

RYAN SZPIECH

The Art of Amazement: Wonder and Fictionality in Ramon Llull's *Vita coetanea* (1311)

RESUM

Aquest treball tracta el tema de la «meravella» i de la «sorpresa» com a punts de partida per explorar el paper de la ficció a la *Vita coetanea* de Ramon Llull. Tenint en compte que la *vita* hagiogràfica, com a subgènere de la *història*, combinava el debat sobre la realitat de les vides passades amb la plausibilitat de l'*exemplum*, assenyalarem en primer lloc que la *vita* medieval generalment evitava l'associació amb l'artificialitat de la *fabula* pura de manera que qualsevol contingut extraordinari o antinatural quedava restringit a l'àmbit del miracle i la meravella (*mirabilia, miracula*), i fora de l'àmbit de la creació poètica o de la imaginació. Seguint aquesta distinció, l'autobiografia de Llull fa un ús innovador de la fórmula de la *vita* ja que incorpora l'ús dels elements de la meravella i de la sorpresa. La dramatització de la meravella li permet a Llull adaptar la fórmula de la *vita* hagiogràfica per crear una «hagiografia secular». D'aquesta manera, autoritza el seu propi mètode de la missió, en contrast amb l'enfocament més acceptat dels dominics que feia recurs constant a l'autoritat dels textos sagrats.

PARAULES CLAU: Ramon Llull, *Vita coetanea*, hagiografia, *fabula*, *exemplum*, ficció, meravella.

ABSTRACT

This essay considers the theme of «wonder» and amazement as starting points to explore the role of fictionality in Llull's *Vita coetanea*. Considering that the hagiographic *vita*, as a subgenre of *historia*, combined a discussion of the reality of past lives with the plausibility of the *exemplum*, we first note that medieval *vitae* generally avoided an association with the artificiality of the pure *fabula* by attributing any extraordinary or unnatural content to the realm of wonders and miracles (*mirabilia, miracula*) rather than poetic inventiveness or imagination. Llull's autobiography, following this distinction, makes innovative use of the *vita* form through its use of wonder and amazement. The dramatization of wonder allows Llull to adapt the form of the hagiographic *vita* to create a «secular hagiography». In this way, he authorizes his own unique missionizing method in opposition to the more recognized approach of the Dominicans that was based on appeal to scriptural authority.

KEYWORDS: Ramon Llull, *Vita coetanea*, hagiography, *fabula*, *exemplum*, fiction, wonder.

Bulletí de la Reial Acadèmia de Bones Lletres de Barcelona, LV, 2015-2016, p. 223-253

RYAN SZPIECH*

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The *Vita coetanea* (*Contemporary Life*), a Latin account of the life and career of Mallorcan polymath and missionary Ramon Llull (1232-1316), is one of the most detailed autobiographical texts of the later Middle Ages. The text might best be termed a «partial autobiography» because Llull did not write it with his own hand but rather, as the introduction says, «at the instance of certain monks who were friends of his, recounted and allowed to be put down in writing what follows».¹ The text resulted from Llull's collaboration with the Carthusian monks of Vauvert in Paris in 1311, while Llull was en route to the Church Council of Vienne (1311-1312). It begins with a story about one night around 1263, when Llull sat down to write a love song for his beloved, and unexpectedly had a vision of Jesus:

* University of Michigan.

** This study has been completed as part of the group research project *Fuentes medievales y modernas para el estudio de las relaciones transculturales en el Mediterráneo: redacción y transmisión*, financed by the Spanish Ministerio de Economía y Competitividad: FFI2015-63659-C2-1-P (MINECO/FEDER), PI: Cándida Ferrero Hernández and Linda Jones.

1. Ramon LLULL, *Doctor Illuminatus. A Ramon Llull Reader*, Anthony Bonner (ed.), Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1994, p. 11; The original is found in Ramon LLULL, *Raimundi Lulli Opera Latina, Tomus VIII* (CCCL 34), Hermogenes Harada (ed.), Turnhout, Brepols, 1980, p. 272: «... Quorundam suorum amicorum religiosorum deuictus instantia narrauit scribique permisit ista».

Ramon, while he was still a young man and seneschal to the king of Majorca, was very given to composing worthless songs and poems and to doing other licentious things. One night he was sitting beside his bed about to compose and write in his vulgar tongue a song to a lady whom he loved with a foolish love; and as he began to write this song, he looked to his right and saw our Lord Jesus Christ on the cross, as if suspended in midair. This sight filled him with fear.²

His vision repeated itself each night over the next few days and each time Llull hastened to bed in fear without paying heed to his vision. Eventually, however, his compunction overcame him and he realized that God wanted him to dedicate his life to missionizing and devout service.

He therefore began to turn over in his mind what service would be most pleasing to God, and it seemed to him that no one could offer better or greater service to Christ than to give up his life and soul for the sake of his love and honor, and to accomplish this by carrying out the task of converting to His worship and service the Saracens who in such numbers surrounded the Christians on all sides...suddenly, a certain impetuous and all-encompassing notion entered his heart: that later on he would have to write a book, the best in the world, against the errors of unbelievers.³

Llull did in fact begin to write, and produced not one book of polemic and missionary work, but hundreds. He is credited with over 250 texts in Catalan and Latin, and there is evidence that he also wrote a number of works in Arabic, although these are now lost.⁴ Llull was, without a doubt,

2. LLULL, *Doctor*, p. 11; Llull, *Raimundi*, p. 272-273: «...dum iuuenis adhuc in uanis cantilenis seu carminibus componendis et aliis lasciuuis saeculi deditus esset nimis, sedebat nocte quadam iuxta lectum suum, paratus ad dictandum et scribendum in suo uulgari unam cantilenam de quadam domina, quam tunc amore fatuo dilegebat. Dvm igitur cantilenam praedictam inciperet scribere, respiciens a dextris uidit Dominum Iesum Christum tanquam pendentem in cruce. Quo uiso timuit.»

3. LLULL, *Doctor*, p. 12; LLULL, *Raimundi*, p. 274: «Coepit ergo intra se cogitando tractare, quod esset seruitium maxime placans».

4. The best resource for navigating Llull's complicated bibliography of works is the Ramon Llull database, which has catalogued and organized all the variant titles of Llull's many works and for each work listed the year and place of writing, the original language, all medieval and modern translations, and relevant bibliography. See <<http://orbita.bib.ub.edu/llull>> and also the comprehensive study by Pere VILLALBA I VARNEDA, *Ramon Llull: Escriptor i filòsof de la diferència. Palma de Mallorca, 1232-1316*, Bellaterra, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, 2015; also useful is the

one of the most notorious polyglots of the later Middle Ages, and his overwhelmingly broad knowledge and extreme productivity highlight the intellectual caliber of the crown of Aragon at the turn of the fourteenth century.

Llull follows his initial moment of spiritual conversion and decision to write «the best [book] in the world» with a telling statement: «Since, however, he could conceive neither the form nor the manner of writing such a book, he was most amazed (*nimum mirabatur*). Nevertheless, the greater and more frequent was his wonder (*plus et saepius est miratus*), the more strongly the inspiration or notion of writing the aforementioned book grew in him». ⁵ This statement and the emotions it describes contrast directly with his previous statement that his lack of knowledge was not a cause of surprise so much as sadness. «Coming back to himself, however, he realized that he had none of the knowledge necessary for such an undertaking...this thought worried him, and he began to feel very sad». ⁶ Given the repetition of his confession of ignorance, the mention of «wonder» in his second statement stands out as a striking detail. Comparison with Llull's other work makes the detail stand out more, as it seems to make a direct reference to Llull's earlier *Fèlix, o Llibre de meravelles* («Felix, or the Book of Wonders», 1287-1289), one of Llull's two explicitly fictional texts. Unlike *Fèlix*, however, the *Vita* was not intended to be fiction, but is an ostensibly «true» account of his early career. Yet the two texts clearly have much in common, and the presence of wonder and surprise on the part of the protagonists of each is one key to understanding those similarities. While wonder serves as an important fictional device in *Fèlix*, its place in the *Vita* is less obvious. What precisely is the role of wonder and amazement in the *Vita*, in particular at this moment in the *Vita's* chronology, a decisive point in Llull's early career in which he began a life-long struggle to convert non-believers through new and innovative means? How does

introduction by Alexander FIDORA and J. E. RUBIO, *Raimundus Lullus: An Introduction to his Life, Works and Thought* (Corpus Christianorum Continuatio Mediaevalis 214), Turnhout, Brepols, 2008.

