The small town of Fuentidueña, the original site of the new apse at The Cloisters, is in the province of Segovia near the boundaries of the northern provinces of Valladolid and Burgos and away from the usual tourist routes. When we try to build up a historical background for the Romanesque art and architecture of Segovia and consequently of Fuentidueña, we have to remember that the province was uninhabited, except for the occasional passing of armies, from the first quarter of the eighth century until the last quarter of the eleventh. The first invasion of Old Castile by the Moorish armies took place when they were on their way north two or three years after landing on the south shores of Spain in 711. The region of Segovia apparently changed hands several times without either Christians or Mussulmans ever settling there for any considerable period. All the land between the Christian boundary in the north formed by Asturias, Santander, part of Burgos, León, and Galicia and the Mussulman line going from Coimbra in Portugal through Coria, Talavera, Toledo, Guadalajara, and Pamplona was, apparently, almost deserted and was claimed at times by Christians and by Moors. If there were any Visigothic monuments in the province of Segovia previous to the Moorish invasion, they were probably destroyed in Almanzor’s raids at the end of the tenth century. There is no documentary evidence, however, that such monuments...
ever existed. As Moors and Christians never lived together in this area, there are no Mozarabic monuments either.

The definitive reconquest of the province of Segovia by King Alfonso VI took place in 1079, but the real repopulation did not start until 1087. The new inhabitants probably came from the northern provinces, which were not under Moorish power or influence. The first step after the reconquest of any region, naturally, was to build up defenses against new attacks by the Moors. This explains the presence of castles at so many dominant points in Castile and all over Spain. With the castle came the church, not only because of the strong Christian character of the enterprise but also because of the growing importance of the military orders, several of them founded abroad but already established in Spain as early as the middle of the eleventh century.

To encourage the repopulation of newly recovered areas, King Alfonso VI conferred a great many privileges upon the Church and the monastic orders to enable them to build religious houses around which the new population could settle. In a number of cases, as probably happened in Fuentidueña, the religious monuments must have grown in much greater proportion than the secular population around them, because the places that were strategic in times of war proved less good in times of peace. King Alfonso VII tried to stop this real inflation of religious power by returning to the Segovian people part of the lands given to the Church by his father.

One travels some forty-five miles from the city of Segovia, over dusty roads and flat land, to a place where rocky formations like a natural fortress dominate the peaceful valley of the Duraton River (see Figure 2). Perched on the cliffs, looking over valleys and faraway plains, stands the once important villa of Fuentidueña, like a medieval sphinx that holds secrets lost for us in time and history. Its unique geographical position indicates the strategic importance it must have had in that chaotic period of the history of Spain.

Diego de Colmenares, the most reliable chronicler of the region of Segovia, wrote in 1641 that Fuentidueña had once been called Castrillo de Lacer. This name appears for the first time in 1123 in a papal bull of Calixtus II confirming the bishopric of Segovia after three hundred years without any religious hierarchy. As Castrillo de Lacer, if we accept this denomination—and we have no grounds either to accept or reject it—it appears in other documents too. Only in 1136 do we find for the first time the name Fuentidueña. From then on, the name Castrillo de Lacer is not mentioned any more, and the name
Fuentidueña appears together with those of other towns which had previously been mentioned with Castrillo de Lacer. This substitution of names makes rather probable Colmenares’s theory that both represent the same town. If we reject this possibility, the date 1136, on a document signed by Alfonso VII, becomes the first documented one for Fuentidueña. This king, whose broad vision of Spanish destinies won him the surname Emperador, seems to have been much interested in this particular region of the Iberian peninsula; it was probably he who encouraged the building of the churches of Fuentidueña, among them the one dedicated to Saint Martin, whose apse is now at The Cloisters. Due to the very special circumstances created by the Moorish invasion and the reconquest of the territory by the Christians, the political organization of Spain differed from that of other European nations. Christian Spain never had feudalism, but an organization based on the power of the king and of the bishops. Hence the royal ability to grant lands and privileges to the Church in any part of Spain. In most of the documents dealing with concessions from the king to the Segovian Church during the life of Alfonso VII and, after 1157, of Alfonso VIII, Fuentidueña is mentioned among a group of other tributary towns from the same area.2

After a document dated 1206 the name of Fuentidueña disappears completely, though the towns hitherto associated with it keep being mentioned. This sudden disappearance cannot easily be explained. Only now and then, and at intervals of centuries, do we see the name again: Once in 1474 when the Fuentidueña castle was used as a prison for a traitor to the king. Again in 1494 when Cardinal Cisneros gave to the Franciscans a monastery from Fuentidueña that had been founded by the monks of San Juan de la Penitencia in the sixth century and belonged then to the Mercedarians. In the fourteenth century Fuentidueña had a rather important aljama, or Jewish community, and several names of Jewish merchants from the capital city of Segovia in that period are followed by de Fuentidueña. Taking this into consideration it would not be surprising if some of the ruins we can still see in the town and surroundings were those of synagogues.

