



**NARRATING THE FALL OF HENRY IV:  
THE ORIENTAL ELEMENT IN THE DEPOSITION  
OF THE ROYAL FIGURE WITHIN CASTILIAN VISUAL  
AND HISTORIOGRAPHIC DISCOURSES (15th century)**

NARRAR LA CAÍDA DE ENRIQUE IV:  
EL ELEMENTO ORIENTAL EN LA DEPOSICIÓN  
DE LA FIGURA REAL DESDE LOS DISCURSOS VISUAL  
E HISTORIOGRÁFICO CASTELLANOS (s. xv)

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**Abstract**

The narrative built around Henry IV's reign by the chronicle gives us an insight to understand the figure of a good king that expressed the values of the nobility.

The rupture of the pact that linked the king with his realm, represented by *Auto de Ávila* in 1465, allows us to see how the concept of royal duty was fictionally built.

According to the chroniclers who opposed Henry IV, his relish for the Mudejar was not in line with the ways of the Castilian royalty. A key concept here is architecture which provides a valuable visual element. There was an existing preference for Arabic architecture such as coffered ceilings, domes, tiling, and garden designs where water played a vital role. Many of these designs were built and inhabited by Christian kings before and after Henry's reign. Why would the chroniclers disapprove of oriental architecture only during Henry's reign?

In this analysis the visual element plays a vital role, as it allows us to appreciate what is missing in the chronicles. It is known that the medieval chronicle served an illustrating purpose, so it's logical that they focus on the patterns of behavior, actions and elements that were present in the performative act. This is why these can be considered inaccurate. Chroniclers failed to describe what these spaces were like. As a consequence, we will explore how oriental features contrast with the *Imago Regis* when they alter the corresponding *decorum* moving from an inaccurate first foreground to the political actions of the realm.

### **Keywords**

Aristocracy, monarchy, historiography, visual arts, arab culture.

### **Resumen**

La narrativa construida en torno al reinado de Enrique IV por la crónica nos ofrece una visión para entender la figura de un buen rey que expresaba los valores de la nobleza. La ruptura del pacto que vinculaba al rey con su reino, representada por el Auto de Ávila en 1465, nos permite ver cómo se construyó ficticiamente el concepto del deber real.

Según los cronistas que se oponían a Enrique IV, su gusto por lo mudéjar no estaba en consonancia con las formas de la realeza castellana. Un concepto clave aquí es la arquitectura, que proporciona un valioso elemento visual. Existía una preferencia por la arquitectura árabe, como los artesonados, las cúpulas, los azulejos y los diseños de jardines donde el agua jugaba un papel fundamental. Muchos de estos diseños fueron construidos y habitados por reyes cristianos antes y después del reinado de Enrique. ¿Por qué los cronistas desaprobaban la arquitectura oriental solo durante el reinado de Enrique?

En este análisis, el elemento visual desempeña un papel vital, ya que nos permite apreciar lo que falta en las crónicas. Se sabe que la crónica medieval tenía un propósito ilustrativo, por lo que es lógico que se centren en los patrones de comportamiento, acciones y elementos que estaban presentes en el acto performativo. Por esta razón, pueden considerarse inexactas. Los cronistas no describieron cómo eran estos espacios. Como consecuencia, exploraremos cómo las características orientales contrastan con la *Imago Regis* cuando alteran el decoro correspondiente, pasando de un primer plano inexacto a las acciones políticas del reino.

### **Palabras clave**

Aristocracia, monarquía, historiografía, artes visuales, cultura árabe.

### INTRODUCTION

The discourses constructed during the 15th centuries demonstrate the importance of a legitimizing machinery of royal power, which was not only presented in historiography but also in the manipulation of artistic-architectural phenomena. Understanding an extemporaneous text requires us to take note of the terms used, their meaning, and even their cultural impact, in order to indicate how they perceived the world and culture within that particular moment in history (Pessoa de Barros, 2017). This is the objective of a cultural semiotic approach to history: to reconstruct the system of socially shared ideas through which events are perceived and reacted to (Uspenski, 1993, p. 62).

By understanding narrativity as a succession of establishments and ruptures of contracts between a sender and a recipient, which in turn give rise to communication and conflict among subjects, we must delve into the social fabric itself that produced the chronistic and visual narratives (Büttner, 2016, p. 102). Although at first glance they may seem to belong to two distinct worlds, they are part of the same production of meaning.

