

“DIVUS ALPHONSUS REX”: THE INSCRIPTIONS DEDICATED TO ALFONSO THE MAGNANIMOUS AFTER HIS CONQUEST OF NAPLES (1442-1458)

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Resumen

Alfonso el Magnánimo, Rey de Aragón (1416-1458), debido a su vinculación al trono napolitano y a su papel en la política europea del “Quattrocento”, construyó un discurso de su imagen con el que representarse ante sus contemporáneos y la posteridad como el nuevo “princeps” auspiciado por el Humanismo italiano. En dicho discurso, dejando a un lado las obras de sus humanistas áulicos, la palabra escrita aparece asociada al Magnánimo en materiales tales como monedas, sellos, medallas, piezas cerámicas, de arquitectura o mármoles, articulándose a través de distintos tipos gráficos, desde la gótica textual hasta las mayúsculas humanísticas, pasando por resquicios de románicas y mayúsculas “alla greca”. El asentamiento del monarca en tierras italianas, tras la conquista de Nápoles en 1442, supone un salto cuantitativo y cualitativo en la producción de los materiales que conforman su imagen. El objetivo del presente artículo es, por tanto, analizar el uso que el monarca realizó de la palabra escrita, de sus lemas y divisas en definitiva, restableciendo el lugar de cada pieza dentro de su discurso representativo según su cronología concreta, motivación y público receptor, a partir del cambio que supone su establecimiento en Italia.

Paraules clau: Alfonso el Magnánimo, Inscripciones, Baja Edad Media, Corona de Aragón, Reino de Nápoles

Abstract

Because of his ties to the Neapolitan throne and his role in the European politics of the *Quattrocento*, Alfonso the Magnanimous, King of Aragon (1416-1458), built a discourse around his image with which to represent himself before his contemporaries and posterity as the new *princeps* sponsored by Italian Humanism. In addition to the works of his aulic humanists, this discourse associates the written word with the King in materials such as coins, seals, medals, pottery, architecture and marble, using different types of scripts, from textual Gothic to humanistic capitals, including vestiges of Romanesque scripts and *alla greca* capitals. The fact that the monarch took up permanent residence in Italian lands after the conquest of Naples in 1442, led to a quantitative and qualitative leap in the production of the materials that made up his image. Therefore, the aim of this article is to analyse the use he made of the written word, namely his mottoes and arms, and to restore the place of each piece within Alfonso's representative discourse according to its specific chronology, motivation and target audience, bearing in mind the turning point that his establishment in Italy meant.

Keywords: Alfonso the Magnanimous, Inscriptions, Late Middle Ages, Crown of Aragon, Kingdom of Naples

1. A Political History, a Representative Discourse

Alfonso V the Magnanimous, King of Aragon (1416-1458), given his links to the Neapolitan throne since 1421 and his consequent key role in Italian and European politics in the “Quattrocento” (RYDER 2008a; 2008b: 67-312), constructed a discourse around his image to present himself to his contemporaries and to create a memory for himself and go down in history (CAPILLA ALEDÓN 2015; 2019a). He develops an iconographic programme through which the sovereign appears and remains as the new “princeps” under the auspices of Italian Humanism. A new ruler of a Caesarean, virtuous and humanist nature who becomes one of the paradigms of modern European monarchies.

We have to bear in mind that Alfonso was a young man of about twenty-five years old when, in the summer of 1421, Queen Joan II of Naples designated him her adopted son, her legitimate heir and successor to the Neapolitan throne, but that he would not be “de facto” king of Naples until 1442, by right of conquest, and close to his forty-sixth birthday. The reason lies in the fact that two years after that favourable appointment, in September 1423, the Queen –fearing the consolidation of an Aragonese empire in the Mediterranean– revoked that appointment and sought the protection of Louis of Anjou, who had the support of Rome, personified by Pope Martin V. From that autumn of 1423, when he returned to Hispanic territories, an obsession grew in Alfonso that would shape his destiny: to become king of Naples.

In fact, after nearly nine years devoted to Iberian affairs, on Thursday May 29, 1432, Alfonso left the port of Barcelona for Italy. He would never return. In 1434 Louis III of Anjou and Queen Joan herself died. At the last minute, in the absence of direct descendants, she named René of Anjou, Louis’ brother, as successor to the throne of Naples, who was solemnly proclaimed as such by Pope Eugene IV on February 2, 1435. On the same day, Alfonso proclaimed himself the legitimate king of Naples and ordered its conquest (CAPILLA ALEDÓN 2017b). His strategy to seize “il Regno” had no only military and diplomatic dimensions, but also a propagandistic one. This large-scale propaganda, this promotion of his image, did not cease once he had conquered the Neapolitan throne; on the contrary, it intensified, for it was from 1442 onwards that his representative discourse was nourished by Humanism and exponentially enriched with all the symbolism of the classical style.

After the complete reconstruction of the King’s image programme (CAPILLA ALEDÓN 2015; 2019a) –like restoring the tiles of a mosaic– and given his propagandistic strategy and its chronological range, we can consider three claims about his programme as starting point of this analysis. The first one is that the political events derived from the Neapolitan cause, and the vicissitudes that the monarch would experience in this respect, would shape the lines followed by his image discourse. Therefore, until the conquest of the Parthenopean throne, a certain number of artworks are associated with each moment of the king’s political life.