5. LLULL, *Doctor*, p. 13; LLULL, *Raimundi* 275: «Cum ipse super tali libro faciendo nec formam uideret adhuc aliquam neque modum, nimum mirabatur. Quanto tamen ipse super hoc plus et saepius est miratus, tanto fortius instinctus ille seu dictamen faciendi librum praedictum intra se crescebat».

6. LLULL, *Doctor*, p. 12; LLULL, *Raimundi* 275: «Sed inter haec ad se reuersus intellexit, ad tantum negotium nullam se habere scientiam...Vnde mente consternatus multum coepit dolere».

this «wonder» function as part of Llull's argumentative method, and how does it fit into the dramatic trajectory of his story? Perhaps most important are the question of whether its function in the *Vita* is somehow different than in Llull's more explicitly fictional writing, and what is the role of such fictional topoi in the purportedly factual presentation of Llull's life is?

In this essay, I will use the theme of «wonder» and amazement as starting points to explore the role of fictionality in Llull's *Vita coetanea*. By «fictionality», I mean the criteria by which medieval narrative categories (such as, *fabula*, *historia*, *exemplum*, and most importantly for this article, *vita*) are differentiated from one another according to their reliance on authorial invention and their purported relationship with fact and the real world of events. This follows the well-known Ciceronian distinction between *fabula* as «events that are neither true nor resembling the truth» (*nec verae nec veri similes res*), *historia* as «actions belonging to a time preceding contemporary recollection» (*gesta res ab aetatis nostrae memoria remota*), and what Cicero calls *argumentum*, «an event that is freely invented but might, nevertheless, have happened» (*facta res, quae tamen fieri potuit*).⁷ Thus while *fabula* may be understood as treating things neither real nor generally possible (such as talking animals), *argumenta* may be plausible although invented, and *historia* considers things that are understood to have actually happened.⁸ While the *exemplum*, «a short narrative used to illustrate or confirm a general statement»,⁹ might be drawn either from *historia* or *fabula*, its didactic

7. CICERO, *De Inventione* 1.19.27, in M. Tullius CICERO, *Rhetorici libri duo qui vocantur de inventione*, Eduard Stroebel (ed.), Leipzig, B. G. Teubneri, 1915, p. 24-25. On this passage, see Peter G. BIETENHOLZ, *Historia and Fabula: Myths and Legends in Historical Thought From Antiquity to the Modern Age*, Leiden, Brill, 1994, p. 59. Cf. *Rhetorica ad Herennium* 1.8.13, in *Incerti auctoris De ratione dicendi ad C. Herennium libri IV*, Fridericus Marx (ed.), Leipzig, B. G. Teubneri, 1894, p. 195; and ISIDORE OF SEVILLE's *Etymologiae*, 1.44.5, in *Isidori hispalensis episcopi etymologiarum sive originum libri XX*, W.M. Lindsay (ed.), Oxford, Clarendon, 1911, n.p.

8. Nevertheless, fourth-century grammarian Servius insists not on what really happened, but on its plausibility or naturalness as criteria of differentiation. See SERVIUS, *Servii Grammatici qui feruntur in Vergilii carmina commentarii*, G. Thilo and H. Hagen (eds.), 3 vols. Leipzig, B. G. Teubneri, 1878-1902, vol. 1, p. 89: «Fabula est dicta res contra naturam, sive facta sive non facta... historia est quicquid secundum naturam dicitur, sive factum sive non factum». («*fabula* is called a thing contrary to nature, whether it happened or not...*historia* is anything according to nature, whether it happened or not».)

9. Joseph Albert MOSHER, *The Exemplum in the Early Religious and Didactic Literature of England*, New York, Columbia, 1911, p. 1.

function often demanded some true foundation, and thus, in opposition to the *fabula*, «*exempla* or ‘ensamples’ usually purport to be stories that are or could be true».¹⁰ Most useful or authoritative *exempla* were, in this sense considered more historical or at least more plausible than poetic or fictive, and might be likened to the *argumentum*, a *narratio verisimilis*. As Isidore of Seville puts it: *exemplum historia est*.¹¹ The hagiographic *vita*, as a subgenre of *historia* (along with the *chronica*), combines a discussion of the reality of past lives with the plausibility of the *exemplum*, and generally avoids an association with the artificiality of the pure *fabula* by attributing any extraordinary or unnatural content to the realm of miracle and wonder (*mirabilia*, *miracula*) rather than poetic inventiveness or imagination. As I will show below, Lull’s *Vita* cuts across these definitions in a unique way through its use of wonder and amazement.

After briefly surveying the role and meaning of wonder in Lull’s writing and in the context of his argumentation and missionizing system known as the *Art*, I will look more closely at the *Vita* to examine its parallels and points of contact. Based on this comparison, I will argue that wonder functions both as a narrative means of dramatizing the sincerity of his conversion, providing a measure for the completeness of his transformation from infidelity to faith, and as a point of contact between the real and the ideal, allowing Lull to highlight the exemplary value of his life’s events. The dramatization of wonder thus serves as a fictional device by which Lull can adapt the form of the hagiographic *vita* as the structure of his own *Vita* and enhance that structure not only with a didactic *exemplum*-style message but also with a kind of profane or worldly miracle story that is plausible but beyond the realm of normal experience. In this way, Lull creates what some critics have called a «secular hagiography», combining the elements of the *vita* form with those of a more mundane life story in

10. A. C. SPEARING, «The Canterbury Tales IV: Exemplum and Fable», in Piero Boitani and Jill Mann (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Chaucer*, 2nd ed., Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003, p. 195-213 (195). For an overview of the genre of the *exemplum*, see Nigel F. PALMER, «Exempla», in F. A. C. Mantello and A. G. Rigg (eds.), *Medieval Latin: An Introduction and Bibliographical Guide*, Washington, D. C., Catholic University of America, 1996, p. 582-588.

11. ISIDORE OF SEVILLE, *Differentiae (De differentiis verborum)*, in J. P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologia latina cursus completus*, 221 vols., Paris, 1841-1864, vol. 83, p. 1.319-1.331 (1.329).

order to authorize his own unique missionizing method apart from the more recognized approach of the Dominicans that was based on appeal to scriptural authority.

LLULL'S ART OF MISSION

In order to appreciate the possible significance of a narrative element like «wonder» or «amazement» in Llull's writing, especially in the context of Llull's story of the origins of his missionizing strategy, it is necessary to understand the great importance of reasoning and rational argument in his thought. The primary focus of the majority of Llull's many texts is how to prove Christian truth to unbelievers—especially Muslims but also on occasion Jews—without recourse to authoritative Scriptural texts. In place of scriptural citations and exegesis, Llull developed his famous «method for proving truth» called the *Art*, a mixture of techniques of exegesis, argument, meditation, and evaluation designed to function as a method for discovering truth in general and, more concretely, for proving the truth of Christian belief to non-believers.