In the case under analysis, Alfonso de Palencia's perspective as a royal chronicler stands out as a unifying element of the figure of Henry IV, with an orientalizing style perceived through his performance. This trait, with the triumph of Isabella I of Castile *la Católica*, would have been purified, leading the courtly customs to once again look towards the North, Christendom, instead of the Islamic South. However, this binary perspective, so useful for the Isabelline project, needs to be reexamined in order to have a more complex understanding

of Henry's figure and the continuities and ruptures between his reign, that of his ancestors, and that of his successor, Isabel I.

To overcome the narrow and rigid description of the king and his government provided by chronicles, the surviving architecture of the period will play a key role, as it represents a conditioning element of human life that manifests the tastes of a period and the patron of the work as a means of social distinction (Bourdieu, 1991, p. 447). Moreover, its scarce mention in the chronic narrative will allow us to put the discourse under tension and observe to which aspects the chronicler pays greater attention and which ones are left unmentioned.

#### DEVELOPMENT OF THEORETICAL APPROACH AND METHODOLOGICAL DESIGN

Among the various ways in which medieval chronicles can be understood and approached, in this study, we perceive them as a fiction proposed by a discourse agent dedicated to either reinforcing or challenging the image of the king. Regardless of the chronicler's specific objective, the vices and virtues embodied in their actions create tension in the narrative, ultimately revealing the narrator's ultimate goal.

However, there is a discourse that coexists with the chronicle, engaging in a dialogue through the visual expressions presented in both written and architectural forms. The Oriental element appears to play a dual role when comparing these two types of discourse.

Buildings express cultural identity and social values through their architectural styles, decorative elements, and materials, reflecting the traditions of specific communities. The interpretation of architectural signs varies depending on the social and cultural context of the observer. These signs in architecture convey cultural and emotional messages that extend beyond their physical dimensions, becoming integral to the experiences of their occupants and guiding their actions and emotions within the space (Eco, 1986, pp. 253-256).

In a manner like chronicling, architecture must not only be stylistically appropriate but also strategically effective. The expressive function of the architectural message reveals information about the identity of those involved in this spatial and visual discourse.

Therefore, we consider these notions in the chronicle in relation to the orientaling inclinations of Henry IV as it provides the necessary tension element to advance the narrative. We will question this tension through a relevant analysis of the architectural signs in royal precincts, complementing our approach to the historiographic discourse.

To achieve this, the methodology will involve a close examination of medieval chronicles and the architectural remains from the specific historical period under scrutiny. Comparative analysis of different chronicles and architectural features will be conducted to identify patterns and discrepancies that may offer insights into the motives behind the construction of the narrative. Moreover, the study will explore how the actant within the chronicles shape the perception of the royal figure and how these representations align or diverge with the visual elements in architectural contexts.

By combining textual and architectural analysis, this study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the discourses of power surrounding Henry IV and how these discourses were shaped and reinforced through multiple channels. By approaching the subject from both literary and material perspectives, this study seeks to enrich our understanding of the complex relationship between history, semiotics, and the construction of meaning in medieval chronicles.

#### THE TENSIONS IN THE DISCOURSES

It is well known that the narrative of Henry IV constructed by the chronicles has the peculiarity of delineating a negative example, an uncommon anti-model in royal chronicles, with the exception of Pedro I, narrated by Pero López de Ayala. Except for the chronicle of Diego Enríquez del Castillo, Alfonso de Palencia recounted the history of a king entangled in a complex theological framework encompassing faith, politics, and identity.

There is no doubt that Palencia sought to delegitimize the sovereign with his narration, so it is not surprising that he selected the traits of Henry IV and his reign that were most functional to this end. We can even classify the chronicles as tendentious, but that does not make them “nonsense” (Gómez Redondo, 2007, p. 3481) or diminish their historical value. Instead of objective records of past events, medieval chronicles stand as semiotic devices capable of re-signifying the present based on models from the past, without implying deception (Cingolani, 2008, pp. 117-118; Funes, 2004, p. 84; Benítez Guerrero, 2013, p. 50).

Invoking the past is never neutral; it always involves taking a position in the present. Thus, Diego de Valera (1878a, pp. 19-20) invoked the figure of Pedro I to admonish Enrique for his conduct and warn him of the ominous fate that awaited him. This act was part of a general discontent among the nobles of the kingdom that had begun to gestate during the military campaign against the Nasrid Kingdom around 1455, becoming evident in 1457 when both kingdoms

signed a peace agreement (Ohara, 2004). However, the reasons for the tensions were more than just military. Indeed, the Archbishop of Toledo, Alfonso Carrillo de Acuña, arrogating the representation of the three estates, demanded that the king amend his life, punish the bad actions, and resume the war.