The second claim is that, once he took possession of the Neapolitan throne, his contact with humanist Italy and the influence of this intellectual movement intensified. During this period of relative peace, there was a notable increase in the production of artworks representing the sovereign, and they did that in the classical style shaped by the new trends. These artworks did not replace those produced under the seal of medieval tradition, but rather on the contrary both models coexisted in the image of the sovereign and, as we shall see in specific cases, they even complemented each other.

Finally, the third claim is that from the King's image programme, which was projected on a great scale, we can infer three important considerations. First, that the narrative associated with the King's image cannot be linked to a specific territory, but to his person, thus spreading through all the lands of the Crown. Secondly, that the target audience is mainly the European courts and, among them, the Italian courts, political and cultural elites who use the same symbolism, the same representative language and, therefore, understand the image of the sovereign.¹ However, we also find artworks that were likely to be understood by the majority of his subjects. Thirdly, that the King's narrative includes artworks from different genres, from numismatics and sigillography, to *azulejos* [wall tiles] and epigraphy, just to mention a few.

Taking into account all these claims and considerations, and leaving aside the works dedicated to king Alfonso by the Humanists associated with his court –Lorenzo Valla, Bartolomeo Facio and, of course Antonio Beccadelli–² (BECCADELLI 1990; MONTANER 2007; ALBANESE 2000; CAPILLA ALEDÓN 2015: v. I, 58-79, 249-260, 261-289; 2019a: 190–200; 2018: 431-432; 2019b) it should be noted that among the preserved artworks that make up the King's narrative, those that contain nicknames or expressions that denote some quality or recall some feat of the sovereign are particularly relevant. We are talking about artworks that include a symbol or image of the King complemented by some sentence or prayer. The written word appears in different artworks associated with the Magnanimous, such as coins, sigils, ceramic objects, the splendid inscriptions that grace the triumphal arch at Castel Nuovo, the marble tondos that are housed today in the Museo Arqueológico Nacional in Madrid and in the Victoria and Albert Museum in London,³ or

¹ The case of Íñigo d'Avalos, Camerlengo of King Alfonso, serves as an example. He was a high-ranking member of the royal court in Naples. He also made use of representative elements consistent with the line followed by Alfonso, as well as by the other Italian courts of the time. This shows that the representation of power was a strategic line of action followed not only by the crown, but also by the court (SOLER 2017; 2018).

² Lorenzo Valla, *De Rebus Gestis Ferdinandi I*, Naples, 1445. Bartolomeo Facio, *De Rebus Gestis ab Alphonso primo Neapolitanorum rege commentariorum libri decem*, Naples, 1455. Antonio Beccadelli, *Antonii Panormitae in Alfonsi regis dicta aut facta memoratu digna*, Naples, 1455. See Roma, BAV, ms. Vat. lat. 1565, ms. Urb. lat. 496 and Valencia, Biblioteca Històrica de la Universitat de València (BUV), ms. 445, respectively. In relation to the most widespread and widely used scholarly editions see Valla, Lorenzo, *Historiarum Ferdinandi Regis Aragoniae Libri Tres*, Parisiis, Ex aedibus Simonis Colinaei, 1521. Facio, Bartolomeo, *De Rebus Gestis ab Alphonso primo Neapolitanorum rege commentariorum libri decem*, Lugduni, apud haeredes Sebastian Gryphii, 1562, and Beccadelli, Antonio, *De dictis et factis Alphonsi regis Aragonum libri quatuor*, Basilea, Ex Officina Hervagiana, 1538.

³ See MAN, inv. # 50249 and VAM, inv # A.97-1921, respectively.

the inscriptions in some medals created by different Humanists, such as Antonio di Puccio, “il Pisanello”.⁴ Furthermore, and given that, as we have said, the figure of Alfonso the Magnanimous combines representative elements of medieval tradition with the new models recovered from classical antiquity under the auspices of the new intellectual movement, the royal image will be conveyed through various graphic types, ranging from textual Gothic and humanistic capitals to traces of Romanesque and exquisite Greek-style capitals.

We have focused our present study on the artworks produced during the period of settlement in Naples or, as we have come to call it, the period of peace, as they constitute the quantitative and qualitative leap within the representative programme of King Alfonso and constitute the irrefutable proof that this narrative was imbued with Humanist ideals. These works present the king as a caesar, and speak to us through inscriptions produced during the last fifteen years of his life and rule, or, in other words, during the last decades of the Middle Ages.⁵

To be more specific, we will focus our analysis on three areas: the triumphal arch of Castel Nuovo and its inscriptions, the medals produced by renowned Humanists and the expressions engraved therein, and finally, the marble tondos with inscriptions encircling the image of King Alfonso.

2. From “re di guerra” [warring king] to “Divus Alphonsus Rex, Invictus et Triumphator”

Alfonso had earned himself the nickname of “re di guerra” in Italy. This is recorded in a memorial written in 1445 in which “Borso d’Este of Ferrara warned Alfonso that he needed to convince Italy that he was not the ‘re di guerra che si dice’ [warring king people know him by]” (RYDER 2008b: 313; FOUCARD 1879: 689-752), i.e. that he was not just a king from Hispania with a voracious thirst for land, but a learned king, a warrior maybe but virtuous according to the new model of prince prevailing in the Italy of the “Quattrocento”.