Llull's *Art* developed through a series of phases in his thinking to become a system of sensible, although not always strictly logical, correspondences between the characteristic elements of creation and understanding. The *Art* is neither a metaphysics nor a kind of logic, but is rather a general, flexible system of reasoning that draws conclusions about truth by collating and combining (through relationships such as «difference», «concordance», «contrariety», etc.) a series of key terms acceptable and meaningful to all humans (greatness, power, goodness, eternity, will, etc.). As Anthony Bonner explains, «His is not a *logica docens, speculativa, or theoretica*, but rather what the Middle Ages called *logica utens*, one to be judged by its usefulness... his logic was directed to producing what he called 'necessary reasons.'»¹² Pere Villalba stresses that the practical usefulness of Llull's *Art* was in part a product of Llull's economic background and experience prior to his conversion.

12. Anthony BONNER, *The Art and Logic of Ramon Llull. A User's Guide*, Leiden, Brill, 2007, p. ix.

Ramon Llull, que venia del món pràctic i eficient dels comerciants, aplica procediments plàstics i digitals a l'expressió dels principis filosòfics i teològics: neixen les figures, de format geomètric i estructural, que han de fer patents les coses invisibles o intel·lectuals als sentits, els quals n'han captat els inicis materials, justificades per les semblances.¹³

The practical method of the *Art* entails aligning and combining the processes by which humans find things meaningful (knowledge, faith, love, supposition, comparison, etc.) with the elemental characteristics and concepts by which existence is organized (glory, law, virtue, eternity, etc.). Being a product neither of purely speculative philosophy nor theology, the *Art* is an idiosyncratic means of argumentation that is unique among the main currents of late medieval thought.

Llull often organized the many terms of the *Art* in systematic charts, overlapping wheels, and allegorical or exemplary symbols such as «trees» that allow for a staggering variety of combinations and results, but he always undertook such combinations with the goal of providing a pragmatic and comprehensive system for proving Christian truth to all varieties of intellectual and spiritual perspectives.¹⁴ The universalist intentions of Llull's *Art* are reflected by the wide variety of the works in which they are expounded, from the early *Ars compendiosa inveniendi veritatem* («Comprehensive Art for Discovering Truth», 1274), to dialogic texts such as the *Disputatio Raimundi christiani et Homeri saraceni* («Disputation of Raymond the Christian and Homer the Saracen», 1308), the amusing (*Disputatio Petri clerici et Raimundi phantastici*, «Disputation of Peter the Clergyman and Raymond the 'Crazy'», from 1311), and the famous *Llibre del gentil e dels tres savis* («Book of the Gentile and the Three Sages», 1274-1276), a dialogue between a Jew, a Muslim, a Christian, and a «gentile» of no religion. While some works are quite technical and focus on explaining the *Art* in both visual and textual form according to logical and exegetical or allegorical analyses, others are allegorical or greatly simplified and provide an introduction for beginners and younger learners. Llull even wrote simple didactic

13. VILLALBA I VARNEDA, *Ramon Llull*, p. 110.

14. While the *Art* has been summarized and described many times, the most recent and accessible overview is BONNER, *Art*.

texts meant to introduce his *Art* to beginners and children, including his *Doctrina Pueril* («Instruction for Children», 1274-1276), written for his son, Domènec. The variety of Llull's writing on the *Art* stems from his desire to address each reader or listener in a comprehensible way according to the beliefs and background of each.

ART AGAINST AUCTORITAS: THE CONTEXT OF LLULL'S ARGUMENTATIVE METHOD

To better understand the sense behind Llull's *Art*, it is necessary to appreciate the circumstances in which it developed. Although Llull's *Vita* does not give much in the way of specific dates, it is possible to align it with a general chronology of Llull's life known from other sources, and this rough chronology can help place the emergence of Llull's ideas in a wider historical context. It is known from a Papal bull (dated October 17, 1276) that Llull established in Mallorca a school called Miramar for the study of Arabic.¹⁵ The *Vita* tells us that Llull met with the king of Mallorca (Jaume II, son of Jaume I of Aragon), who granted him permission to set up the school: «At the same time Ramon also obtained an agreement from the above-mentioned king of Majorca that a monastery be built in his kingdom...and that thirteen Franciscan friars be sent there to learn Arabic for the purpose of converting unbelievers».¹⁶ Llull had met with Jaume II in Montpellier around the middle of 1275. (It is known that the king was in Mallorca in March 1275, and the 1276 Bull claims it is answering a previous message). This date is important for constructing a chronology of earlier events narrated in the *Vita*: Before this meeting, Llull «went up a certain mountain not far from his home» (identified as Mt. Randa, near Palma), where «the Lord suddenly illuminated his mind, giving him the form and method for writing the aforementioned book against the errors of the un-

15. VILLALBA, *Ramon Llull*, p. 136; On Miramar, see the study of Sebastián GARCÍAS PALOU, *El Miramar de Ramón Llull*, Palma de Mallorca, Instituto de Estudios Baleáricos, 1977.

16. LLULL, *Doctor*, p. 19; LLULL, *Raimundi*, p. 282: «Sub eodem tempore impetrauit etiam Raimundus a praedicto rege Maioricarum unum monasterium construi in regno suo [...] ac in eodem tredecim fratres Minores institui, qui linguam ibidem discerent arabicam pro conuertendis infidelibus».

believers».¹⁷ This sojourn on Mt. Randa must have taken some months, before which he had also passed a period of «more than four months» (*per quattuor menses et amplius*) in the Monastery of Nuestra Señora de La Real, in Majorca, as well as gone on a pilgrimage to Santiago and Santa María de Rocamadour in France (which we can estimate to have taken up to a year). Most importantly, he claims to have studied Arabic with a Muslim slave of his for nine years before going on these trips. Putting these various details together, we can date Lull's original visions of Jesus and his «conversion» to a life of missionizing to around the summer of 1263.¹⁸

While this date is merely approximate and it is misleading to fix any conversionary moment to a single moment or date, the chronology is, nevertheless quite significant because it situates Lull's moment of illumination and the beginning of his *Art* as contemporaneous with the famous Disputation of Barcelona between the converted-Jew-turned-Dominican-friar Pau Crestià (Pablo Cristiani) and the great Rabbi of Girona, Moses ben Naḥman (Nahmanides). What we know of the 1263 Disputation comes from two written records, one in Latin and one by Nahmanides himself in Hebrew, detailing the arguments of each side. While the two versions differ on their characterization of many of the details of the event, both sides affirm the general methodological tack of Pau and the Dominicans.¹⁹ Rather than attacking the Talmud and other post-biblical rabbinical sources as earlier Christian debates had done (such as the «trial» and burning of the Talmud in Paris under the auspices of King Louis IX in the 1240s), the Dominicans at Barcelona attempted to *use* the Talmud to prove that

17. LLULL, *Doctor*, p. 17-18; LLULL, *Raimundi*, 280: «Post haec Raimundus ascendit in montem quendam, qui non longe distabat a domo sua [...] in quo [...] subito Dominus illustravit mentem suam, dans eidem formam et modum faciendi librum, de quo supra dicitur, contra errores infidelium».

18. LLULL, *Raimundi*, p. 279. For a more detailed summary of this information and the calculations that lead to a date of Summer 1263, see J. N. HILLGARTH, *Ramon Lull and Lullism in Fourteenth Century France*, Oxford, Clarendon, 1971, p. 1 n. 1; Ramon LLULL, *Selected Works of Ramon Llull*, Anthony Bonner (ed. and trans.), 2 vols., Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1985, vol. 1, p. 18, n. 64; and Ryan SZPIECH, «La disputa de Barcelona como punto de inflexión», *Studia Lulliana* 54, 2014, p. 3-32 (5-7).

19. For a thorough study of the sources and their contrasting depictions of the events, see Robert CHAZAN, *Barcelona and Beyond: The Disputation of 1263 and Its Aftermath*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1992.