No documents have been found that deal with the construction of the castle or any of the churches of Fuentidueña. As the bishopric of Segovia was not restored until 1123, it is quite

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Figs. 4 (above), and 5. The capitals of the triumphal arch: Daniel in the Lions’ Den and the Adoration of the Magi.
probable that most of the religious buildings in the area were begun some years later. It does not seem likely that any were started in Fuentidueña after the town lost its importance early in the thirteenth century.

As the repopulation of Segovia had to come from the north of Spain because the south was still in Moorish hands, it is also to the north that we have to turn in the attempt to analyze artistic influences in the region. Along the pilgrimage road to Santiago de Compostela (see Figure 3) many churches and monasteries were built as royal foundations during the second half of the eleventh century. Though some of those monuments have disappeared, the extant examples are enough to give a complete idea of the importance of that road not only for the development of the Spanish Romanesque but for that of other countries as well. The continuous stream of different currents of thought and artistic interpretation was the reason for that importance.

The province of Segovia and the neighboring one of Avila were out of the way of the pilgrims, but in all probability the artists that started the postreconquest religious monuments in this area came from some of the artistic centers along the road to Santiago. Of all these centers the church of San Isidoro in León seems to be the closest answer to the origins of the Segovian Romanesque and therefore of San Martín of Fuentidueña. Though started in the eleventh century, San Isidoro was still under construction in the first half of the twelfth. At least three different artists can be traced as working in it; the latest of them, active in the twelfth century, was not as brilliant as his predecessors, but it is to him that we owe the disciplined Romanesque impulse in the provinces of Segovia and Avila before the middle of the twelfth century, as well as the diffusion of certain decorative motifs that were afterward widely used in these provinces. These motifs, which we shall analyze later on, are like a thread going from one town to another, from one church to another, covering comparatively long distances to put in contact places that otherwise would not necessarily seem related.

This type of small church with one nave, a single apse, and no transept is quite common to the Segovian Romanesque, but the church of San Martín of Fuentidueña, even when the apse was still in situ, presented structural problems that make its study more complicated than it should be. One of them is that only the apse has come to us in a comparatively good state of preservation, while the nave and the bell tower were already in ruins by the nineteenth century, according to Cuadrado’s description in 1865. What is left of them shows a structure made of rubble with remains of some kind of whitewash and ashlar reinforcements in the corners of the tower (see Figure 1). It is hard to believe that a building of the more than average richness that the apse shows could have been finished in so rough a way. Most of the churches scattered all over the area and belonging to more or less the same type as San Martín are made all of squared stones, a very understandable fact for a region where quarries are abundant. One possible explanation is that this church was started in a way that, for lack of funds, could not be carried to a conclusion. Or perhaps, when war changed to peace and the town lost strategic importance, construction of the church was abandoned until some later date.

Another problem is the purpose of building a
church on top of a hill. There are no traces to indicate the existence of a monastery of which San Martín could have been the church. We referred above to the only documented monastery in the area where Fuentidueña stands now, the monastery of San Juan de la Penitencia, which is down in the valley and was founded before the Moorish invasion; it was destroyed then and rebuilt after the reconquest. The richness of decoration in San Martín makes it clear that it could not have been a Cistercian monastery, even if the presence of the monastery of San Bernardo in nearby Sacramenia were not enough to reject that possibility. It was not a parish church either, because down the hill, where the village is now, the church of San Miguel, bigger than San Martín, was built at the same time and in part by the same artists; it was always the parish church. The proximity of San Martín to the ruins of an apparently important castle also built on top of the hill makes it probable that it was used as the chapel of the castle, or maybe as a sanctuary of some special devotion.

The Fuentidueña apse—we describe it now as it stood in Spain—is made of limestone of a beautiful golden color characteristic of its region. All the decorative elements and sculptures are also carved in limestone but of a finer grain and less yellow. As is the rule for this type of architecture, the vaulting of the apse is lower than that of the nave with which it is connected by means of a gable wall and a triumphal arch. It has a straight section covered by a barrel vault and a semicircular one covered by a half dome. Both the inside and the outside of the straight section present pairs of blind arches, pointed and with double colonnettes as separation on the inside, semicircular and with human figures supporting the middle column and capital on the outside.

Three windows of the usual Romanesque type open on the apse proper, but their light is reduced to a very narrow loophole. As no glass panels were used, this slit had to be very narrow to protect the interior against low temperatures and precipitations. Four engaged columns of rectangular base and with capitals on the same level as the corbels that support the cornice under the roof, flank the windows on the outside. Two large sculptures, Saint Martin, the patron saint of the church, on the side of the Gospel and the Annunciation on the side of the Epistle, constitute the strongest accent of the interior of the apse. Sculptures of this importance in size and craftsmanship are rather common in façades of churches, but never located in the apse as we see them here. It seems possible that in San Martín they were preserved, and that in other examples comparable sculptures might have existed and were destroyed to make room for elaborate baroque retables like those we see in practically all the Romanesque churches of the region of Segovia.