In the eyes of the archbishop and the religious and lay aristocracies aligned with him, the kingdom's ills were rooted in Enrique IV's habits, which ultimately compromised his roles as a just king for the realm and a warrior against infidels (Nieto Soria, 1988). The maurophilia with which the chroniclers depicted the king was an issue that evidently called into question the entire power structure. This matter needed to be recorded, however disturbing it may have been (Fernández de Palencia, 1904, p. 1), as a warning for future kings. Thus, the chronicles establish maurophilia as a tensioning element of the narrative that allowed presenting a king who was inverted in religious and sexual matters and with a contested lordship.

### 1. *Challenged lordship*

This is evident when analyzing the challenges posed by the nobility to the king in the Arbitral Sentence of Medina del Campo and the deposition “auto” in Ávila. But before addressing the aspects dealt with there, it is worth noting that the figure of the Castilian king inherited a long chronicle tradition that legitimized the kings of León and, before that, the Asturians: royalty was destined to expel the infidel from the Iberian Peninsula (Martin, 2020).

With the slowing down of conquests since the reign of Alfonso X and the increasing difficulties for him to sustain its vassal network and his household, coupled with a rise in royal taxation pressure, the kingdom's nobility had to deploy a policy of factions to compel the Crown to grant rents and delegate the exercise of justice, to the jurisdictional lordship (Estepa Díez, 2003; Álvarez Borge, 2019; Monsalvo Antón, 2019).

This system worked during the turbulent years of the late 13th century and the minorities of the first quarter of the 14th century, taking advantage of the struggles between Pedro I and Enrique de Trastámara and the subsequent need for the new dynasty to be recognized as legitimate. However, during Enrique IV's reign, two issues made this approach problematic. First, he shied away from armed confrontation with Granada, and second, he accumulated great wealth. Even Enriquez del Castillo, in his chronicle, defined Enrique as a “lord of great treasures” (1878, p. 101). The nobility saw that the royal fiscal resources benefited

the king's friends, most of whom were of dubious Christian life or openly Moors, rather than the noble families of ancient lineage. This was perceived by the aristocracy as an act of tyranny that undermined the common good, violated the silent contract they entered into when assuming the crown (Carrasco Manchado, 2011), and resembled the behavior of Pedro I (Ortega Rico, 2021), a specter that was always present over the king's head.

It didn't take long for the nobility to see the king as a tyrant devoid of virtue. Thus, in *Memorial de diversas hazañas*, Mosén Diego de Valera recounted that the conspirators in Ávila saw nothing more appropriate than getting rid of a tyrant "lacking vigor of heart, prudence, courage, and all the other qualities befitting a good prince; nothing was left of him except the title of king, which, once taken away, was utterly lost" (Valera, 1878b, p. 33). However, removing this condition from the king during his lifetime had never happened in Castile. Therefore, an aristocratic confederation (González Nieto, 2015, p. 80) led by Archbishop Carrillo, the Master of Calatrava, and the Marquis of Villena sought to subject the king's will to their designs through the idea of a shared sovereignty (Quintanilla Raso, 2005, p. 549), or perhaps a collegiate monarchy, already outlined in previous centuries (Asiss-González, 2022; 2023).

As a result, in the Arbitral Sentence of Medina del Campo (1465), the representatives of the nobility expressed a clear position regarding the king's connection with Moors and converts. The first resolution, contained in the second law, was that the king should remove Moors from his court "because his subjects and natives are very scandalized by this," and apply true justice to them, given that "these Moors have supposedly committed many wrongdoings" (RAH, 1835-1913, p. 364). To the purge of all non-Christian elements, the nobility added another demand to the king: to resume the war against the Kingdom of Granada. They requested that he command "war against the Moors on all sides and frontiers of the kingdom of Granada, and that he has sufficient power with cavalry and infantry to pursue the said war, conducting it with the counsel and agreement of the Grandes of his kingdoms" (RAH, 1835-1913, p. 365).