Jesus was the Messiah and had already come. This approach of treating non-Christian sources as textual authorities represented a radical shift in the methodology of Christian polemics against Muslims and Jews and was part of a larger shift in the meaning and role of authoritative texts in Christian missionizing.

Llull rejected this line of argumentation altogether, believing that no claims for or against any religion that were based on written authorities could possibly be effective in convincing or converting those of other faiths. As Harvey Hames has explained, «Llull recognised that it was useless to have recourse to authority... any debate based on authority that was not shared and interpreted in a similar manner was doomed to failure. Instead Llull's method of argumentation was based on rational proofs that stemmed from premises acceptable to all sides».²⁰ It is possible to see the *Art* as Llull's alternative to the preaching and polemicizing method of the friars, and to see the timing of its development as a direct response to the Disputation of Barcelona and the later texts and debates it gave rise to. It is thus highly significant that Llull's rough chronology should situate his conversionary moment, the moment when he first conceived his own argumentative methodology, as contemporaneous with the debate.

The details in the *Vita* support this reading. For example, after Llull's initial dreams and after «a certain impetuous and all-encompassing notion entered his heart»,²¹ he still remained «too imbued with his worldly life and licentiousness» and «he was quite lukewarm and remiss in carrying out the above-mentioned...projects».²² Importantly, he states that this spiritual inertia continued «for the next three months, that is, until the feast day of Saint Francis».²³ It was on this date that Llull heard a sermon by a Franciscan friar and was «incited by the example of Saint Francis» to pursue his mission without hesitation. The feast day of Saint Francis

20. HARVEY HAMES, «Approaches to Conversion in the Late 13th-Century Church», *Studia Lulliana* 35, 1995, p. 75-84 (80).

21. LLULL, *Doctor*, p. 13. «Intrauit cor eius vehemens ac implens quoddam dictamen mentis» (LLULL, *Raimundi*, p. 275).

22. LLULL, *Doctor*, p. 13. «Cum nimis esset adhuc imbutus uita et lasciua saeculari...in praedictis...conceptis negotiis persequendis...satis fuit tepidus et remissus» (LLULL, *Raimundi*, p. 277).

23. LLULL, *Doctor*, p. 13-14. «Per tres subsequentes menses, scilicet usque ad sequens festum sancti Francisci» (LLULL, *Raimundi*, p. 277).

is October 4, placing Llull's period of uncertainty in the period between July and September. Given that the Disputation of Barcelona took place on July 20-24, Llull may be implying that although his turning point was contemporary with it, neither his inspiration (which came by divine vision before the debate began) nor his final embracing of his new life (which came by following the model of Francis) was a product of Dominican activity or example. The timing of the conversionary story in the *Vita* seems to deliberately disavow any association with the new Dominican method that emerged at the same time.

Other details in the text of the *Vita* reinforce this association with the Franciscans. The opening declares that the subject to be treated is *de conversione sua ad poenitentiam*, «conversion to penitence», a phrase that, as A. Oliver among others has pointed out, has a «strong Franciscan color» to it.²⁴ It is also clear that this phrase provides a Franciscan alternative to the best-known work of Dominican Ramon de Penyafort, the *Summa de poenitentia*, composed in the 1230s just before the author acceded to the post of Master General of the Dominican order (1238-1240). Penyafort, in fact, had close ties at this time with Pope Gregory IX (d. 1241) who had played an important role in the condemnation of the Talmud (leading eventually to its public burning in Paris in the 1240s) as well as the codification of anti-Jewish sentiment in the *Decretales*, which Penyafort compiled and arranged at Gregory's request.²⁵ Penyafort has been associated with the organization of Dominican groups for learning Hebrew and Arabic, and he is named in the account of the Disputation of Barcelona as giving a compulsory sermon to

24. A. OLIVER, «El Beato Ramón Llull en sus relaciones con la Escuela Franciscana de los siglos XIII-XIV», *Studia Lulliana* 9, 1965, p. 55-70, 145-166; 10, 1966, p. 47-55; 11, 1967, p. 89-120; 13, 1969, p. 51-66 (10, p. 47-48). On Llull's «conversion», see also Pere-Joan LLABRÉS MARTORELL, «La conversión del Beato Ramón Llull, en sus aspectos histórico, psicológico y teológico», *Studia Lulliana* 12, 1968, p. 161-173; and Ryan SZPIECH, *Conversion and Narrative: Reading and Religious Authority in Medieval Polemic*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013, 134-142. On Llull and the Franciscans, besides this study by Oliver, see also Jordi GAYÀ, «De conversione sua ad poenitentiam: Reflexiones ante la edición crítica de *Vita coetanea*», *Studia Lulliana* 24, 1980, p. 87-91.

25. On the Christian condemnation and burning of the Talmud, see Jeremy COHEN, *The Friars and the Jews: The Evolution of Medieval Anti-Judaism*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1982, p. 51-99.

the Jews after the debate had concluded.²⁶ Penyafort is an icon of the thirteenth-century Dominican method of polemic and argumentation, and it is thus very significant that he is alluded to in some of Lull's works and is even mentioned by name in the *Vita*. For example, in his Catalan fictional work *Blaquerna* (1276-1283), one of the main protagonists «went one day to the school of the Preachers to hear the lesson in theology» and along the way he «found another school which was full of decretalists». He «cried in a loud voice that to wisdom was being done great dishonour by those that love science that is lucrative rather than science that is of merit only, or that which demonstrates Divine wisdom».²⁷

This criticism of the followers of Penyafort informs Lull's more general criticism of the Dominican order and its methods of missionizing. Perhaps the most famous example of this open criticism is an anecdote, which Lull repeated numerous times in his various works, about a certain unnamed friar «well-versed in Arabic» (*bene in arabico litteratus*) who debated with the Sultan of Tunis. After the friar proved *per mores et exempla* that Islam was false, the Muslim asked for a positive proof of Christianity, to which the friar allegedly responded, «The faith of the Christians cannot be proved, but here is the Apostles' Creed explained in Arabic: Believe this».²⁸ Many

26. On Penyafort's role in the Dominican activity of the thirteenth century, see COHEN, *The Friars*, p. 104-108; and Robert CHAZAN, *Daggers of Faith. Thirteenth-Century Christian Missionizing and Jewish Response*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1989, p. 44-52, and 74-75. On the so-called «language schools» of the thirteenth century, see André BERTHIER, «Les écoles de langues orientales fondées au XIII^e siècle par les Dominicains en Espagne et en Afrique», *Revue africaine*, 73, 1932, 73, p. 84-102; José María COLL, «Escuelas de Lenguas Orientales en los siglos XIII y XIV», *Analecta Sacra Tarraconensia* 17, 1944, p. 115-138; 18, 1945, p. 59-89; 19, 1946, p. 217-240; and the important corrections by VOSE, *Dominicans, Muslims and Jews in the Medieval Crown of Aragon*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2009, p. 104-115.

27. LLULL, *Blanquerna*, p. 368; LLULL, *Romanç*, p. 389: «Altrobá altra scola plena de decretalistes... cridà en altes veus que gran desonor prenia saviea per aquells qui mes amaven sciencia lucrativa que meritoria ni demonstrativa de la divinal saviea».

