeed in creating inspirational, moral-didactic works despite differences of purpose and genre. However, both the English poem and the Catalan sermon are similar in many ways because they are works of two skillful authors who knew how to address their fifteenth-century audiences and selected details from a common source which, hopefully, will surface some day.

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