The two engaged columns supporting the triumphal arch have capitals with figure sculpture. A course of billet molding is carried around at the spring of the vault and at the same level as the abaci of these capitals. (It probably would have run along the nave walls had these been constructed at the same time as the apse.) There is also billet molding around the voussoirs of the windows, both inside and outside, and on the
cornice under the roof, but it is not of the same type as the band at the spring of the vault. The latter shows a characteristic that is almost a leitmotif for the churches of Segovia and Avila; the spaces between the cylindrical billets are filled with angular ones that from a distance give the impression of small steps running behind the billets (see Figure 28).

A decorative band forms the abaci of the capitals of the windows inside and outside and runs along the curve of the apse. The patterns vary from window to window so that they are never repeated; there are eight different ones altogether, some with interlaces and others with vegetable motifs. Of the latter kind are the rosettes with four pointed petals enclosed in a circle that we see in the decorative band to the left of the Annunciation group (see Figure 13). These rosettes are one of the decorative motifs that can be traced back to San Isidoro of León and that appear all over the regions of Segovia and Avila. But we cannot present here a careful analysis of all the decorative motifs in the Fuentiduena apse, for we have to concentrate mostly on the stylistic and iconographic study of the sculpture proper, including capitals and corbels.

Of all the capitals of the Fuentiduena apse, only three have clear Biblical subjects; the others represent fantastic creatures or animals, and if they were meant to be symbolical the symbolism is very obscure in most of the cases. In earlier times bestiaries like the Physiologus were quite widely used as references, and most of the animals and mythological creatures that we see in the San Martín apse are described in them; their symbolical implications, however, are somewhat lost in these lively but comparatively crude representations. By the time San Martín was built the Romanesque style was already so far from the original sources that the sculptors were probably following or imitating other works they had seen somewhere else and using them only for decorative purposes.

Nevertheless, these capitals, as well as the corbels and major sculptures, are far from being decadent. On the contrary, they have a freshness and primitive quality that make them really appealing. The artists that carved them seemed to be much more concerned with the punishment of evil than with the exaltation of good. Tortured animals entangled in serpentine vines, monsters devouring human beings, birds picking at dead heads, all of them bring to us the awareness of hell without telling us anything about heaven.

Of the capitals in the interior of the apse, those of the triumphal arch represent the Adoration of the Magi (Figure 5) and Daniel in the Lions’ Den (Figure 4). The capitals of the two pairs of blind arches represent centaurs (Figure 6), unfortunately very damaged. The capitals of the windows represent, from left to right: First, two birds, heads hanging down, entangled in serpentine vines (Figure 7). Second, two creatures with cocks’ heads and reptile tails, something between

Fig. 8. The third window capital inside
a basilisk and a griffin, picking at a bald head. Third, a pair of two-headed birds (Figure 8). Fourth, two pairs of birds of tortured shapes picking at bunches of grapes. Fifth, two standing harpies with masculine heads, wearing caps (Figure 11). Sixth, two ravens picking at a head and pulling at one of its eyes with a claw (Figure 13). According to the Physiologus the raven is supposed to have the habit of devouring the eyes and brain of the dead. It is considered a symbol of evil.

The capitals of the windows on the exterior represent, from left to right: First, two strange creatures with heads that could be unicorns’ and rolled-up bodies in the shape of a nautilus shell. Second, two mermaids holding up their double tails with their hands (Figure 12). This type of double-tailed mermaid appears in Spain at least in San Isidoro of León, in the church of the castle of Loarre in the Aragonese province of Huesca, in Santiago de Compostela, and in the cloister of Santa Maria de Ripoll in the Catalan province of Gerona. Outside Spain the double-tailed mermaids are rare in France and particularly popular in Italian Romanesque, above all in the region of Modena. Third, two pairs of griffins (Frontispiece). Fourth, two strange animals with ducks’ heads and reptile tails, picking at the ears of a large head (Figure 15). This capital is very similar to the second on the inside of the apse. Fifth, two pairs of dogs entangled in vines coming from the mouth of a monstrous head. In the Physiologus dogs are considered symbols of uncleanness. Sixth, two pairs of birds eating grapes.

With the exception of the Adoration of the Magi, all the capitals described above have a certain consistency of style. The dominant characteristics are the large volutes, sometimes accompanied by acanthus leaves, reminiscent of the Corinthian capital. The figures are treated in a broad way with rather smooth surfaces. The faces—in centaurs and mermaids—are flat, with round, bulgy eyes without engraved pupils, and large mouths with thick, spread lips. In several instances a band decorated with beads and a fringe of feathers or locks of hair is placed around the middle or the neck of different creatures—centaurs, griffins, birds. There is almost no question that all these capitals were carved by the same hand.