In fact, six long years of warfare weakened the Angevin enemy, until June 2, 1442, when the armies of Alfonso the Magnanimous fell on the city of Naples. René of Anjou acknowledged his defeat and abandoned the Kingdom of Naples, and his former allies began peace negotiations with the new king. Alfonso had won his longed-for throne (CAPILLA ALEDÓN 2017b). A little less than a year later, on February 26, 1443, he made his grand triumphal entry into Naples. (MARINELLI 1888: 101-131; NOCITI 1895; DELLE DONNE 2001: 147-177; 2006; 2011: 447-476; IACONO: 2009: 9-57; ALISIO & BERTTELLI & PINELLI 2006; HELAS 2009: 133-229). It was his first

⁴ See Madrid, Museo de la Fundación Lázaro Galdiano (MFLG), inv. # 00463 and Paris, Musée du Louvre (ML), inv. # OA 2877

⁵ CAPILLA ALEDÓN, “Inscripciones reales al límite de la Edad Media: Alfonso el Magnánimo y el uso de la palabra escrita dentro de su discurso representativo”. *I Congrés Internacional IRCVM: Escriure i llegir a l’edat mitjana* (Barcelona, Universitat de Barcelona April 25-27, 2018). See https://www.ub.edu/web/ub/ca/menu_eines/noticies/docs/PROGRAMA_C.IRCVM.pdf, [23/10/2019].

public appearance as “de facto” king of the Kingdom of Naples and he did so in the Caesarean-Augustan style or, in the words of Father Mariana: “a la manera y traza de los antiguos Romanos” [in the manner and style of the ancient Romans] (MARIANA 1791: t. VII, l. XXII, c. I, 217; CAPILLA ALEDÓN 2016: 21-41).⁶

Following the classical style of the virtuous general, in line with the new trends in the Italy of Humanism, Alfonso immortalised his victory in the monumental triumphal arch of Castel Nuovo –begun during his lifetime (1453) and completed during the reign of his son Ferrante (1471)– (HERSEY 1973; FILANGIERI DI CANDIDA 1932: 439-626; CAPILLA ALEDÓN 2015: v. I, 167-178; 2019a: 115-124). Alfonso, persevering once again, kept the idea of his “Roman-style” arch alive from February 1443 until its realisation ten years later. Proof of this is the letter he wrote to Cosimo de Medici in 1444 asking him to find him a sculptor “for a work I have in mind” (RYDER 2008b: 422), as well as the continuous acquisition of premade pieces of statuary that, from 1446 and while the main Italian artists, such as Pisanello and Donatello, were committed to their work in northern Italy, began to arrive at Castel Nuovo from Aquileia, Rome and Venice. (HERSEY 1973: n° 4, p. 65). He finally succeeded in getting the Dalmatian sculptors Pietro da Milano and Francesco Laurana –the main artists of the arch– to enter his service in the summer of 1453. (HERSEY 1973: 76 y 81; FILANGIERI DI CANDIDA 1932: 440 y 442). On 22 July 1455, an anonymous spy wrote to Francesco Sforza informing him of the construction work on the triumphal arch being erected at Castel Nuovo, revealing the progress of the work in mid-1455, as he says: “Sono già gitadi li fondamenti, et lavorasse per li marmorii con studio et singular diligentia” [The foundations have already been laid, and the marble is being worked on with care and singular diligence] (FILANGIERI DI CANDIDA 1937: 267). Thus, as Ryder states: “Hacia 1455 todo estaba dispuesto para empezar a erigir el monumental arco entre las torres de entrada a Castelnuovo” [By 1455 everything was ready to start building the monumental arch between the towers at the entrance to Castelnuovo] (RYDER 2008b: 423-424).

Of all the decorative elements that make up the arch, we are going to focus on the representation of the parade commemorating his victory.⁷ In it the monarch holds the orb of sovereignty in his left hand, and in his right hand he held the sceptre which, unfortunately, has been lost. In front of the monarch, at his feet, his emblem of the “siti perillós” [siege perilous] –a motive of the Arthurian cycle that Alfonso adopts as an allegory of the Neapolitan throne (GARCÍA 1997: 33-47; MOLINA 2011:11-44; JUNCOSA 2011: 141-166; BARRETO 2011: 301-328; DOMENGE 2014: 99-117; 2016:139-175; CAPILLA ALEDÓN 2017a)– symbolised by a burning flame –an element of the medieval tradition in a Roman-style artwork. Next to the chariot, two young men hold the royal pallium. Behind him we find the nobility, the first is his son, Fernando –future Ferrante I of Naples– and just to his left Giovanni Antonio del Balzo Orsini, prince of Taranto (FILANGIERI

⁶ In relation to the aforementioned studies on this commemorative celebration, Massip Bonet’s assessment of the Aragonese context is of great interest (MASSIP 1996: 371-386).

⁷ See Fig. 1.