Since these conditions were not fulfilled by Henry IV, the nobility's ideologists concocted a political fiction that would enable his removal. Historical precedents did not provide a clear procedure for a monarchy that was supposed to have an elective origin, even in Gothic times. When Alfonso X was deposed in 1282, the nobility, led by an infant, Don Manuel, accepted that the government would be exercised by a regent, the future Sancho IV, so that the king could retain his title

(González Jiménez, 2004). In the case of Pedro I, he was deposed on charges of tyranny by a faction within the context of a war that ended with his death. In the case of Henry IV, the context was different, and the nobility sought to remove his title as king, although they lacked the strength and resources necessary to depose him without facing resistance from the king.

For the purposes of this paper, we will set aside multiple aspects susceptible to analysis in the so-called “Farsa de Ávila” and focus on the heretical component that the nobility used to underpin the entire process. In Ávila, the nobles gathered with Archbishop Carrillo to find the most appropriate way to secure Henry IV’s removal. Palencia (1878, p. 455) relates that the Marquis of Villena and the Master of Calatrava wanted to accuse the king of heresy and false Christianity, but the idea was dismissed, possibly by Carrillo, as an accusation of this nature would involve Rome, with popes likely to favor the highest bidder, and Henry IV was known to have a vast treasure.

As it was not possible to attempt against the king’s life, as regicide was God’s prerogative, a safer path was chosen, with precedents in the kingdom: deposition on charges of tyranny. To satisfy the nobility, who believed the sentence would only be valid if the king was present, a dramatic constitutional ritual was orchestrated around an effigy of the king. From afar, one could see a doll dressed in black garments, adorned with royal insignia, resting on a high scaffold upon a throne.

The ritual is crucial to understanding how the royal representations constructed by the nobility were sublimated in a gray area between heresy and *contra naturam* crime. Indeed, beneath the legal-political argument of tyranny, there lay a representation that can be recovered by examining the precedents on which the conspirators relied. Although Angus MacKay (1985, p. 14) points out that the ritual itself has no precedent in Europe, he considers it possible to trace its influences. According to this researcher, the ritual was inspired by inquisitorial practices that used effigies draped in black in cases where the heretic had died or escaped at the time of sentencing, as well as in the deposition of the Master of the Order of Santiago, whose effigy was dressed in white and adorned with the insignia of the position.

According to MacKay, when the nobles chose Alfonso as the new king, they tacitly caused the political death of the previous king, and for this reason, the effigy was dressed in black on the scaffold; however, the punishment could only be applied to the defendant after publicly reading his crimes and removing the royal insignia (Valera, 1878b, p. 33). At this moment, the king’s effigy, already deprived by the nobility and clergy of its attributes and in the sight of the third estate,



was thrown to the ground from a height and kicked while the great men of the realm shouted “to the ground, scoundrel” (Valera, 1878b, p. 33). Based on what we have been analyzing, the Arabophile customs of the king and their projection into the political sphere may have triggered this situation, but it is worth asking whether Henry IV’s oriental taste was as peculiar among the Castilian kings as the chronicles suggest.

## *2. Symbolic legitimization in stone and brick*

The final phase of the Trastámara dynasty marked the beginning of a historical period for the peninsula, with an emphasis on a foreign element. Sensibilities towards the oriental led to an inclination for art and luxury from the southern regions of the peninsula (Nogales Rincón, 2017, p. 48). Consequently, architectural projects were not exempt from this orientaling influence and became privileged vehicles for both Henry IV and Isabel I to strengthen their royal power in the new and old territories of the Castilian crown.

It is interesting that the historiographical portraits developed during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries find no echo in the royal places that we must read as architectural signs (Eco, 1986, pp. 257-266). Just as the chroniclers wielded their pens, a propagandistic project was implemented in the visibility of their precincts. To prevent this analysis from overflowing with numerous architectural examples, it is appropriate to distinguish two circumscriptions: the Alcázar of Segovia and Seville.

These locations served as a link between the Christian and Islamic worlds as part of the legitimizing construction of the dynasty. Segovia, synonymous with the Christian north, was close to transpyrenean Europe, while Seville asserted itself as a symbol of conquest and triumph over the Moors in the south. However, this binary or dichotomous view of spaces can lead to a simplistic interpretation of historical and cultural realities. We believe that the term “border space” (de Courcelles, 2020, p. 120) should be employed for a better understanding, understood as the place where socio-cultural relations are established that permeate and blur the lines separating both worlds.