The four capitals that support the cornice under the roof have no volutes or acanthus leaves. They represent, from left to right: First, pairs of griffins entangled in vines. Second, a basketwork motif over the whole surface (Figure 9). This type of decoration is not alien to Romanesque sculpture. It is found quite often in and out of the Iberian peninsula. Third, two pairs of lions bending over with their heads together and entangled in vines (Figure 14). Fourth, four standing harpies with their hair in a sort of pigtail and with large wings sharply carved with vertical lines (Figure 16).

The type of representation shown in the third capital comes from San Isidoro of León, where the lions still show their manes. The same type, and even closer to the San Isidoro model, appears in the south portal of the church of San Vicente of Avila and in the church of San Pedro in the same town. It can also be seen in some churches in the city of Segovia. The origin of this type of lion is quite obscure. It could come from a legend in the Physiologus, according to which the lioness brings forth her whelps dead; the lion comes and howls over them and vivifies them by his breath. The myth was used as a symbol of the resurrection of Christ. In the Basilica of Armentia in the Basque province of Alava there is a capital under the choir that represents pairs of lions devouring an animal, probably a deer, and in exactly the same position as the lions described above. Either the newborn whelp
or the dead deer could have been overlooked in the course of the ages, leaving only the bent-over lions without any purpose or significance. In the reconstruction of the apse, this capital, one of the better preserved ones, has been replaced by a cast; the original is inside the chapel.

The style of these last four capitals is much more nervous than that of the preceding ones. The faces have high, protruding cheekbones and mouths with thin lips—the upper one forming a sharp angle in the middle with the vertex down. The eyes have deeply carved pupils that were probably meant to be inlaid with a dark stone as we see them in other Romanesque monuments in and out of Spain. The entangling vines have always a sharply incised line all along them and shoots ending in two sharp angles. These vines twist one over the other, forming a kind of knot that constitutes the over-all pattern in the capital with basketwork motif.

In view of these stylistic differences, we assume that the capitals are the work of two different artists. A careful comparison of similar representations described above, such as the harpies on the fourth capital supporting the cornice with those on the fifth window capital in the interior of the apse, or the griffins of the second window capital on the outside with those of the first capital under the cornice, shows how marked were the differences between the two sculptors.

Similar disparity can be seen in the two capitals supporting the triumphal arch. The capital on the left (Figure 5) represents the Adoration of the Magi. It has no volutes, and the figures present the high cheekbones, mouth with a sharp angle, and deeply carved pupils that we described above. The Virgin seated under an arch with the Infant Christ in her arms and with Joseph beside her is a type we find in other monuments belonging to the same Segovian area, such as the church of Santa María de la Sierra in nearby Sepúlveda, the church closest in style to San Martín in that Romanesque town. The headdress of the Virgin is typical of the twelfth century and appears also in other regions of Spain.
such as Aragon—both in the tomb of Queen Doña Sancha in a convent in Jaca and in a capital in the cathedral of the same town. We see it also in the statue said to represent Santa Sabina in the south portal of San Vicente of Ávila and, within the Fuentidueña apse, we find it again in the Virgin of the Annunciation and in one corbel.

On the right of the triumphal arch is a rather crude but extremely expressive representation of Daniel in the Lions’ Den (Figure 4). Though the figures fill practically all the space, we can still see the basic structure of the Corinthian capital in the volutes that emerge at the angles. The heads are large, and Daniel’s face shows the characteristics described above in connection with mermaids and centaurs. The manes of the lions have been carved in very geometric and well-defined locks similar in all respects to those emerging from the belt of one of the centaurs (Figure 6) on the right blind arches.

We shall refer from now on to sculptor A when considering the author of the Daniel cap-

tal, all the capitals of the windows, and the centaurs in the blind arches; to sculptor B as the author of the Adoration of the Magi and the four capitals supporting the cornice.

On the basis of style, the thirty corbels that support the cornice under the roof can be attributed to sculptor B. Apart from the first and the twenty-ninth (always counting from left to right), which are missing completely, and a few others badly damaged, these corbels are well preserved and show a freshness and originality of interpretation, within a rather crude craftsmanship, that makes them extremely interesting and amusing. The church of San Miguel, also in Fuentidueña, has around the apse corbels identical to the ones under discussion; so are some of the capitals that alternate with them. It is quite obvious that artist B worked in both churches, but we cannot find traces of A in San Miguel, either in the window capitals or those of the nave. These last saw a hand much more skillful and elegant than any we have been studying so far.

