

**ALL THOSE WHO FIGHT:
THE MOTIF OF SINGLE COMBAT IN ROMANESQUE ART, C. 1050-1215**

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ELIZABETH A. PUGLIANO

Boston University Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, 2016

Major Professor: Deborah Kahn, Associate Professor of History of Art & Architecture

ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines images of single combat in Romanesque art. Between the mid-eleventh century and the first decades of the thirteenth century, representations of head-to-head battle between two human opponents were abundant, especially in architectural sculpture. The appearance of these combats is concentrated in northern Spain and southwestern France, although this imagery is found throughout Europe and the Mediterranean. Only a small number of these images are identified by labels or accompanied by an explanatory text. However, those few examples show that the motif of single combat served different purposes and conveyed a variety of meanings, ranging from representations of historical figures to encounters drawn from epic literature to allegorical renderings of spiritual battle.

Despite the prevalence of this iconography, this dissertation is the first study to address the entire corpus of Romanesque single combats. Beginning with the few examples to include a contemporary text, it addresses the variety of identities and meanings attached to the single combat motif in eleventh- and twelfth-century works.

Analysis of those examples sheds light on the interpretive problems that arise for the larger body of unlabeled images comprising the corpus, whose significance is assessed by considering both formal attributes, and the spatial, functional and visual contexts in which the motif appears. Finally, the dissertation brings new focus to the motif's temporal and geographic characteristics by addressing the high concentration of combat images in parts of Spain and France. Examination of the discourses concerning the early crusades and the Iberian 'reconquest' suggests that these images acted not just as representations of those locally prevalent events, but as visual components aimed at promoting the Iberian cause and aligning peninsular warfare with endeavors in the Holy Land.

This dissertation shows that the single combat motif coincides with and reflects a crucial shift in the ways violence and conflict were conceived and addressed in Christian society. Considered within the context of the contradictory discourses on fighting circulating at this time, this multivalent motif is shown to reflect the many meanings battle held for medieval viewers.