The connection between Al-Andalus and the Christian kingdoms resulted in a new and uniquely peninsular style in architecture, known as the Mudéjar art or style. It was an Andalusian art executed by Christian artists, which José Gómez Galán defines as a fusion that highlights the historical significance of the phenomenon. This convergence of artistic elements represents the coexistence of

Christian and Islamic societies in a geographical space that, intentionally or casually, facilitated the transmission and diffusion of knowledge (2017, pp. 88-122).

It is worth recalling that from the eleventh and twelfth centuries, there was a proliferation of Almohad art that captivated Christian monarchs, especially the Castilians, who, due to their proximity to Al-Andalus, became enchanted by the sumptuous and palatial art with oriental tinges. Despite the clear intention of demonstrating conquest over the oriental through Alfonso X's construction of Gothic palaces, such forms still penetrated the Christian spaces, ultimately resulting in the aforementioned fusion of Mudéjar style.

One might logically assume that due to Henry IV's love for all things Moorish, this orientalizing style would be present in a large portion of his architectural projects, and that assumption would be correct. However, this feature was not exclusive to Henry; the Mudéjar style transcended the reign of Henry IV and became an emblem of a dynasty that saw itself as a continuation of Fernando III's. Moreover, it was Pedro I who built a palace in the mid-fourteenth century within the Alcázar Complex of Seville, one of the most representative examples of oriental art constructed by Christians. The kings resorted to an Arabesque architectural language because the style of the castles or fortresses in the north no longer fully satisfied the need to represent the opulence and power of the monarch (Nogales Rincón, 2017, p. 54). The oriental, synonymous with wealth and majesty, constituted a complex cultural and architectural development experienced in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Castile.

Regarding Henry IV, the Alcázar of Segovia was a privileged space, symbolically representing his monarchy and fulfilling his desire to possess a stronghold for his extraordinary treasure, especially the pieces with oriental characteristics (Laredo Quesada, 2005, pp. 851-874). Intervened from the early years of his reign to provide it with the magnificence desired by the monarch, some rooms exhibit this Mudéjar influence: the Hall of Kings, the Hall of the Galley, or the Hall of the Cord.

As an architectural sign, we must consider the ceilings made of wood and adorned with mainly oriental motifs. In the Hall of Kings, for instance, a semi-vaulted ceiling adorned with hexagons resembling beehives stands out. It glimmers with a gold finish that continues over the sculpted representations of the Castilian monarchs preceding Henry. The fusion of Italian Renaissance and Mudéjar elements results in a decoration that breaks away from the western exterior scheme of the Alcázar. The same motif can be found in the Hall of the Galley, named after its ceiling's similarity to the hull of a ship. Also made of wood, these ceilings present geometric patterns that seek to assimilate the tilework decora-

tions of the palatial walls in the southern regions of the peninsula. Arrocabes and carved wood panels in the same golden hues as the Hall of Kings accompany this motif. In both halls, the orientalizing decoration finds harmony with Italian Renaissance motifs, suggesting an adaptation of the oriental to the new elements arriving from Italy. Along the same lines, the Hall of the Cord displays a ceiling more oriented towards a fusion of Gothic and oriental styles, but when observing the wall cladding, the decoration on the lateral walls features tiled panels in geometric motifs. This artisanal work could only have been executed by specialized labor of Andalusí origin or by Christian artisans under the direction of a specialized craftsman from the region.

Upon discovering these recompositions of the ceilings, we observe that their functionality goes beyond the typically functional, as they hold a clear symbolic intention, representing the king in his absence (Ruiz Souza, 2022, p. 523), as a representation of his person. These halls were predominantly used for court and governmental activities, so the presence of these architectural elements would have had an impact on the taste and perception of the courtiers and servants of the king, who, faced with Henry's orientalizing practices and customs, would have felt persuaded or addressed by the decoration of the Segovian Alcázar. This imposition on Segovia is of interest as it was one of the cities where the coexistence of the three most important religions on Castilian soil was still present until the second half of the fifteenth century, when the situation would shift in favor of the Christian extreme. In this way, the reaction towards the king and the great lords close to the court, sensitive to the refined oriental spirit (López Díez, 1996, pp. 121-122).