Nine of the San Martín corbels show men clad in long garments, sitting or standing, and

Fig. 12. The second window capital outside

Fig. 13. The sixth window capital inside
most of them carrying what look like musical instruments (see Figure 17). One figure, wrapped in a long mantle and wearing a headdress like the one in the Adoration of the Magi capital, seems to be a woman (Figure 22). In another corbel we see an acrobat wearing a long tunic and with his legs bent over his head (Figure 18). Acrobats are not rare in Spanish Romanesque, including a capital in San Isidoro of León, but it would be hard to find their exact symbolic meaning. In other corbels the human figures give way to a harpy entirely similar to those in capital four under the cornice, a crouching monkey—also a common representation—other animals of different kinds, and some vegetable (Figure 19) or interlace motifs. A rather curious point is made by the presence in corbel twenty-two (Figure 23) of a man naked but for a fig leaf, and next to him, in corbel twenty-three (Figure 24), a stylized fruit tree along which coils a serpent. It seems quite clear that we are in the presence of Adam and the tree of knowledge of good and evil; we could expect that on the other side of the tree Eve would appear to share with Adam the original sin. But instead of a woman, what is represented in corbel twenty-four (Figure 25) is a fat monster with a big head, not without a certain optimistic expression, in the process of devouring a human being in long skirts. Unless our artist had such an intense hate for the trick our mother Eve played on us that he represented her suffering the torments of hell—and this would be against Biblical teaching—the only explanation we can find for this omission is that he probably found himself unable or considered it improper to represent a naked woman, and so decided to leave Adam forever alone. This should be enough punishment for him!

The last corbel, representing a castle (Figure 26), is particularly interesting. Could this rather detailed interpretation have been inspired by an actual castle, maybe the one that once stood on the same site as San Martín? If that could be proved, this piece of stone would become a real and valuable document.

In the study of the main sculptures of the Fuentidueña chapel we shall start with the atlantes supporting the blind arches on the outside of the apse. The one on the left is extremely battered but still shows the figure of an exceedingly fat man, apparently nude. If we were dealing with pagan representations we should call it a silenus. His arms are bent back to hold the base of a column that ends in a very simple Corinthian capital. The abacus shows the rosette motif that we described above. This figure stands on a very low plinth resting on the molding that runs along the wall of the apse and forms the window sills.

The extremely bad preservation of this sculpture makes impossible its attribution on stylistic grounds to either of the two sculptors under study. Moreover, this type of representation is so unusual within the Spanish Romanesque, and, we should say, the French as well, that any attempt to assimilate it to a particular school or group would be out of the question. Nude atlantes or telamones are not rare in Italian Romanesque; several examples could be mentioned here, but none of them is placed the way the Fuentidueña one is. Not only are the atlantes supporting the middle column of a pair of blind arches rare, but the blind arches themselves are very unusual.

The supporting sculptural group on the blind arches to the right (Figure 29) is much better preserved than the “silenus” described above. For the better protection of this group a faithful
cast has taken its place on the outside of the apse, while the original may now be admired inside the chapel. It has a Far Eastern flavor in the placement of the figures one upon the other in a compact shape. It shows a crouching bearded man under whom a lion’s head opens its mouth to devour him. The lion’s head recalls those in the Daniel capital. On the man’s back, two masculine figures kneel and bend over to support a column on their shoulders with the help of their hands. The column ends in a capital decorated with confronted pairs of turtledoves, symbol of Christian faith and devotion. The heads and part of the arms of the two kneeling men are missing. The draperies cling to their bodies, revealing their structure, and the whole group is an exquisite example of the beauty that Romanesque sculpture could reach.

A completely tentative interpretation of the symbolic meaning of this group is that the crouching man represents the pagans, for whom the devil waits and “as a roaring lion walketh about seeking whom he may devour” (I Peter, 5:8). The men kneeling on his shoulders are the converted who, overcome by the power of truth, step on paganism and support the orthodox faith represented by the turtledoves.

If the fat atlas on the left of the apse brought to our mind some comparable representations in Italian Romanesque, these figures on the right side, and even the presence of the lion, make us consider the possibility of a relationship, even if remote, between one of the sculptors in Fuentidueña and the school of Wiligelmo da Modena. Among many other examples in places like Ferrara, Piacenza, Modena, Verona, the telamones supporting the pulpit of the church of Quarantoli, Pieve, are almost identical in posture, treatment of the draperies, even the shoes and belt, with the ones in the San Martín apse. The Quarantoli telamones are attributed by Salvini to a follower of the “Maestro d’Artù” whom he includes in a group of sculptors with Burgundian influence. Whether or not these sculptures have any Nordic influence—and this is not very clear—there is no question that the subject matter is absolutely within the school of Modena. Even closer to Wiligelmo, in the work of the “Maestro delle Sfingi,” we find capitals extremely like the mermaids from Fuentidueña.

The sculptures representing Saint Martin (Figure 27) and the Annunciation (Figure 28) stand on each side of the interior of the apse. As we mentioned before, the use of sculptures of that size other than in portals is quite unusual. These two we are studying now do not seem to have a real functional mission, as the columns against which they stand do not support a real arch but only the initial curve of the half dome. Moreover, their carved bases do not rest on a real pedestal or plinth but simply on a large block of the same kind and shape as the stones that form part of the fabric. This gives to the sculptures a certain unfinished quality, as if they were made too short for the space they had to fill or as if they had been made for another place in the building.
Saint Martin, bishop of Tours, was one of the most venerated saints of the Middle Ages, above all in France, whence this veneration spread to other countries. Italy was the stage of his young military years, and Spain was connected with him through his humanitarian but futile intervention to save the life of the Spanish heresiarch Priscillian. The small church of San Martín at Fuentidueña was one of many dedicated to this popular saint. We see him on the left side of the apse, represented as a bishop, both hands and part of his arms missing, standing on two animals difficult to identify. The almost columnar effect of this statue is practically undisturbed by the stylized foldings and the carved motif that decorates the borders of the garment. The static rigidity of the figure is emphasized by the capital above it, in which the Corinthian structure has been restricted to the essentials, in sharp contrast with the elaborate capitals we have previously described.