DI CANDIDA 1932: 597). Ahead of the chariot, we find some boys playing the trumpets of triumph and Fortune, who is on foot. The people of Naples are represented in the sculptural body on the left; on the right we find “i tubicini”, the trumpeters, on horseback, who open the triumphal march. Above the triumphal relief, on the marble base, is one of the aforementioned inscriptions, which, in humanistic capital letters, reads: “Alfonsus, Regum Princeps, hanc condidit arcem”. In the lower part, at the foot of the triumphal procession and above the sculptural group composed of two griffins holding the coat of arms of Aragon, we find the other inscription, articulated in the same graphic type, in which we read: “Alfonsus Rex hispanus, sículus, italicus. Pius, clemens, invictus”.⁸

It should be noted that in both headings the humanistic capitals used are clearly inspired by the Roman capital script (GIMENO BLAY 2002: 159-175, 2005a: 1519-1564, 2005b: 23-81 y 86-137), identical to that used in the inscription that crowns the arch of Titus preserved in Rome (ROMA 2000: 94),⁹ although in the Neapolitan case we find an open “m”.¹⁰ In fact, the image of King Alfonso in this relief bears an interesting similarity to the representation of the Emperor Titus as *triumphator* –north inner panel of his memorial arch– where the emperor, accompanied and crowned by the goddess of Victory, is carried by a chariot, preceded by lictors and led by the goddess Rome looking backwards; it also bears a certain resemblance to the triumph of Emperor Marcus Aurelius, represented in one of the reliefs of the church of SS. Luca e Martina (ROMA 2000: 94-97; BLANCO FREIJEIRO 1989: 38-40, 43 y 76-81).¹¹

On the other hand, both inscriptions refer to the person to whom the construction is dedicated, and frame a narrative that represented the king in a very specific way, thus serving his propagandistic goals. They both contribute to shaping the image of the monarch and nurture it by becoming a key element of his representative discourse, through which he aims to go down in history as “Rey de Reyes” [King of Kings] and, beyond his mention as a Hispanic, Sicilian and Italian king, as a “pious, clement and undefeated” king, thus intending to highlight his personal qualities. It should also be noted that, given the tremendous public exposure of the arch –its monumentality and visibility–

⁸ With regard to the epigraphs on the triumphal arch, as well as other details of the arch, an epistle by Beccadelli has been preserved, of which, unfortunately, we only know that it was written on the first of December. However, given its content and the date of Beccadelli’s death, it is certainly prior to the completion of the arch. See Antonio Beccadelli, *Epistolarum Campanarum Liber*, Naples, 1435-1458. Rome, Biblioteca Universitaria Alessandrina, 1553, impreso K d.42 f2, f. 113r.-v (SORIA 1956: 248).

⁹ Rome, 71 d. C. Rome, Roman Forum, “in situ”.

¹⁰ We must bear in mind that despite the coherence of the models that serve as the basis for the new graphic types sought and used by the humanists, there is still a lack of conformity, due precisely to this early search for a model, but also to the fact that in Roman epigraphic products within the Roman capital script, there are also irregularities or differences within the same graphic sign. It should also be borne in mind that Roman inscriptions, depending on their material support: stone or metal, have a different writing appearance. In the case of metal, we find forms which, on occasions, are more reminiscent of the rustic capital than of epigraphic writing. For some examples see GORDON 1983:121-123, 133-134 and 159-160, no. 46, no. 54 and no. 74, illustrations 29, 35 and 48, respectively. In the first two cases (*CIL* 6.930 y *CIL* 6.1492) we are talking about bronze plates. The last case (*CIL* 10.6569) is a marble. On the open “m” of the script used in the epigraph see also GIMENO BLAY 2005a: 1526-1527.

¹¹ *Triumph of Marcus Aurelius*, Rome, 176 d.C. Rome, Museo del Palazzo dei Conservatori, inv. # MC0808.

and its parallelism with some of the ancient ruins surviving in southern Italy, his portrait as a great sovereign, conqueror, and emperor of the Mediterranean was most easily intelligible to his subjects.¹²

The bronze medal that Cristoforo di Geremia dedicated to the monarch around 1458,¹³ is closely related to the inscriptions on the arch, specifically the first one (CAPILLA ALEDÓN 2017d: 16-17). The medal is about 75.5 mm in diameter and has a pearled border. On the obverse, in the centre, we find the bust of the king, facing right (resting on an open royal crown), wearing a rich cuirass and a mantle. Around him we find the motto in humanistic capital script: “Alphonsus Rex Regibus imperans et bellorum victor”. On the reverse king Alfonso is wearing an antique (Roman-style) armour, and is seated facing right. He holds a sword and an orb, and is being crowned by Bellona, Roman goddess of war (GRIMAL 2004: 70), who holds a palm branch in her left hand, and by Mars, nude, who wears a helmet and carries a trophy over his shoulder. Encircling the scene we find the motto: “Coronant victorem regni Mars et Bellona”. The inscription in the exergue announces the name of the designer: “Cristophorus Hierimia”

It is worth mentioning that King Alfonso is again characterised as “King of Kings”, but even more relevant is the presence of Bellona in this medal, since there was a temple dedicated to this goddess of war in ancient Rome, beyond the pomerium, that the Senate used to receive ambassadors or generals who returned victorious from their war campaigns, and whom it was unwise to let into the city immediately because of that very triumph, as it gave them a strengthened position vis-à-vis other powers in the “urbs” (HOWATSON 1991: 113). Surely, in Alfonso’s case, this second aspect gave him a halo of strength in the face of his Italian rivals. This medal makes a reference to victory, to his triumph, for which he is being crowned and for which he deserves to be respected.

