Preface

The seventh centennial of Alfonso the Learned's death in 1284 occasioned an outburst of international congresses, conferences, and celebrations. The earliest of these, at the University of California, Los Angeles, I designed to display the talents of the burgeoning American school of medieval Hispanists. Two separate books resulted. *The Worlds of Alfonso the Learned and James the Conqueror: Intellect and Force in the Middle Ages* appeared in 1985 from Princeton University Press and under the auspices of UCLA's Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies. It focused on Alfonso's social and political context, his ruinous financial policies, the municipal militias supporting his crusades and bellicose adventures, and his cycle of contributions to Roman law, all in a comparative perspective with his rival and neighbor, James of Aragon, with parallel date-charts to synchronize Alfonsine activity with wider European history. As a companion volume that same year, I presented *AlfonsoX the Learned: Emperor of Culture, 1284-1984* in the form of a special issue of *Thought*. Its contributors were not from the American school of medieval Hispanist history but from the literary-cultural Alfonsinists.

The historical book was widely reviewed in both the professional and popular press; the cultural book, by reason of its journal format, inevitably received less formal attention—all of it, happily, welcoming. The need for a wider and more accessible exploration of the cultural themes inspired the present book. Its scale and range are larger. The number of studies has increased from eight to thirteen. Of these thirteen, however, eight are entirely original and formed no part of the *Thought* volume. Three more are so radically revised as to constitute new, and newly titled, contributions. The remaining two, including my own introduction, remain substantially the same as in *Thought*. Of the wholly new articles, two are by contributors to the original journal volume. This means that six new authors appear, and eleven new articles of the present thirteen chapters are new. To emphasize the novelty of content while indicating some continuity, the book's title is reversed and it now has a subtitle.

The present set of scholarly studies is designed to advance our knowledge of important aspects of El Sabio's contributions to Western culture. At the same time, the studies are broadly conceived and designed so as to be accessible to and interesting for the educated general reader. None of the studies is a general synthesis or popularized essay, however; these are serious and focused original works, useful to specialists and requiring the general reader's careful attention. The combined authors, as a glance at the list of contributors will indicate, constitute a representative roll call from the major literary and cultural Alfonsine scholars in this country. Had more space been available, the number of distinguished senior and junior medieval Hispanists might easily have been tripled. The chapters afford a wide vista of Alfonso's own achievements, treating his ruler-image, his role in the evolution of language, his Jewish translators/collaborators for Arabic science, his art in its European context, his chancery-scriptorium interchange, his influence on Dante and on contemporary Italy and France, and his new historiography as well as his music, legal contributions, and connections with drama. An essay by the king's most indefatigable bibliographer appropriately closes the sequence, pointing the reader toward further search and discovery.

In presenting the Learned King's achievements, this book follows the practice widespread among medievalist Hispanists of usually omitting modern accents and tildes from the titles of the king's books. It does not adhere to this policy slavishly. The word *crónica* has particularly kept its accent, since many
Hispanists are disconcerted to encounter it in the nude. The same is true of the familiar Espéculo. The Cantigas, which appears here so frequently, would have had its accent on the first syllable; a fair number of Hispanists incorrigibly mispronounce this fine Galician word in Castilian mode. No apology is needed for Englishing cortes, as even American newspapers do, but several other Spanish terms have been similarly appropriated where it seemed a sensible expedient. A few kings also appear in English garb, because they either are more familiar in that guise (Frederick II of Germany-Sicily) or ambiguously have more than one alien form (Jaume/Jaime of the Realms of Aragon and his son Pere/Pero, here as James and Peter, respectively).

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