This affinity for the orient was even more strongly represented in the craftsmanship of the Hall of the Solio, where an octagonal base dome made of wood with geometric motifs similar to those previously mentioned can be found. The significance of this ceiling lies in its dome as an example of the adaptation of the Islamic Qubba. This structure had gained great acceptance in funerary chapels from the fourteenth century onwards, and throughout the fifteenth century, and was even used in presbyteries, the most sacred and revered places in the Christian temple (Mogollón, 2011, p. 324). However, its application in the Alcázar of Segovia differed in terms of its symbolic and spatial significance, as it was used for governance purposes, breaking away from the religious connotation that the Islamic Qubba conventionally marked. This means that, in addition to a reinterpretation of the typical Mudéjar dome, there was also a resemantization of the architectural element, detached from its ritual-religious aspects and adapted to the profane-courtly setting, without losing the symbology that this aesthetic resource held in relation to the king's image.

The Islamic Qubba is geometrically presented as a combination of two elementary figures of creation: the square and the circle in their three-dimensional composition, namely the sphere and the cube. Both forms are understood by Islamic philosophy, and not far from Christian and Hebrew philosophy, as representations of the earthly and the celestial. The cubic form is a metaphor for the earth, for the concreteness of creation, for the tangible, while the spherical form alludes to everything circumscribed to the heavens, especially to God. Considering that this Qubba is located in the hall that would have been used for Henry IV's throne, the king represented himself within creation and below God. This implementation allows us to understand how Mudéjar architecture functioned for Henry and his court, enriching the Castilian imagination without contradicting God or religion. Mudéjar traces would have been part of this cultural fusion of the fifteenth century, but mainly as an explicit impulse from the monarch and not as a continuous distinction of the Trastámara dynasty (Alonso Ruiz, 2021, p. 21).

In the case of the Alcázar of Seville, it is one of the most significant palatial complexes when it comes to analyzing the symbolic representation of Castilian kings of the period, and especially this dispute between Isabel and Henry. After all, Seville is a city whose foundations are inscribed in Roman and Muslim history, transferring to the Christian conqueror power and personal value to the detriment of the conquered, consolidating in the mythical and real a monarchical project for lasting domination of the Al-Andalus space in a political and cultural dream (de Courcelles, 2020, p. 122). The city's and Alcázar's importance refer to the conquering spirit of the Castilian kings in their architectural imprint. Each of the monarchs who followed Alfonso X left their own architectural conquests on this fortress. As mentioned earlier, Alfonso X built his Gothic palace on an old Almohad residence, followed by Pedro I and his characteristic throne facade in an oriental style. When contemplating this architectural concept, we find it pertinent to consider Juan Carlos Ruiz Souza's observation of Pedro I's palace, considering the references of the monumental facades of the Umayyad palaces of the 7th and 8th centuries and the grand palace or entrance of the Citadel of Aleppo during the Mamluk period of the 13th and 14th centuries. This alludes to an iconographic tradition that suggests that during the 14th and 15th centuries, both Christians and Andalusians redefined the forms of representing royal authority through the monumentality of their architectural projects (Ruiz Souza, 2022, p. 513).

Pedro's complex represents the orientation of the Trastámara kings towards Mudéjar style, without the need to include Gothic or Christian architectural

elements. This king, more hesitant than Henry, was eager to have a palace that could be compared to the residences of the sultans across the Mediterranean, a complex we consider to have been an inspiration for Henry in his interventions in Segovia. From the gardens, fountains, and even the halls used for court and private purposes by the king, we can perceive a close relationship with the Islamic past of the region.

Before the conquest of the Nasrid kingdom by the Catholic Monarchs, Seville was an example of this type of architecture and perhaps a symbol of the Castilian crown. If Henry IV erected a Qubba in Segovia, its inspiration might be found in Pedro's palace, in the well-known Hall of Ambassadors. The Qubba in this hall is an excellent example of Mudéjar architecture, where a dome with a half-orange shape representing the celestial can be observed, framed by a large square or cube, corresponding to the same hall where the throne and spectators were located. This complex also features golden arrocabes and translucent hanging mocarabes, allowing sunlight to pass through the dome. The symbolic elements of the earthly and celestial are presented before the spectator to demonstrate the king's place in relation to God, but also the opulence of this room as a representation of his magnificence.

However, the oriental element was neither exclusive to Henry nor rejected by Isabel during her reign as Queen of Castile. For the Catholic Monarchs, Sevilla was a space where they symbolically demonstrated their dominion over the Moors until the conquest of Granada, with the Alhambra being the main objective in their endeavor to showcase the conquest of the Islamic south.