Another commemorative artwork is the bronze medal, 108 mm in diameter, which Antonio di Puccio, “il Pisanello”, dedicated to the monarch around 1449.¹⁴ On the obverse, we find the bust of the king, facing right, wearing a cuirass and a mantle. The bust, as in the case of the medal designed by Geremia, rests on an open royal crown. To the right and left of the bust, written in humanistic capital script, we find the first part of the motto: “Divus Alphonsus Aragoniae utriusque Siciliae, Valenciae, Hierusalem”. Encircling the central image, and following the perimeter of the coin, we find the rest of the motto: “Hungarie, Maioricarum, Sardinie, Corsice Rex, Comes Barchinone, Dux Athenarum et Neopatrie, ac eciam Comes Rosillionis et Ceritanie”.

¹² Behind the arch of King Alfonso, another smaller arch opens into the interior of the fortress. It represents the coronation of Ferdinand I of Naples (Barletta, February 4, 1459). On a small plinth that divides the aforementioned scene from the “genietti alati” holding the coat of arms with the arms of Aragon and Naples, a new epigraph appears, written in the same script as the previous ones, in which we read: “Successi Regno Patrio cunctisque probatus et trabeam et Regni Sacrum diadema recepi”. This epigraph should be associated with Ferdinand and not with his predecessor on the Neapolitan throne..

¹³ See Fig. 2.

¹⁴ See Fig. 3.

The central part of the reverse shows a triumphal chariot driven to the right by an angel who holds a sword in his hand symbolising justice (CAPILLA ALEDÓN 2016: 33) and drawn by four horses. The inscription in the exergue shows the name of the artist: “Opus Pisani pictoris”. The upper part of the reverse displays an inscription written in the same Humanistic script: “Fortitudo mea et laus mea Dominus, et factus est michi in salutem” (Is 12, 2). It is a motto from medieval tradition associated with King Alfonso, since we find it, prior to this medal, in a golden bull issued by him in 1445, and it is also a motto commonly used in the Catalan-Aragonese Crown, as it dates back to coins of James II of Aragon (CAPILLA ALEDÓN 2017d: 18-20).

The target audience of these two medals are clearly the Italian courts. However, in the case of Pisanello’s medal, we see the different titles of the king combined with a motto from medieval tradition, thus revealing the complexity of King Alfonso’s narrative. Pisanello’s medal combines medieval and Renaissance elements.

“Il Pisanello”, created other medals for King Alfonso during the last decade of his reign, a period when his image discourse becomes even more complex.¹⁵ The artwork subject of our analysis constitutes the vehicle for the transmission of a carefully crafted message that will be aimed at the Italian political and cultural elite. It is a medal with a diameter of 110 mm, designed in 1448, and cast in bronze for the members of the Neapolitan court in 1449.¹⁶ The artist’s signature appears at the bottom of the reverse, where we read: “Pisani pictoris opus”.

On the obverse, we find the bust of the king, facing right, wearing a coat of mail and an armour. On the left there is a helmet decorated with a shining sun and the emblem of the open book – symbol of wisdom and knowledge– in which we can read –although it is difficult to see in the reproductions, even in the silver medal kept in the MAN (GRANADOS ORTEGA 2016: 601-618)–¹⁷ the motto “Vir sapiens dominabitur astris” (“The wise man will master his destiny”, literally “the stars”). On the right there is a royal crown and the year the medal was coined. On top of the king we read “Divus Alphonsus Rex”, and beneath him “Triumphator et pacificus”. The reverse of the piece depicts a scene in the middle of a kind of stony amphitheatre with an eagle in the centre, perched on a dry tree. Around it, perched on the ground, four others contemplate the dead body of perhaps a deer. On either side of the victorious eagle we read: “Liberalitas Augusta”, thus pointing out to the generosity of the king. All the inscriptions are engraved in humanistic capital script.

¹⁵ There are two other extant medals associated with the figure of King Alfonso: one by the aforementioned Pisanello, on the reverse of which is a scene of a prince killing a boar –one of the Twelve Labours of Hercules– with the inscription “Venator intrepidus”. Madrid, MAN, inv. # 1993/80/2; other by Polo d’Antonio da Ragusa, in which reverse we find Nemesis, one of the representations of the Roman goddess of justice (Naples, private collection). Given the simplicity of their analysis in comparison with the medals presented in this study, it has been considered appropriate to refer the reader to the corresponding bibliography. Therefore, for the complete study of both pieces see CAPILLA ALEDÓN 2015: v. I, 215-218 y 219; 2019a: 153-156 and 156-157, respectively.

¹⁶ See Figs. 4a and 4b.

¹⁷ Madrid, MAN, inv. # 1993/80/1.