28. Eugène KAMAR, «Projet de Raymond Lull *De acquisitione Terrae Sanctae*. Introduction et édition critique du texte», *Studia Orientalia Christiana. Collectanea*, 6, 1961, p. 103-131 (126): «Fides Christianiorum non potest probari, sed ecce symbolum in arabico expositum; credas ipsum». Lull repeated this anecdote in various forms in numerous works. See HILLGARTH, *Ramon Lull*, p. 21-22; Joachim CHORÃO LAVAJO, «The Apologetical Method of Ramon Martí, According to the Problematic of Ramon Lull», *Islamochristiana*, 1985, II, p. 155-176 (158); Harvey HAMES, «Through Ramon Lull's Looking Glass: What Was the Thirteenth-Century Dominican Mission Really About?» In Maria

critics have wanted to identify this unnamed friar as the famous Dominican Ramon Martí, a disciple of Penyafort and the author of the multilingual polemical treatise *Pugio fidei* (*Dagger of Faith*, ca. 1278). Others, such as Alexander Fidora, have proposed Penyafort himself as a possibility.²⁹ Even if Llull's unnamed friar is not specifically identified with Martí or Penyafort—and it is also possible that this Christian mentioned in his work is an amalgam of various important Dominicans, including Martí, Penyafort, and perhaps others—there is no doubt that Llull is explicitly rejecting the Dominican path of using textual authorities to disprove rival faiths.

Furthermore, an important scene takes place in the *Vita* that connects Llull again with the Dominicans and shows his opposition to their argumentative method. After Llull's full embrace of his mission on the feast of Saint Francis, he set off on a pilgrimage to Santiago and Rocamadour. Thinking of travelling to Paris, «he was dissuaded from making this trip by the arguments and advice...most of all of Brother Ramon of the Dominicans, who had formerly compiled the *Decretals* for Pope Gregory IX, and those counsels made him return to his own city, that is, to Majorca».³⁰ Saying this with «a bitter tone»,³¹ Llull tells how he returned to Mallorca and purchased a Muslim slave with whom he studied Arabic for the next nine years. When on one occasion the Muslim slave «blasphemed the name of Christ» (*nomen Christi blasphemaret*), Llull struck him. In anger, the slave began plotting Llull's death and «he secretly got hold of a sword, and one day, when he saw his master sitting alone, he suddenly rushed at him, striking him with the sword and shouting with a terrible roar: 'You're

Isabel RIPOLL and Margalida TORTELLA (eds.), *Ramon Llull i el lul·lisme: pensament i llenguatge. Actes de les jornades en homenatge a J. N. Hillgarth i A. Bonner*, Palma de Mallorca, 2012, p. 51-76; and Alexander FIDORA, «Ramon Martí in Context: The Influence of the *Pugio fidei* on Ramon Llull, Arnau de Vilanova and Francesc Eiximenis», *Recherches de Théologie et Philosophie médiévales*, 79/2, 2012, p. 373-397 (376-381).

29. FIDORA, «Ramon Martí», p. 379.

30. LLULL, *Doctor*, p. 14; LLULL, *Raimundi*, 278: «Sed ab hoc itinere...maxime frater Raimundus de ordine Praedicatorum, qui quondam domini Gregorii noni compilauerat *Decretales*, suis persuasionibus et consiliis diuerterunt, et eum ad ciuitatem suam, maioricarum scilicet redire fecerunt».

31. Anthony BONNER, «Ramon Llull and the Dominicans», *Catalan Review*, 4, 1990, p. 377-392 (380).

dead! [...] By means of his strength, however, he managed to overcome the Saracen, knock him down, and forcibly take the sword away from him.»³² When his servants arrived, «Ramon kept them from killing him», and locked up the Saracen. After going to a nearby abbey to decide what to do next, «he found that [the captive] had hanged himself with the rope with which he had been bound».³³

Both this scene and the opening scene of Llull's conversion in the *Vita* contain language that seems to echo earlier Dominican texts. Llull's description of his Muslim slave uses similar language as that of the opening to Martí's *Pugio fidei*, which states:

I was ordered to compile from those books of the Old Testament, which the Jews uphold, and also from their Talmud and fragmentary writings which are considered authentic among them, a work which may serve as a sort of dagger for preachers and worshippers of the Christian faith, both for slicing the bread of the divine word in Jewish discourse and also for cutting the throat of their impiety and perfidy.³⁴

Unlike Martí, Llull does not wield a sword or dagger, and it is, on the contrary, his Muslim slave who brings the weapon against him. Llull describes how rather than trying, like Martí, to «jugulate» the infidel with his own «dagger» of faith, he in fact *protected* his Muslim slave from the attacks of others, and yet still the Muslim finally hangs himself out of remorse. Tellingly, the verb used by Martí and Llull in these passages is the same: Llull's Muslim *iugulauerat semet ipsum* whereas Martí uses his dagger *ad eorum impietatem [...] iugulandam*. It seems no surprise that, just as Martí

32. LLULL, *Doctor*, p. 17; LLULL, *Raimundi*, p. 279: «Cumque ipse, clam procurato sibi gladio, quadam die uideret sedentem dominum suum, irruit in eum subito simul ipsum praedicto gladio percuciens, et cum rugito terribili acclamans: 'Tu mortuus es.' Sed Raimundus [...] praevalens tamen ipse uiribus, illum Sarracenum sibi substrauit, gladiumque uiolenter abstulit ab eodem».

33. LLULL, *Doctor*, p. 17; LLULL, *Raimundi*, p. 280: «Ipse fune quo ligatus fuit, iugulauerat semet ipsum».

34. Ramon MARTÍ, *Pugio fidei aduersus Mauros et Iudaeos* Leipzig, Heirs of Friedrich Lankisch, at the press of the Johann Wittigav's Widow, 1687, p. 2: «Iniunctum est mihi, ut de illis Veteris Testamenti, quos Iudaei recipiant, libris, vel etiam de Talmud ac reliquis scriptis suis apud eos authenticis opus tale componam, quod quasi pugio quidam praedicatoribus Christianae fidei atque cultoribus esse possit in promptu, ad scindendum quandoque Iudaeis in sermonibus panem verbi diuini; quandoque vero ad eorum impietatem atque perfidiam iugulandam».

was ordered to compose a book against «their impiety and perfidy», so Llull's moment of conversion likewise entailed his vision of composing a book *contra errores infidelium*.

This is not the only place where the language used to describe Llull's experience seems to contrast directly with that of the Dominicans. When Llull first speaks of setting up schools «in which selected monks and others fit for the task would be brought together to learn the languages of the Saracens and other unbelievers»,³⁵ his words sound similar to those of Humbert of Romans (who was Master General of the Dominican Order until 1263, just before the Disputation of Barcelona). Humbert ordered «that some friars fit for the task labor in fit places to learn Arabic, Hebrew, Greek, and foreign languages». ³⁶ Where Llull speaks of *personae religiosae et aliae in hoc idoneae*, Humbert calls for *fratres idonei*. Where Llull speaks of how *ponerentur ad addiscendum [...] linguagia*, Humbert wants them to *insudent in locis idoneis ad linguas [...] addiscendas*. Such similarities in language, taken together with Llull's situating of his conversion around the summer of 1263, suggest that Llull is deliberately comparing himself to the Dominicans in the *Vita*. The fact that Llull repeatedly criticized and rejected their methodology also suggests that his conversionary moment has been carefully constructed to be a recognizable alternative to their own mission, providing him with a separate source of authority that does not rely on their notion of textual citation. Given that the realization of this alternative method is prompted in the *Vita* with Llull's surprise and wonder at his own ignorance, it seems that «wonder» is at the heart of Llull's criticism of Martí and his subsequent attempts to differentiate himself from the Dominicans. As we will see, «wonder» does this by providing an extra-rational but authentic channel of inspiration for his *Art* that is not based on textual sources but on the simple sense of the divine and miraculous that is available to all.

35. LLULL, *Doctor*, p. 13; LLULL, *Raimundi*, p. 276: «In quibus electae personae religiosae et aliae ad hoc idoneae ponerentur ad addiscendum praedictorum Saracenorum et aliorum infidelium linguagia».