The sculptural group representing the Annunciation, on the other hand, is far from static. Both figures stand on a square base beneath which we can see nude creatures about to be devoured by a lion's head. They are, unfortunately, quite damaged, but their tortured shapes seem to be human though with claws instead of feet. They probably represent the souls of the damned, and the mouth of the lion the gate of hell. The capital that crowns the column against which Mary and the archangel stand represents the Nativity in the typically Romanesque interpretation of the subject. On the front appears Mary in bed, and above her the Christ Child in swaddling clothes, lying in the manger, while the ass and the ox warm Him with their breath. This part of the capital is in a bad state of preservation, but the two shepherds with hoods and staves who approach the scene from the left are well preserved—and extremely charming with their wide-open eyes and astonished expressions.

Fig. 16. A section of the cornice showing the first capital with griffins
The Virgin Mary and the archangel Gabriel stand very close together, their bodies in an almost dancing attitude and their feet following in posture the square shape of the base. There is no rigidity about these figures. In spite of the missing heads—one completely, the other in part—we can almost see their expressions. The whole gives a feeling of rhythm and intimacy. The garments cling to the bodies, revealing their slender limbs in the same way as those of the atlantes from the blind arches on the right of the outside of the apse. There is a great deal in common between that group and the Annunciation. In the latter, the base, main figures, and capital are closely related: the salvation of mankind through the Redemption symbolized by the Annunciation to Mary and, on top, the fulfillment of the Angelic Salutation. This unity would support our tentative interpretation of the symbolic meaning of the sculptural group from the outside of the apse if we consider both the work of the same artist.

Comparing the statue of Saint Martin with the Annunciation, we notice a great similarity of style: the same type of schematic foldings interpreted with two or three parallel lines; practically the same garments, but with the basic difference that in Saint Martin we cannot believe in the presence of a body under them, while in the Annunciation both figures seem perfectly alive. The difference is very small, maybe too subtle to warrant any emphatic statements about authorship. It is only a feeling of something in the Annunciation that does not exist in the other sculpture—a matter of a light touch, of a soft breath of inspiration. There are other differences between them. In the Saint Martin statue all has been subdued, from capital to base. In the Annunciation, apart from the greater liveliness of the main figures, capital and base have also a representational importance. Saint Martin has no halo; Mary has one. The decorative pattern around the border of Saint Martin’s garment is quite different from the bead motif in both figures of the Annunciation and in most of the capitals studied before.

It is possible that these differences are not strong enough to attribute the sculptures to different hands. They could be the result of a greater sympathy on the artist’s part for one subject than
for the other. If, on the contrary, we were allowed to take sides, we would attribute the Annunciation and the atlantes on the right side of the apse to one sculptor, Saint Martin to another. It is very probable that both the former groups were designed by the same artist, but that the capitals above them and maybe the base of the Annunciation were executed by a hand other than his. This latter hand, we conclude after comparative analysis, was that of sculptor A. The battered face of the Saint Martin—the whole head was lost, found, and replaced—does not seem to agree with the sharp and consistent features we found characteristic of sculptor B. We feel tempted to attribute the Saint Martin and the fat atlas on the left of the outside of the apse to another sculptor. This atlas shows much more restraint than the atlantes on the right, in spite of the subject matter, and, like the Saint Martin, it has a simple Corinthian capital. Is it possible that a third sculptor, neither A nor B, worked only on these four groups? Might he have been the same who executed the capitals of the nave of the parish church of San Miguel in Fuentidueña, which, as we have said above, are more refined than any of the capitals of San Martín?

Who were these artists? Where did they come from? Once again we are confronted with the eternal problem of lack of documentary evidence. If in some of the decorative motifs and capitals we pointed to connections with San Isidoro of León, we cannot say the same about the statues. At that late period of Romanesque art the influence of France was very strong; it was to become even stronger at the beginning of the Gothic. Nevertheless, in our problem we cannot point to any specific characteristic that would make that influence entirely positive. We also have to

Figs. 20, 21, and 22. Corbels: Man with a Book, Animal, and Woman
consider the possibility of an Italian influence coming to Spain directly or through France, and, above all, the powerful Spanish imagination that even at that late period could transform any influence into something intensely personal and absolutely local.