The warrior's helmet and the book of the wise are united in the figure of Alfonso. According to Esteban Lorente, these attributes characterise him as a wise king and new Apollo, since, according to him, the helmet in the medal is that of Apollo-Sun, full of all wisdom, since astrology had a central place in university curricula (ESTEBAN LORENTE 2000: 150). On the interest of European princes on this subject, Ferrer de Valdecebro wrote in his *El cetro con ojos*: "Con la matemática alcanzará el sitio del mundo, el movimiento de los cielos, las navegaciones y sus rumbos, los climas y las constelaciones" [With mathematics you will reach the place in the world, the movement of the heavens, the navigations and their courses, the climates and the constellations] (FERRER DE VALDECEBRO 1678: 47-50), and mentions as examples Ptolemy the Astrologer, Alfonso X of Castile, Julius Caesar, Prometheus and Achilles, whose shield is engraved with constellations. This insight is condensed in the expression "Vir sapiens dominabitur astris".

What is truly relevant for us is precisely that, for the first time, the emblem of the open book, associated with the figure of King Alfonso since 1422 (CAPILLA ALEDÓN 2017c), is displayed together with a text. We know that the expression "Vir sapiens dominabitur astris" decorated the Great Hall of Castel Nuovo since, as Amadeo Serra Desfilis has shown (SERRA DESFILIS 2000: 13; DOMENGE 2010: 290-339), before the fire of 1919, the arms of Aragon, Naples, Hungary, Jerusalem and Sicily, along with the book with the motto "Vir sapiens dominabitur astris", and the "siege perilous" with the motto "In dextera tua salus mea, Domine" (CAPILLA ALEDÓN 2017d) adorned this hall.¹⁸ Given the destruction of the Great Hall during the fire of 1919, Pisanello's medal is the first extant evidence of the royal symbol of the open book with the motto.

On the other hand, we know that the motto "Vir sapiens dominabitur astris" was widely used in the Middle Ages and was attributed to Ptolemy; in fact, it is sometimes accompanied by the expression "Dicit Ptolomeus". Also, "Vir sapiens dominabitur astris" is the incipit of John of Saxony's *Commentary* on Al-Qabisi's *Liber introductorius ad magisterium indicium astrarum*, and on Porphyry's *Isagoge* (THORNDIKE Y KIBRE 1963: col. 1699). It can be concluded, therefore, that Pisanello associates the book with King Alfonso in order to link him to universal knowledge, and particularly to the knowledge of sciences and liberal arts. On this issue, Enrico de Rosa wrote

I Principi italiani hanno dunque in uggia il Castigliano, e fanno correre voce che sotto tale aspetto egli sia solo un barbaro in grado neppure di competere. (...) I Principi italiani sottovalutano però l'uomo e il suo passato, segnato dal vero e proprio fossato scavato tra sé e la gretta mentalità imperante tra i suoi connazionali, a dispetto dei quali aveva addirittura deciso di far apparire un invitante «libro aperto» tra le imprese del suo stemma. Il Trastàmara non era pertanto giunto in Italia impreparato (ROSA 2007: 39).

Leaving aside the question of the "open book", the imagery chosen by Pisanello for this medal dedicated to King Alfonso introduces further aspects that we would like to add to complement the

¹⁸ Text from a prayer for the Sunday mass (CORPUS 1993: 175, no. 1233, IV^a and 257-258, no. 2270, II^a).

discussion. The medal is definitely a Humanist artwork, since it uses the figurative language of the Classical period. In fact, this particular depiction of the eagle is also present in ancient coins such as the hemidrachm of Akragas, pointed out by George L Hersey (HERSEY 1973: no. 21), and the script is a Roman-style script (GIMENO BLAY 2002: 159-175, 2005a: 1519-1564, 2005b: 23-81 y 86-137). It represents, as we pointed out, the king's generosity, which is also expressed in the inscription “*Liberalitas augusta*” and which refers to one of the main virtues that the new prince should possess, the source of which is to be found in Pliny the Younger's *Panegyric in praise of Trajan* (ESTEBAN LORENTE 2000: 150; WITTKOVER 1977: 122).

According to George Francis Hill, the eagle giving part of its prey to the small birds of prey was the medieval “*exemplum*” of liberality (HILL 1984: v. I, 12). This magnificence is embodied by the scene of the five eagles on the reverse, which would represent the division of his empire among the members of his family. The five eagles would thus symbolise: his three brothers, the infantes Henry, John and Peter, who died in 1438 and who had been governor of Naples between 1423 and 1433 while Alfonso was not in Italy; his son Ferdinand, Duke of Calabria and heir to the throne of Naples; and himself (as the eagle atop the tree), conqueror of an empire –the prey dead at the foot of the tree. It should also be noted that the eagle is the symbol of the House of Hohenstaufen, the immediate predecessor of the House of Aragon in the dominion of the Kingdom of Sicily (LOS REYES 1993: 153). Furthermore, with the inscription “*Divus Alphonsus Rex. Triumphator et pacificus*” Pisanello portrays a divine king and raises echoes of the Roman imperial period. King Alfonso is victorious because he triumphs over Naples and ceremoniously enters the city, and, finally, he is also a peaceful king because, like Augustus and his well-known “*pax romana*”, Alfonso restores tranquillity to the “*Regno*”. “*Rex Triumphator*” and “*Divus Alphonsus Rex*” are precisely two of the inscriptions that encircle the bust of the monarch on the two marbles preserved in the MAN and the VAM, respectively.