Despite the Christian triumph, Sevilla continued to represent the victorious Christian over the defeated Islam. However, the oriental elements were maintained in the visual discourse without imposing the Gothic style, as Alfonso X did. The Catholic Monarchs intervened artistically by making minor modifications to improve the use of the spaces in the Seville Alcázar, while the Alhambra underwent similar modifications. The respect for the Mudéjar style can be appreciated in the ceiling created in 1492 during the restoration of one of the halls of the Alcázar, named Sala de los Reyes Católicos. In this room, an intervention features geometric-style arrocabes and mucarabes carved in wood. The composition includes emblems and heraldic symbols of the kingdoms forming the unified domain of Isabel and Ferdinand, with the arms of Granada under Castilian rule.

Given this scenario of Isabel's presumed acceptance of the Mudéjar style, it becomes necessary to question why Alfonso de Palencia considers the oriental as a sign and symptom of the king and his court's decadence.

### 3. *Maurophilia: sexuality and confessionality*

Since the 13th century, the seats of power of the Castilian kings were marked by Arab influence, whether they resided in former Moorish palaces or built their own, as was the case with Pedro I. We know this better from the material remains that still endure than from the accounts provided by chroniclers. Medieval chronicles were less interested in spaces than in the actions carried out within them. History in the Middle Ages, following the Ciceronian idea, was a *magistra vitae* that recorded models of behavior to avoid or emulate. Thus, it is not surprising that the narration is more effective in transmitting actions than in characterizing spaces, which only serve as coordinates in the kings' itineraries with scant sensory references.

Even in the chronicles dedicated to Enrique IV, which were decidedly critical of the king's maurophilia and the Mudéjar style he promoted for his living and ruling spaces, there is no mention of this as evidence of the king's degeneracy. We believe this is not accidental but rather indicative of an underlying logic. The Oriental element, used by the kings since Ferdinand III as a means of social distinction and political projection, became problematic for both chroniclers and the nobility to whom they answered when it shifted from being a decorative style acquired through conquest to a reminder of the power of the conquerors who had taken possession of the conquered culture. It then became the regulator of the king's behavior, signifying that the Arabic had conquered the will of the king, displacing the ethics of the Christian knight.

As a result, Pedro de Velasco, the eldest son of the Count of Haro, found it inexplicable that the nobles still followed the king, considering Enrique a "man steeped in infamous vices since his tenderest childhood," who had destroyed not only military discipline and order but also the court. In the former case, he had preferred to ride the Arabian horse (*gineta*), while at court he "preferred all the customs of the Moors": "in dress and gait, in eating and the manner of reclining to eat, and in other secret and more indecent excesses" (Fernández de Palencia, 1904, pp. 189-190).

What the narrative was emphasizing was a crisis of regal decorum that went beyond a mere aesthetic change. The concept of decorum, in Ciceronian terms, established an intimate relationship between aesthetics and customs on one hand, and ethics on the other (Camarero, 2000, pp. 61-82). Consequently, the regal figure that Enrique portrayed with his appearance and manners embodied a rejection of the ethical standards expected from the nobility's king. Embracing Moorish customs could imply that the king had even converted to Islam in the

depths of his soul, which called into question the divinely assigned obligation to expel infidels from the peninsula (Fernández de Palencia, 1904, p. 176).

The breach of decorum expected from a Castilian sovereign had immediate socio-political consequences. Enrique IV, aware of the rejection his lifestyle generated among the Grandes of the realm, “chose as his chamberlains and gatekeepers who conformed to his customs, and before whom he could indulge in the greatest obscenities without any shame” (Fernández de Palencia, 1904, p. 191). Appointing lower-ranking individuals to positions at court not only affected the honor of the nobility but also jeopardized the economic viability of their households. The nobles relied on positions and income from the king to obtain the economic resources that their lordships no longer provided (Álvarez Borge, 2023).

By breaching decorum, the king had strayed from the Aristotelian golden mean, from what was suitable for his rank and condition. He had let his will be swayed by passions, making him akin to a woman, even passive in sexual matters (González-Ruiz, 2017). These analogies were reinforced by a prejudice linking Jews and Muslims with sodomy. In Enrique’s case, this was highlighted further by sexual impotence, which, according to Palencia, rendered him incapable of active intercourse: after his first wedding night, “the Princess remained as if nothing had happened” (Fernández de Palencia, 1904, p. 8).