It is quite probable that there existed a workshop of sculptors who served all the region of Segovia, for we find a close relationship between many decorative elements and some of the sculptures. These are different enough, however, to consider them the work of several artists belonging to the same atelier. We have referred to the south portal of the church of San Vicente in Avila in connection with decorative motifs and the headdress of the Virgin. The figures said to be San Vicente and Santa Sabina in this portal, dating, probably, from the first half of the twelfth century, could be taken as early prototypes for certain Segovian sculptures including those in the Fuentidueña apse. The closest to the Saint Martin and the Annunciation within the same Segovian region is a beautiful sculpture, probably representing Saint John the Evangelist, that now stands in a niche on the outside of the ruined church of Santiago of Sepúlveda but that came from another and unknown church. This sculpture is more refined than the Fuentidueña ones, also much better preserved, but it must have come from the same workshop.

The dating of the whole apse—we cannot say of the whole church of San Martín because the nave and tower were probably later—has to be tentative because of the lack both of documents and of any definitive studies of the Segovian Romanesque that could be used as a starting point. As King Alfonso VII, who gave the main impulse for the construction of religious houses

Figs. 23, 24, and 25. Corbels: Adam, Tree with Serpent, and Devouring Monster
in the region of Segovia, died in 1157, it seems reasonable that those built in areas that were strategically important for a short period, as Fuentidueña was, were started before or at least shortly after his death. Though most of the related works we have mentioned belong to the first half of the twelfth century, a date somewhere around 1160 seems to be the closest we can get for our monument. The San Martín apse is, in our opinion, contemporary with the church of Santa María de la Sierra in Sepúlveda and earlier than most of the churches in the city of Segovia.

To take down a building, even a small one, with the intention of reconstructing it in another place is never an easy matter. The little church of San Martín of Fuentidueña presented some problems that made the task more complicated than we expected. To begin with, the ruinous church had been used as a cemetery for many years, and all the space enclosed within its walls had been filled with ground to make the burials possible. For legal reasons this filling ground could not be removed, and we soon made up our minds that the work had to be done in that gruesome, if silent, company.

The first step was to dig a ditch along the inside wall of the apse, deep enough to reach the rocky foundation of the building and reveal its total height. The basic plan had to be taken at the point where the lower section of the wall projected beyond the upper, and on the inside was just visible above the ground. Four more sections were taken at different levels, the last one giving the outline of the vault, dome, and the shafts of the engaged columns of the outside of the apse. At the same time, and conveniently separated from each other, vertical measurements were taken that, related afterwards to the horizontal levels, gave the exact lack of horizontality of base and platform, impost under the windows, vault, and so forth. It became clear that the whole fabric had sunk, because of original defective planning or perhaps the stress of the centuries. The lack of horizontality was due to the fact that the church had been erected on solid rock that was never leveled for the purpose, and the building was adjusted to the sloping ground and made higher on one side than on the other so that it could stand vertical.

Once all the general measurements were taken, measured drawings of sections and elevations were made, recording also the dimensions of the stones and decorative elements. All the stones corresponding to the interior of the apse were provisionally numbered with white chalk (see Figure 32); when the same was done with the stones on the exterior, rain and wind washed the numbers off, and they were not replaced before the definitive ones were drawn. A great many record photographs were taken during the whole process of dismantling, to be used in double-checking the numbers in drawings and on stones in the reconstruction.

Before they were taken down, the stones were carefully numbered with indelible black paint on
the upper and hidden surfaces (see Figure 33). The joints of the stones coming on top of each of them were marked on that same surface, and so were their corresponding numbers, in red paint to differentiate them from the identifying black ones. In many instances it was considered useful to draw the complete outline of the stones coming on top—mostly in the arches. With this system the exact location of each stone and its relationship with the stones in contact with it could be easily found; when a course was put back in place, the position of the next would be already determined. All the numbers were carefully recorded in the drawing at the same time they were marked on the stones, to avoid any mistakes.

Several empty tombs appeared excavated in the rock and radiating from the exterior wall of the apse. When and by whom these tombs were made we have not been able to find out, but in the village the people call them las tumbas de los moros. That they were not for or from the Moors is obvious: the Moors probably were never there, and certainly not after the church of San Martín was built. The location of the tombs outside of the sacred walls could imply that they were meant for non-Christians or heretics, and it is probable that the term moros was associated in the minds of the inhabitants of Fuentidueña with any non-believer, not necessarily with Mussulmans alone. We are not going to attempt, however, to build up any theories to explain this mysterious problem. Our concern was that when the tombs were excavated they damaged to a great extent the bases of the engaged columns on the outside of the apse. As the projecting part of the wall and the bases of the columns on the inside were also damaged when the place was converted into a cemetery, it was necessary to cut new stones—of the same kind and perhaps from the same quarries as the old—to replace the destroyed ones. Those that were not seriously damaged were left, to avoid an excess of restoration, always looking toward the reconstruction of the apse in New York.

New stones were also cut and put in place to complete the gable wall that joins the apse to

*Fig. 27. Saint Martin of Tours*
the nave and to take the place of several missing ones in the cornice under the roof. The billet motif that decorates this cornice was carved in the new stones by the same workmen who did the rest of the work. These men, who can never get enough credit, were, as the architect Ferrant said, real Romanesque workers; for them each stone was really precious.