The tondo housed in the MAN of Madrid is dated 1449, and it shows the motto: “*Invictus Alphonsus Rex triumphator*”.¹⁹ It is a marble artwork, 60cm in diameter and 4cm in depth, with the bust of the king, facing right, wearing a coat of mail and an armour. To his right we find the royal crown, and to his left a bunch of millet, the symbol of incorruptibility. We find a vertical “*m*”, but unlike in Pisanello's medals, it is not open. Although it has some similarities with Pisanello's medals, he is not the author of this tondo. Nonetheless, his work could have served as model for it,²⁰ since it is very much alike the “*Liberalitas Augusta*” medal – the bust, including the details of the cuirass, the jugular vein of the king's neck, and the royal crown on the right, the open book with the astronomical motto being the only difference, as it is replaced by the bunch of millet. According to Juan M^a Cruz Yábar (CRUZ YABAR 2008: 129, no. 23), the artist behind this tondo could be Francesco Laurana or Pietro da Milano, both marble sculptors that took part

¹⁹ See Fig. 5.

²⁰ See Pisanello, Bust and profile drawing of King Alfonso V 1450ca and sketches for the “*Liberalitas Augusta*” medal, 1448 (Paris, Musée du Louvre, *Codex Vallardi*, inv. # 2481r and 2307r, respectively).

in the construction of the triumphal arch of Castel Nuovo. What we can claim is that, as in the case of Pisanello's medals, it is an artwork where we find elements typical of the language of the Classical period recovered by the Humanist Italy, with elements of medieval traditions such as the mottos (OSMA 1909: 39-40; ALFONSO V: 1996; CAPILLA ALEDÓN 2017d).

Given its simplicity and the large size of one of Alfonso's identifying emblems, the bunch of millet, this artwork is accesible to a wider audience than the three medals (OSMA 1909). However, given that the place where it was intended to be displayed is not known, we cannot be more precise as to the audience for which it was originally intended. In any case, it should be reiterated that the millet is enough to identify Alfonso and to establish in the mind of the public the connection between the material testimony and the character depicted in it.

Finally, the second marble tondo, which is housed in the VAM of London,²¹ is dated to the second half of the 15th century. It is 24,5 cm in diameter and 3,2 cm in depth, and depicts the bust of King Alfonso in right profile dressed in Roman-style attire, like a Roman emperor: with a toga and a diadem. The cloak hangs in folds much like those in classical sculptures. Examples of these are the reliefs found in the Palazzo della Cancelleria, which depict the *Adventus Vespasiani* and the *Profectio Domiciani*,²² or the bust of Caracalla housed in the Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Napoli.²³ The Roman-style haircut is a novelty compared to previous representations of the monarch, and shows once again the desire to imitate the aesthetic models of the Classical period. The inscription "Divus Alphonsus Rex", in humanistic capital script, is the same that we find in Pisanello's medal referring to the "Liberalitas augusta".

3. Conclusions

King Alfonso, following the model of the imperial Rome and of his admired and widely read Julius Caesar, coined for himself different names and representations: "Invictus et triumphator", "triumphator et pacificus", the wise Apollo, the divine Augustus, the imperial eagle of the "Liberalitas Augusta", king of Parthenope crowned by Mars and Bellona, the victorious general that celebrates his triumph. The arch, medals, and marble tondos attest to the fact that the man known as the "re di guerra" was successfully incorporated into the cultural and political landscape of Quattrocento Italy and became the new "princeps" sponsored by Italian Humanism.

Therefore, the evidence concerning the representation of King Alfonso, given the period in which they are devised and produced and the tremendous influence on most of them of Italian Humanism in the mid-15th century, is very different from most of the images produced by his predecessors on the throne of the Crown of Aragon, although some representations survive and

²¹ See Fig. 6

²² Rome, 1st century. Vatican City, MV, Gregoriano Profano Museum, inv. # 13392, 13395, 13389 and 13391.

²³ Rome, 2nd century. MANN, room XXIX, Collezione Farnese, *Sculture e Ritratti romani*, in exhibition.

continue in Alfonso. However, and beyond the necessary political use of previous symbols, Alfonso also used representations from medieval traditions, as is the case of his personal emblems and mottos, some of which evoke characters and events from the Arthurian cycle. Therefore, these representations were inspired by other values and articulated through the forms and means available at the time: those of the medieval tradition.

It is therefore necessary to stress that the artworks produced during the last decade of his government –in the full maturity of his politics and his life– should not bias our overall view of King Alfonso’s narrative. He was a monarch between two worlds, the medieval and the modern, and it is precisely this duality that reveals the enormous complexity of his symbolic discourse. The material evidence that accounts for the king’s narrative shows a great typological variety and it is articulated through different visual and verbal components, some of which were retrieved from the past and others were a novelty in the Crown of Aragon and the rest of the territories of the Iberian Peninsula, as they were influenced by the classical values and models that Humanism had recovered from Antiquity.

Through these artworks, produced after his conquest of Naples in 1442, King Alfonso cultivated an image of himself as a new Caesar, and this is how future centuries will remember him. In the last stage of his life, Alfonso employed the same language the rest of the Italian courts used. The potential of his propagandistic programme had reached the highest standards in terms of exquisiteness and ability to communicate with its audience, of which we are all part today.

