

**On the Edge: Envisioning the *Libro de buen amor*
in the *Cancionero de Palacio***

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Mounting evidence confirms that generations of Castilian poets well into the sixteenth century knew and read closely the *Libro de buen amor*. As they perused the *Libro*, many of them plundered its themes, examples of virtuosity, and its content to weave both explicit and subtle allusions to the work into their own compositions, and in general validate it as a universally recognized source of vernacular poetic, moral, and social authority.

The *Libro* was unique in early Castilian vernacular literature in that it seems to have anticipated its future influence and perceived its own centrality to the development of vernacular poetics in Castile. Recognizing its own artistry, in its well-known *envoi* it dared all good poets to emend, expand, or add to it:

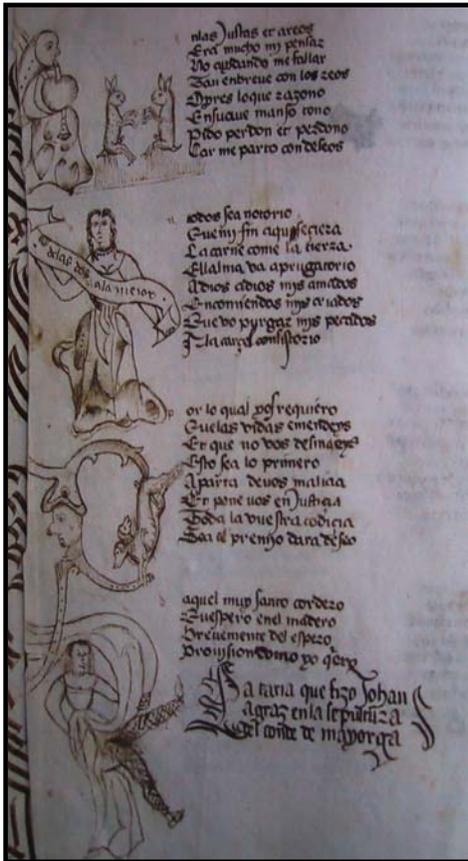
Qual quier omne que lo oya, si bien trobar sopiere,
puede más y añadir e emendar, si quisiere;
ande de mano en mano, a quien quier quel pidiere;
como pella a las dueñas, tome lo quien podiere (1629).

When examined in light of subsequent tradition, it is clear that the *Libro's* words did not so much extend an invitation as issue a challenge to later artists to join in writing and commenting upon it. These are more than commonplace entreaties to correct the work or add text to the blank folios at the end of the manuscript (*pace*, Blecua, note to 1629 of his edition; and Gómez Moreno). Rather, they constitute a summons to change, revise, and extend it, indeed to gloss, rewrite, and reimagine it--the only proviso being that the individual taking up the gauntlet be a virtuoso and worthy successor. The *Libro's* presentation as a self-consciously "open text" (one which invites the reader's collaboration in the production of its meaning, Eco 1979, 7), is consequently far more ample and complex than we have been inclined to believe: other artists were not only called to read it, correct it, and contribute to it, but to comment upon it and add to the infinite possibilities of its sense, form, and significance.

As a work that recognized the prospect of its subsequent interpretations, the *Libro* set into motion the process of its own gloss. Indeed, it embraced the notion of glossing as an integral part of its constitution and announced that, through the process of development, accretion, and annotation, it could be expanded, transformed, and transmuted into different texts, forms, and images. Its late medieval readers understood this well, and it is in this spirit that the *Libro* best manifests itself in the *cancioneros* of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, where the intertextual art of gloss and poetic commentary reigned supreme.

As scholarship since the mid-nineteenth century has shown, the *Libro* functioned as a touchstone for glosses and allusions in a number of *cancioneros*. As early as 1851, for example, P. J. Pidal in his edition of the *Cancionero de Baena* noted a reference to it in a composition by Ferrán Manuel de Lando. Although critics since then have continued to uncover both explicit and concealed references to the *Libro* in *Baena* as well as other *cancioneros* (Moffat 37-38, Gerli, Deyermond, Labrador Herráiz and Di Franco, Whinnom), only the most recent scholarship has

begun to investigate how allusions to it functioned in their new contexts and to inquire as to their purpose. In fact, from the elusive manner in which many references are cast, it is now possible to appreciate how the *Libro* affected a broad spectrum of verse and served as a "key subtext of early fifteenth-century Castilian poetic discourse" (Gerli 1990, 368), and how its influence weighed significantly upon later generations of Castilian poets. The more recondite allusions to and abstruse glosses of the Archpriest's work in the *cancioneros* not only confirm the *Libro's* ample circulation in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries but attest to the active collusion of a large, learned audience so familiar with it, so well schooled in its themes, methods, language, and images that even fleeting references to it could be readily recognized. Put simply, the *cancioneros* constitute an important medium for establishing how the Archpriest's work was read, received, rewritten, and reimagined by later generations, and for understanding the role it played in defining the subtle dynamics of reading Castilian courtly verse.