Before taking down the triumphal arch, vault, and dome, a special combination of centerings was made in such a way that they could be put together again for the reconstruction (see Figure 30). As that part of the building is the most difficult, special care was taken to avoid any future problems; the joints of all the stones and voussoirs, as well as their corresponding numbers, were drawn on the wood together with special marks to help in putting the strips of wood together afterward.

Disassembling of the apse was started with the new stones of the gable wall and the spandrels of the triumphal arch down to the impost; then the triumphal arch itself and the voussoirs of the barrel vault, starting with the keystone. The walls of the apse consisted of two stone walls put together by means of a compound of rubble and mortar. Both walls were taken down at the same time, to keep as much as possible the same level. This simultaneous process was followed right to the end. The lower part of the apse, which should have been the easiest because windows, columns, and sculptures were already down, proved to be much more difficult than expected because of the particularly hard mortar that formed a single block solid enough to support the weight of the entire building. While the projecting base of the fabric was still standing, the width of the walls was checked and also the relationship between the exterior and interior levels. The initial measurements were corrected for the final drawings meant to be used in the reconstruction.

As they were being taken down, the stones were put on the ground in groups according to their location in the apse (see Figure 33). An area conveniently leveled and covered with con-

*Fig. 28. Two views of the Annunciation group*

*Fig. 29. Atlantes from right exterior blind arches*
crete was made ready so that the arches for the centerings might be drawn upon it and the curvature of the actual arches verified. After the first classification of the stones, a second one was made according to their size and shape, to make the packing easier.

All the wooden boxes for shipping were made on the spot, by the same “Romanesque” workers. They were made in different ways according to their future contents—cradles for plain stones, boxes for more delicate pieces. Each of them was reinforced with steel hoops and steel corner pieces. Capitals, corbels, and statues were fixed to their boxes by means of dovetail pieces of wood inlaid in the unexposed surfaces of the pieces to prevent any possible movement. In the case of the large and very heavy sculptures of Saint Martin and the Annunciation, in addition to the dovetail system all the empty spaces in the box were filled with sawdust as a protection against damage by mishandling.

A code based on the initials of their place of location was given to each group of stones and was written on each box together with the black numbers of all the stones contained in it. A list of all the cradles and boxes was necessary, to check them when they were sent by truck to the northern Spanish harbor of Bilbao whence they were shipped, and again when they arrived in New York. Another list, of all the stones inside, was enclosed in each box. In the general checking list were written the dimensions of all the stones, their location according to the established code, and their relationship to the stones on which they rested. In some instances special identifications were given to prevent confusion.

With this we have come to the end of this already too long and complex study of the new treasure exhibited at The Cloisters. Among the many persons that have made this enterprise possible I want to emphasize my personal gratitude to the architect Don Alejandro Ferrant, whose many years’ experience in the conservation and restoration of monuments, whose magnificent and almost heroic direction of the whole process of
dismantling the apse, together with his beautiful and accurate drawings, have been the bases for the reconstruction of the monument that we admire now. I am also deeply indebted to the historian and academician Don Gonzalo Menéndez Pidal, who took most of the record photographs, made a film showing the different steps of the work, and provided constant advice and support in many difficult moments.

NOTES

2. A single document makes special mention of Fuentidueña on the occasion of the serious illness that made Alfonso VIII stop there. Thinking that his end was near, the king wrote his last will on December 8, 1204 (he did not actually die until 1214). The document, as preserved in the Liber privilegiorum ecclesie Toletane, fol. 26v-28v, Archives of the Cathedral of Toledo, Spain, starts: “Testamentum Illustris Regis Adefonsi factum apud Fontemdoniam” and ends: “Facta carta apud Fontemdoniam, Era MCCCXL* secunda, VIII* die Mensis Decembris, Rege expri[mente].” In this will are stated endowments to several monasteries without any reference to Fuentidueña. The document has probably misled many authors since Colmenares mentioned it. Practically everyone has accepted as a fact that the Fuentidueña mentioned in it was the one we are dealing with. The fact that the document is in the Liber privilegiorum ecclesie Toletane, plus the evidence that Alfonso VIII was in the region of Toledo much more than in that of Segovia, opens the possibility that the town where the king wrote his will was Fuentidueña de Tajo. Pascual Madoz (Diccionario Geográfico-Estadístico-Histórico de España y sus Posesiones de Ultramar, Madrid, 1850, VIII, 252-53) gives Fuentidueña de Tajo as the setting for the illness of the king and the writing of his last will. Cuadrado (Recuerdos y bellezas de España, Salamanca, Avila y Segovia, Madrid, 1865, pp. 523-25) jumps to conclusions and insinuates that Fuentidueña of Segovia was a royal site where the kings used to go to rest from their harassed lives.


4. Ibid., pls. 135-39.

5. I owe this information to Don Justo Hernansanz Navas, Secretary of Local Administration, Olombrada, Segovia.