For Palencia, the root of the entire problem was ethical, an idea later taken up by later chroniclers such as Hernando del Pulgar. According to Pulgar, Prince Enrique, as the only child of Juan II, was raised with “great tenderness and in great vices and delights,” separated from his father in Segovia with his own household. Lacking guidance, “he did not resist any of his desires, nor did any other leash dare to restrain him, even though he saw him indulging in undue pleasures.” His character weakened, and “when he finally ruled after the death of King Don Juan, his father, he was already subject to young men he took as favorites” (Pulgar, 1878, p. 235).

It was accepted that behavior could be contagious, eventually affecting the whole soul. But in the case of the king, this was more severe; being a model for the entire kingdom, the degeneration he could provoke in customs was exponential, affecting what was proper for each social class and promoting chaos. Hence, Palencia reported that the king’s well-known indecorous actions ended up generating rumors “of similar corruption existing in the palace” (Fernández de Palencia, 1904, p. 173). Although this chronicler acknowledged that Enrique IV was not the only king who had contact with and even hosted Moors (Fernández de Palencia, 1904, p. 174), he accused him of being the only one who adopted

their customs: “in this, as in everything else, he accommodated himself to the tastes of those people, thus increasing our diverse fears even more” (Fernández de Palencia, 1904, p. 186).

However, it was not just the chronicles that criticized these indecorous attitudes of an inverted king. Gabriel Tetzl, who was part of Baron of Blatna’s entourage in 1466, encountered Enrique IV in Olmedo. Of the king, Tetzl claimed, “He eats, drinks, dresses, and prays in the Moorish manner and is an enemy of Christians; he violates the precepts of the law of grace and lives the life of an infidel” (1879, p. 166). The king, after rejecting Christian nobles as his knights and advisors, surrounded himself with a Moorish guard who did “whatever they pleased, and the king could do nothing against them” (168). In the eyes of the nobility, as the Moorish entourage increased, their customs and “their attire gained such acceptance that the king was more pleased with those who imitated them best” (Fernández de Palencia, 1904, p. 210). The Christian society of the kingdom was corrupted, abandoning the customs and modesty that had characterized it, casting doubt on the salvation of the entire realm.

#### CONCLUSION

As we can see, the narrative of the crisis of Enrique IV’s reign leads us to a central point that revolves around regal decorum and the violation of its ethics and aesthetics. This element serves as the tension point of the narrative and provides the key to interpreting the entire story. An indecorous and inverted king ruled Castile, lacking rectitude, and had become both a tyrant and impotent, both sexually and politically and militarily. Indeed, according to Palencia and his followers during the time of the Catholic Monarchs, the king was perceived as sodomized, both literally and metaphorically, by the Moors. This was an image difficult to digest for a nobility displaced from its role as advisers. Thus, supporting the infant Alfonso, in a way, meant taking sides for a decorum that the nobles expected from their king.

The nobility demanded to be led and represented by a king who projected courtesy in his manners, wealth in his attire, and power in his just and warrior-like actions. Yet, the king remained distant from all this decorum, always dressed in a mournful appearance, without a collar or any other royal or military insignia adorning him. He covered his legs with rough leggings and his feet with worn-out borcegués or other ordinary and dilapidated footwear, thus clearly displaying his lack of emotional control (Fernández de Palencia, 1904, p. 12).



Enrique IV's resistance to royal ritual and symbols deprived the nobles of intervening in the symbolic realm to performatively demonstrate their relevance and function within the kingdom's *res publica*. For Palencia, the king's attitude of disdain towards royal pomp was another indication of his preference for pagan customs.

The king's influential capacity meant that any breach of decorum was serious, as his bad habits, which eventually affected the duties of a good Christian, spread like an ethical and aesthetic infection throughout the Christian world:

“Not only has he introduced contagion among the Spanish, but he has also opened such a wide channel for evil throughout the world that, from the most remote times to the present, never before has such copious seed of malice spread, to the point where scarcely any place for good remains.” (Fernández de Palencia, 1904, pp. 2-3)

In summary, we can observe that the Oriental element present in the taste of the Castilian kings, as seen in their architecture, is not included among the elements that create tension in the narrative about Enrique IV. Instead, the chronicler exclusively focuses on the performative practices carried out by the king, which evidence his disdain for the decorum expected of his rank and status. The behaviors and image of the king, clear manifestations of his lack of ethical standards, are ultimately the aspects that interest the chronicler. He is intent on creating an anti-model from which to exalt the figure of Queen Isabel I, whose rights to the throne were in question when she assumed power in 1474 after the death of the king.

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