36. HUMBERT OF ROMANS, *Opera de Vita Regulari*, J. J. Berthier (ed.), Rome, 1888-1889, vol. 2, p. 187-188: «Ut aliqui Fratres idonei insudent in locis idoneis ad linguas arabicam, hebraicam, graecam et barbaras addiscendas».

WONDER IN LLULL'S WRITING

Before looking at wonder in the *Vita* as part of Llull's alternative basis of textual authority, it is important to understand how such imagery compares to other representations of wonder in Llull's earlier writing. While a full survey of the concept of «wonder» in Llull's writing would require a separate study, such a comprehensive treatment is not necessary here and a few general remarks can suffice as background for consideration of the *Vita* in particular. The key source for discussion of «wonder» in Llull's writing is his long fictional work, *Fèlix*, in which «wonder» forms part of Llull's exploration of human sin and the marvels of God's creation. *Fèlix* tells the story of the pilgrim Felix, who encounters all manner of worldly virtue and vice on his travels, gaining nuggets of truth as he enters into discussions with hermits and philosophers. This work also includes the separate work, a collection of frame-story animal fables, entitled the *Llibre de les bèsties* ('Book of the Beasts'). «Wonder» for Felix is both a cause of his criticism and rejection of the sins of the world and also a prompting for reflection on the truth that God has made evident in creation. The first mention of «wonder» is not by Felix but by his father, who is said to be sad because «he wondered greatly at how little the people of this world knew and loved God».³⁷ Sent out to the world to «travel through the world and wonder why men no longer love and know God», Felix sets out on a journey «drawn straight from the narrative and rhetorical conventions of topography and romance».³⁸ He wandered widely and «wondered at the wonders of this world, inquiring about whatever he did not understand and recounting what he knew».³⁹

37. LLULL, *Selected*, vol. 2, p. 659; Ramon LLULL, *Llibre de meravelles: Volum I, Llibres I–VII*, Lola Badia, Xavier Bonillo, Eugènia Gisbert, and Montserrat Lluch (eds.) (Nova Edició de les Obres de Ramon Llull 10), Palma, Patronat Ramon Llull, 2011, p. 81: «Fortment se maravellava de les gents de aquest mon com tant poch conexen e amen Deu».

38. LLULL, *Selected*, vol. 2, p. 659; LLULL, *Llibre de meravelles*, p. 81: «Ve per lo mon e maravella-t dels homens per que sessen a amar e conexer e a loar Deu». Second quotation by Lorraine J. DASTON and Katharine PARK, *Wonders and the Order of Nature, 1150-1750*, New York, Zone, 2001, p. 125.

39. LLULL, *Selected*, vol. 1, p. 659; LLULL, *Llibre de meravelles*, p. 82: «Maravellaves de les meravelles que son en lo mon e demanava ço qu no entenia e recomptava ço que sabia».

Lorraine Daston and Katharine Park, who have surveyed the evolution of the concept of «wonder» in the late medieval and early modern periods, note three key sorts of medieval wonder that included «romantic and paradoxographical wonder at exotic and unusual phenomena, Aristotelian wonder at ignorance of causes, or Augustinian wonder at the mysteries of creation».⁴⁰ In Felix's adventures and encounters, Llull makes «a valiant effort to bridge the gap between university natural philosophy, Augustinian and monastic values, and the literary tastes of courtly and urban elites».⁴¹ Throughout these different presentations, Felix's wonder is primarily a marker of his piety: as he marvels over the ways of the world, he also opens himself to teaching about God's ways and to devotion to God's majesty. In this way, wonder is device by which Llull can stress the importance of experience, contemplation, and personal contact with God in the search for truth. Felix is a sort of Everyman who can arrive at truth and faith through necessary reasons based on experience without recourse to written revelation or authority. This, as Bonner states, «represents a very Franciscan form of *contemptus mundi*, mixed with a typically medieval admiration for solitary meditation».⁴² Felix's wonder is thus a key device of Llull's universal and anti-Dominican message. As a first step in observing and questioning the ways of the world, wonder opens the door to a systematic and thorough pursuit of truth through the techniques of the *Art*, and is «a splendid example of Llull's literary use of these techniques».⁴³

40. DASTON and PARK, *Wonders*, p. 125. For a study of how such notions play out in late medieval fiction, see Simone PINET, *Archipelagoes: Insular Fictions From Chivalric Romance to the Novel*, Minneapolis, 2011, especially p. 8. See also the overview by Jacques LE GOFF, *The Medieval Imagination*, Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1988, p. 27-44; the rich discussion by Caroline WALKER BYNUM, *Metamorphosis and Identity*, New York, 2001, p. 37-75; and the classic study by Edmond FARAL, «Le Merveilleux et ses sources dans les descriptions des romans français du XIII^e siècle», In *Recherches sur le sources latines des contes et romans courtois du Moyen Âge*, Paris, 1913, p. 30-88.

41. DASTON and PARK, *Wonders*, p. 125.

42. LLULL, *Selected*, vol. 2, p. 652.

43. BONNER, *Art*, p. 263.

WONDER AS AUTHORIZING TECHNIQUE AND FICTIONAL DEVICE IN THE *VITA*

With this historical and literary context in mind, we can now turn to the instances of «wonder» in the *Vita* to consider their function as part of Lull's anti-Dominican stance as well as of the overall methodology of Lull's *Art*. The most notable element of Lull's conversionary moment is its structure as a dramatic climax to a mounting conflict. Lull begins his story in ignorance, writing profane love poetry for his mistress without thought about God or his soul. His first inkling of conflict comes with his unsought vision of Jesus. Lull's crisis of faith is predominantly visual at the beginning: as it says, «he looked to his right and saw our Lord...this sight filled him with fear» (*respiciens a dextris uidit Dominum...quo uiso timuit*). Yet he returned to his old life «without giving the vision a further thought» (*nihil de uisione illa curabat*) until Jesus «appeared» (*apparuit*) to him again. Lull uses a variety of terms to refer to the visual nature of the experience (using words such as *respiciens*, *uidit*, *uiso*, *uisione*, *apparuit*, *apparitionem*, *appareret*, *apparitione*, *uisiones*, *uisum*, etc.). This attention to the visual can be understood, as Jacques Le Goff explains, as typical of medieval ideas of the wonderful or marvelous because, according to accepted medieval categories, «the root of *mirabilia* is *mir* (as in *miror*, *mirari*), which implies something visual. It is a question of looking». Yet «not all *mirabilia* were things that men admired with their eyes». ⁴⁴ Thus although Lull uses visual terms eleven times in his conversion story, these visions produce nothing but «fear» until finally Lull's mind began to understand and the text begins using language of understanding and the mind (*intellexit*, *cogitando*, *scientiam*, *mente*, *nesciebat*). And even Lull's «understanding» of God's will produces only «pain» because he realizes that his old habits of mind are insufficient for what he is being called to do.

44. LE GOFF, *Medieval*, p. 27. Le Goff presents an etymological connection between *mirabilia* and the visual that, while accepted in the Middle Ages, may not be entirely true in fact. As De Vaan points out, the Indo-European root of «*mirus*», like «*miro*, -are», is probably closer to «smile» than to «see», and the connection with the visual only seems to derive from the phenomenon of watching pleasant spectacles. See Michiel DE VAAN, «*Mirus*» in Alexander Lubotsky (ed.), *Etymological Dictionary of Latin and the other Italic Languages*, Leiden, 2014, Brill Online. June 30, 2014. < <http://iedo.brillonline.nl.proxy.lib.umich.edu/dictionaries/lemma.html?id=13670> >.