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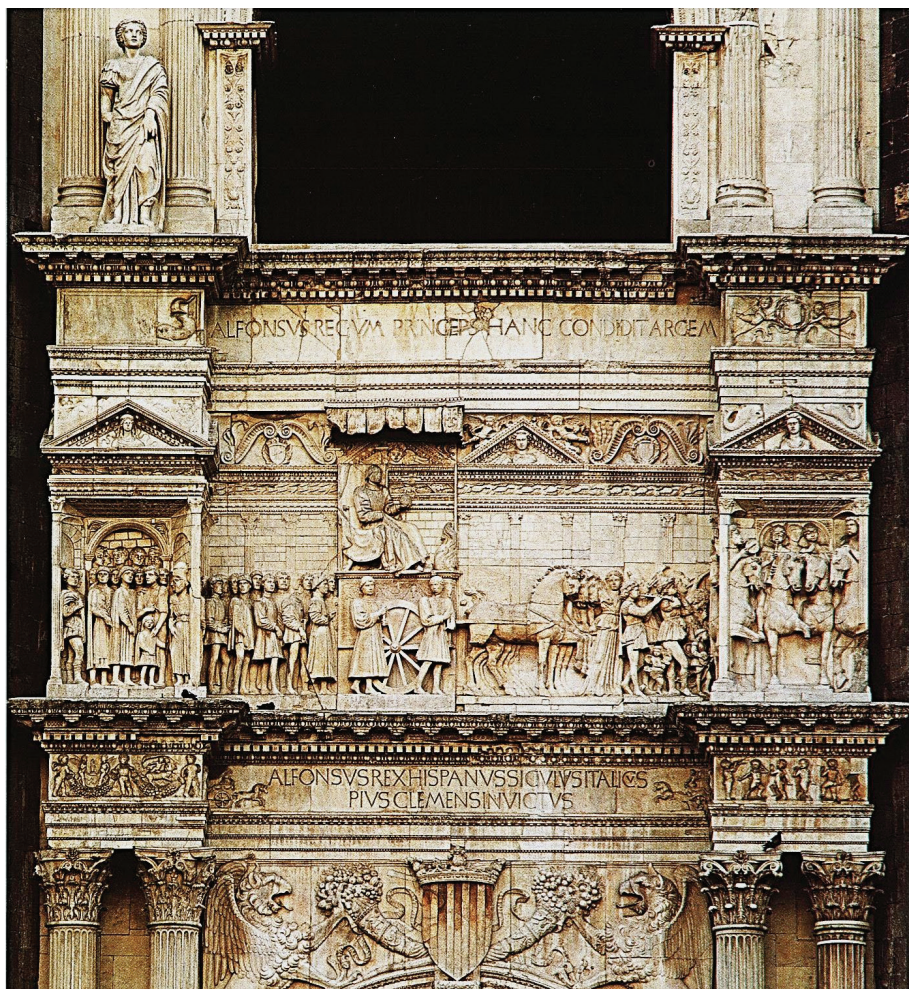


Fig.1 Representation of the royal triumph in the arch of Castel Nuovo, Naples (*in situ*). Image by the author.
Author's archive.



Fig.2 Cristoforo di Geremia, Medal of King Alfonso V, 1458 ca. Madrid, MAN, inv. # 1993/80/19-2.
Image from Hill 1984: v. I, 197. Author's archive



Fig.3 Antonio di Puccio, il Pisanello, Medal of King Alfonso V, 1449 ca. Paris, ML, inv. # OA 2877.
Image from Hill 1984: v. I, 12 (See also Sindona 1962: 128, n° 158). Author's archive.



Fig.4a Antonio di Puccio, il Pisanello, Medal of King Alfonso V, 1449. Madrid, MFLG, inv. # 00463.
Image from Hill 1984: v. I, 12 (See also Sindona 1962: 127, n° 153). Author's archive.



Fig.4b 18th century silver reproduction of the original bronze medal made by Pisanello in 1449. Madrid, MAN, inv. # 1993/80/1. Image from Granados Ortega 2016: 604. Author's archive.



Fig.5 Relief of King Alfonso V in a marble tondo, Attributed to Francese Laurana or to Pietro da Milano, Naples, 1449. Madrid, MAN, inv. # 50249. Image from Lozano López 1996: 20. Author's archive.

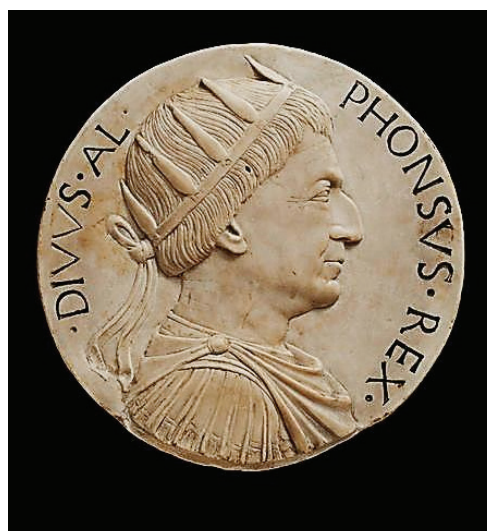


Fig.6 Marble tondo of King Alfonso V, Naples, sculpted between 1450 and 1500. 24'5 cm Ø, 3'2 cm depth. London, VAM, inv. # A.97-1921. Image from VAM. Author's archive.