It is at this critical moment that a breakthrough occurs, shifting the language away from his senses and his mind to his heart: «Suddenly, a certain impetuous and all-encompassing notion entered his heart: that later on he would have to write a book, the best in the world, against the errors of unbelievers». ⁴⁵ Yet despite his heart's grasp of his mission, he still could not «see» (*cum...nec formam uideret...neque modum*). His proverbial blindness produces the first moment of wonder in the text (*nimum mirabatur*), and out of his wonder comes his increased desire (*quanto tamen ipse super hoc plus et saepius est miratus, tanto fortius instinctus ille seu dictamen faciendi librum...se crescebat*). Like Paul of Tarsus, Lull must overcome his figurative mental blindness and gain the spiritual «sight» of a pious heart in order for his conversion to be complete.

In one sense, Lull's sense of wonder is the turning point of his conversion, representing the moment when he no longer clung to his old desire and instead began to accept the importance of his new mission. Wonder thus represents a transformative force, one that enacts what Karl Morrison calls the «the kerygmatic ironies of proportion built into the ideals of conversion». ⁴⁶ With this confession of ignorance, Lull seems at first to differentiate himself from the conversion narratives of the twelfth century, as well as from the contemporary polemical texts of Dominican rivals like Ramon Martí. Rather than appealing to his mastery and preeminence in his former knowledge, Lull affirms the opposite: he had barely studied grammar in Latin and knew no Arabic and «this thought worried him and he began to feel very sad» (*unde mente consternatus multum coepit dolere*). Yet this claim of ignorance can be taken as a direct imitation of the topos of preconversion authenticity –the «being lost» that allows one to be found. Just as the twelfth-century convert Petrus Alfonsi depicted himself before his conversion as «more zealous in the Jewish law than all of his contemporaries» and Herman of Cologne, author of the slightly later *Opusculum de conversione sua*, claimed he was formerly «a Jew of the Jews» (*Iudeum ex Iudeis*), so Lull claims that before his conversion he had «scarcely learned more than a bare minimum of grammar» and paints his former identity

45. LULL, *Doctor*, p. 12.

46. Karl MORRISON, *Understanding Conversion*, Charlottesville, University Press of Virginia, 1992, p. 32.

as «imbued with his worldly life and licentiousness».⁴⁷ Lull's surprise and amazement are the markers of his transformation from unbeliever to faithful Christian, from self-absorbed philanderer to ascetic missionary. By marking the difference between his life before and after conversion with his «wonder» at his own ignorance, Lull underscores the full and radical nature of his transformation and stresses that he fully understood and admitted to the life he left behind. The moment of conversion is a kind of narrative *peripeteia*, a moment of dramatic reversal or inversion of circumstances that is key to the unfolding plot of a classical drama. Though not converting from another religion, he is, like most medieval converts, an «expert» in his former infidelity, and thus he is all the more fully authorized to speak polemically against it.

Lull uses shock or amazement in a number of passages to express his own understanding of his ignorance or limitation. For example, when his slave attempted to kill him, he was unsure how he should deal with him. After going to an abbey to pray, he remained uncertain of the solution. «When the three days were over, astonished (*admirans*) that the same perplexity remained in his heart and that God, or so it seemed to him, had in no way listened to his prayers, he returned home full of sorrow».⁴⁸ In a similar way, Lull is amazed at his own lack of knowledge, and this amazement opens his heart to a solution that arrives directly from God, not through his understanding of tradition but through a kind of divine or prophetic revelation. Even when Lull's arguments do not convince his interlocutors—as when Lull's assertions provoke the religious leader of the city of Bougie to throw him in jail—they still amaze, leaving the Muslim *stupefactus* («astounded» or «stupefied») by Lull's reasoning, realizing his own limited ability to answer Lull's arguments.⁴⁹

47. LLULL, *Raimundi*, p. 276-7. On these citations by Petrus and Herman, as well as on Herman's similar use of wonder in describing his conversion as being «as delightful as it was amazing» (*tanto delectabilis [...] quanto mirabilis*), see SZPIECH, *Conversion and Narrative*, p. 86-88 and 139.

48. LLULL, *Doctor*, p. 17. «Quibus completis, admirans, quod adhuc in corde suo praetacta perplexitate remanente, Dominus, ut sibi uidebatur, ipsius orationem nullatenus exaudisset, maestus ad domum suam rediit» (LLULL, *Raimundi*, p. 280).

49. LLULL, *Doctor*, p. 36; LLULL, *Raimundi*, p. 298.

Other instances of wonder in the *Vita* likewise mark Llull's own radical and unexpected transformation to a deeper level of piety: when he was in Genoa, preparing for a missionary journey to Tunis, he fell gravely ill. Deliberating over his commitment to the Franciscans, he contemplated joining their order and also considered the Dominicans again. Realizing that the Dominicans had formerly rejected his *Art*, he decided to follow the Franciscans in order to ensure the survival of his *Art*, even if it meant losing his own soul. Wondering at his own choice of possible damnation over the loss of his *Art* among the Dominicans, he proves to himself that he is truly committed to his mission. «What a wondrous temptation!» he claims, in which he was «despairing of God in a wondrous way».⁵⁰ When he falls so ill that he seems to be dying, he sends to the Franciscans for last rites. Yet after hearing that a ship is leaving for Tunis, he immediately recovers «to such an extent that within a few days, to the amazement of everybody traveling with him (*mirantibus cunctis*) and even of himself, he felt in as good a state of mind and body as ever before in his former life».⁵¹ As in his conversion from infidelity to faith, his transformation from sickness to wellness is recognized with wonder by all, a wonder that parallels the «wondrous» temptation that led him to reaffirm his opposition to the Dominican perspective and his commitment to a life of missionizing according to his *Art*.

BETWEEN *VITA*, *EXEMPLUM*, AND *FABULA*

While wonder marks the dramatic turn of Llull's conversion in one sense, it marks in another sense a manifestation of the divine and the miraculous, a meeting point of the real world and the ideal. This is especially evident when Llull, after meditating on Mt. Randa in Mallorca (a scene reminiscent of Saint Francis receiving the stigmata on Mt. Verna) eventually builds a hermitage on the spot where he received his *Art*. There, he suddenly meets

50. LLULL, *Doctor*, p. 27; LLULL, *Raimundi*, p. 288: «O mirabilis tentatio! ...de Deo modo mirabili desperando».

51. LLULL, *Doctor*, p. 28; LLULL, *Raimundi*, p. 289: «In tantum, quod ipse infra dies paucissimos, mirantibus cunctis, qui secum uenerant, et etiam semet ipso, sensit se in adeo bono statu mentis et corporis, sicut antea fuerat in tota praeterita uita sua».

(like Felix often does in *Felix*) «a handsome young shepherd of cheerful countenance, who in one hour told him as many good things of God and of heavenly matters...as another ordinary person...would have taken at least two entire days to recount». ⁵² The shepherd «blessed Ramon with many blessings of a prophetic nature» and «watered» Lull's books «with his tears», offering a sort of prophetic authorization of Lull's *Art* as divinely inspired. ⁵³ This divine visitation is again related to wonder when Lull reflects on the event after the fact. «When he thought about all this, however, Ramon was astonished». ⁵⁴ Here, Lull's wonder is not simply a marker of his transformation, but of the connection between the real world of his *Art* and mission and the ideal world of mythic and prophetic symbolism. In this sense, wonder is a marker of the holy character of Lull's *Art*, proving that although it is not based on textual authorities, it is still divinely authorized. As the *Vita* later explains, when Lull began teaching the principles of his *Art*, he «not only expounded a doctrine reinforced by philosophical arguments, but also professed a wisdom wonderfully confirmed (*mirum in modum confirmatam*) by the high principles of the Christian faith». ⁵⁵ Lull wonders at the miraculous nature of his own *Art*.

The structure of the *Vita* is clearly modeled on the standard form of the hagiographic *vita*, in which the saint overcomes early trials or temptation and receives some kind of divine mandate, often through a conversionary «peripety» or reversal, authorizing his future career and mission as a saint. Claudio Leonardi has characterized Lull's text as a kind of secular *vita*, a life story of a saintly non-saint, of a type that appears with more frequency in the fourteenth century. It presents, as Lola Badia has characterized it,

52. LLULL, *Doctor*, p. 18; LLULL, *Raimundi*, p.281: «Venit ad eum quidam pastor ouium, adolescens, hilaris facie et uenusta, dicens sibi sub una hora tot et tanta bona de Deo et de caelestibus [...] quot et quanta, ut sibi uidebatur, unus quicumque alius homo uix per duos dies integros fuisset locutus».

53. For a reading of this scene as a possible reference to a Kabbalistic «authorization» by prophetic visitation, see Harvey HAMES, «Elijah and a Shepherd: The Authority of Revelation», *Studia Lulliana* 34, 1994, p. 93-102.

54. LLULL, *Doctor*, p. 19; LLULL, *Raimundi*, p. 281: «Considerans haec omnia, mirabatur».

55. LLULL, *Doctor*, p. 38; LLULL, *Raimundi*, p. 302: «Non solum philosophicis rationibus exhibebat roboratam doctrinam, uerum etiam altis principiis fidei christianae mirum in modum confirmatam sapientiam proferebat».

the use of «saintly self-legitimation» in service of partly profane or worldly interests.⁵⁶ In this case, Lull is making use of the exemplary character of the *vita* form in order to call his readers to his own methodology and away from recourse to textual authorities. As Jamie Kreiner has explained, «the genre of hagiography had affinities with the ancient rhetorical principle of the *exemplum*, which was an argument that worked inductively: a single example was supposed to stand for, and prove by the very fact of its existence, some larger conclusion».⁵⁷ That larger conclusion necessarily took the form of a socially significant act, making the *exemplum*, in Larry Scanlon's words, «a narrative enactment of cultural authority».⁵⁸

The narrative form of Lull's *Vita* can be seen to align itself with his wider purpose, presenting itself as more than just a frivolous story. As opposed to a *fabula*, which, as we have argued, made its point by telling of something that was not and could not be real, an *exemplum* was usually defined by its possible reality. The saint's *vita* did not draw from *fabula*, but instead modeled its narrative structure according to the didactic value of the *exemplum*. To keep its extraordinary elements within the realm of the possible rather than the fantastic, it defined them as miraculous, not simply far-fetched or fictional. I suggest that just as Lull's (auto)biographical *Vita* might be taken as a kind of secular hagiography, representing his life as a kind of exemplary pursuit of the *Art*, so the use of wonder and amazement in the text represent a secularized or profane form of the miraculous (a word that Lull does not ever use in the *Vita*). In *Fèlix*, wonder plays an important role both in the exemplary, plausibly realistic sections about the protagonist's wanderings as well as in the impossible

56. Lola BADIA, «*Fa che tu scrive*: variaciones profanas sobre un motivo sagrado, de Ramon Lull a Bernat Metge», in Ian Macpherson and Ralph Penny (eds.), *The Medieval Mind. Hispanic Studies in Honour of Alan Deyermond*, London, 1997, p. 3-20 (13): «...la utilización de procedimientos de autolegitimación propios del santo, el místico y del profeta al servicio de intereses particulares, a veces de carácter profano.» See also Claudio LEONARDI, «Committenze e autocommittenze agiografiche nel Trecento», in Vicent Moleta (ed.), *Patronage and Public in the Trecento*, Florence, 1986, p. 37-58 (57).

57. Jamie KREINER, *The Social Life of Hagiography in the Merovingian Kingdom*, Cambridge, 2014, p. 35.

58. Larry SCANLON, *Narrative, Authority and Power: The Medieval Exemplum and the Chaucerian Tradition*, Cambridge, 1994, p. 34.

but equally didactic *fabulae* of book seven, the famous *Book of the Beasts*.⁵⁹ Because the wonder described in Lull's *Vita* is not outside of the order of nature (and thus more a plausible *exemplum* than a fictive *fabula*), it also does not conflict with the general Church tradition of presenting saints' miracles *non imitandum sed admirandum*, for wondering at but not for imitating.⁶⁰ It is true that «medieval theories of wonder» (such as those of Gervais of Tilbury) «made the point that wonder is non-appropriative yet based in facticity and singularity. The opposite of *admiratio* is not only to investigate; it is also to imitate and to generalize».⁶¹ Nevertheless, Lull's presentation of wonder is not that of the experience of a fully manifest miracle, but only of the general and constant presence of God in the world. In this sense, Lull's profane «anti-hagiographic» wonder is meant to invite *imitatio*, not discourage it.

The *Vita coetanea* has long been read as a source of factual information about Lull's life and deeds.⁶² I have suggested in this essay that it can be read also, perhaps even more fruitfully, for its form and structure in a way similar to Lull's more openly fictional texts *Blaquerna* and *Fèlix*. By ap-

59. On the *exemplum* in *Fèlix*, see Barry TAYLOR, «Some Complexities of the *Exemplum* in Ramon Lull's 'Llibre de les bèsties'» *The Modern Language Review* 90/3, 1995, p. 646-658. More generally in Lull's work, see the lucid study by Rubén LUZÓN DÍAZ, «Una aproximación a la noción de *exemplum* en la obra luliana, seguida de un breve comentario en los *exempla* del capítulo 62 del *Llibre de meravelles*», *Revista de llengües y literatures catalana, gallega y vasca* 12, 2006, p. 253-276. Roberto J. GONZÁLEZ-CASANOVAS, «The Hermeneutics of Mediation in Ramon Lull: *Blaquerna* as a Thirteenth-Century Parable», in Ronald S. Calinger, Robert P. Badiillo, Rose B. Calabretta, and Robert Magliola (eds.), *Humanization of Social Life. Volume II: Cultural Resources and Historical Responses*, Washington, D.C., The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2004, p. 161-178 (171), has similarly observed that Lull's other long fictional work, *Blaquerna*, provides «a signifying frame (the *vita*), a narrative process (the *fabula*), a situational message (the *exemplum*), and a spiritualized lesson (the *glossa*)». While both *Blaquerna* and *Fèlix* combine *exemplum* and *fabula*, the *Vita* avoids the fictional associations of the latter even as it draws from narrative structures common to it.

60. On this idea, see Bruce C. BRASINGTON, «Non imitanda set veneranda: The Dilemma of Sacred Precedent in Twelfth-Century Canon Law», *Viator* 23, 1992, p. 135-52; and the fuller history in Michael E. GOODICH, *Miracles and Wonders. The Development of the Concept of Miracle, 1150-1350*, Aldershot, 2007.

61. BYNUM, *Metamorphosis*, p. 73.

62. See BONNER, *Doctor*; and VILLALBA, *Ramon*, for two examples.

propriating and modifying the hagiographic form for his own, non-saintly purposes, Lull's life is presented in the *Vita* as a realistic, albeit stylized and constructed, *exemplum* meant to explain the principles of the *Art*. In this way, Lull can provide a «narrative enactment» of the «authority» of his own unique method of missionizing that keeps its distance from the unreal *fabula* while at the same time providing an alternative to the text-and-*testimonia*-based argumentation of the Dominicans as well as the verifiable miracles of true saints. The marvel (*mirabilis*) that produces amazement and surprise in his work is not a fully-fledged miracle (*miraculum*) but is rather a kind of secular wonder that calls his readers to go beyond mere *admiratio* to *imitatio* and eventually *conversio*. Even so, although Lull eschews the traditional method of argumentation according to *auctoritas* that he associated above all with the Dominicans, his eclectic adaptation of the saintly *vita* for his own purposes still evokes that tradition insofar as the ultimate goal of his use of the fictional topos of «wonder» was to transform himself into a *auctor* to be imitated and believed.

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