In fact, the *Libro's* pervasiveness as a literary exemplar may now be traced to a precinct beyond a strictly written text, specifically to the illuminations of at least one *cancionero* in which it materializes through a complex process of ocular and textual allusion to produce a visual as well as verbal gloss upon the page. I am referring to the *Cancionero de Palacio* (Ms. 2653 of the Biblioteca Universitaria de Salamanca) which, as Keith Whinnom noted, is embellished with "dibujos de parejas desnudas, y de animales ocupados en el ayuntamiento carnal" (ed., Diego de San Pedro, *Cárcel de Amor* 18) that frame courtly poems that were misleadingly described by Francisca Vendrell de Millás, the first modern editor of the work, as essentially platonic in nature (87).¹ In at least one of these drawings there is an unmistakable visual evocation of, and textual allusion to, the *Libro* which can further broaden our understanding of its full effect on the Castilian artistic imagination of the late Middle Ages and the early modern period. The reference appears on folio 60v of the *Cancionero*, reproduced in its entirety in the enlargeable image to the left.²

¹ Ana María Álvarez Pellitero, the *Cancionero's* most recent editor (1993), mentions the ribald illustrations (xii) but does not examine them in any detail, let alone reproduce them to do full justice to the pragmatics of reading the manuscript. As with her predecessor, Vendrell de Millás (1945), she appears to deem the marginal elements inessential to a reading of the *Cancionero* and detaches the text from the illustrations in the editing process. Michael Camille's "Philological Iconoclasm: Edition and Image in the *Vie de Saint Alexis*" (1992) offers powerful arguments for the reconceptualization of the role of text and image in medieval manuscripts and the need to study, reproduce, and publish them in conjunction with each other.

² I am grateful to the Biblioteca Universitaria de Salamanca, where the *Cancionero de Palacio* is kept, for permission to reproduce this image. At the same time, I wish also to express my profound gratitude to my colleague and friend, Jesús Rodríguez Velasco, for photographing the folio in question and sending me a digital image of it via the Internet. His diligence and technological expertise reduced to a matter of days a process that, experience tells me, would have taken months to complete less than a decade ago. It is perhaps not insignificant that, despite the *Cancionero de Palacio's* wanderings in modern times, it and Ms. S of the *Libro de buen amor* were housed in the University's library during the late Middle Ages.

The woman that forms the initial capital A and is holding the banner in the middle of the page is, of course, a pictorial representation and verbal gloss of one of the most inventive passages of the *Libro de buen amor*--the Archpriest's advice on *dueñas chicas*, located near the end of the work (*cuadernas* 1606-1617), in which he counsels that, when choosing between large and small women, the ones of slightest stature are the better lovers:

non es desaguizado del grand mal ser foidor;
del mal tomar lo menos, dize lo el sabidor;
por ende de las mugeres la mejor es la menor. (1617 bcd)

There can be little doubt that the woman depicted in the *Cancionero* draped in the emblem “de las dos a la menor” comprises both a verbal and visual calque on this passage from the *Libro de buen amor*, a text curiously favored by later generations of poets as a touchstone for their own work (see Gerli, Deyermond, and Labrador Herráiz). The passage on *dueñas chicas* is explicitly evoked here on the edge of the *Cancionero de Palacio* and doubtless serves as a visual and verbal commentary for the verse that accompanies it. That said, however, how this clear reference to the *Libro* functioned as a visible framing device in the dynamics of reading the poem it accompanies remains to be examined.

The illustrator of the *Cancionero de Palacio* placed this allusion to the *Libro* in one of the historiated initials of the text, specifically at the beginning of one of the stanzas comprising an austere elegiac composition by Juan Agraz, to produce an effect that at first appears to be not unlike the *motes*, *empresas* and *invenciones* which formed such an important part of courtly culture (see MacPherson, Rico, and Casas Rigal). By doing this, the drawing was meant to provoke thought and encourage the beholder to search for a whole new range of significations and nuances embedded in it and in the poem that it frames. Moreover, we can conclude that, since this reference to the *Libro* is contained in one of the illustrated capitals on the page, its presence there was calculated as an integral part of the manuscript at the time of its creation and, therefore, as a deliberate element of any message which might be conveyed from reading or contemplating this folio. Although the scribes of texts and their illustrators could often be one in the same person, illuminators were usually different from scribes and followed them in the crafting of a manuscript. That said, however, regardless of whether the text and the image in the *Cancionero* are the work of one or two hands, the image does not comprise a later gloss like a piece of marginalia placed there serendipitously by an itinerant reader; it and the verses it inaugurates are clearly intended to be one of a piece.

Examining striking images like this one in other medieval manuscripts, Michael Camille (1992) has noted how they are “exactly the opposite of spontaneous unconscious associations,” and how “medieval artists created marginal images from a ‘reading,’ or rather an intentional misreading, of the text” (41) not specifically to illustrate it but to comment upon it. In this way, “marginal images are *conscious* usurpations, perhaps even political statements about diffusing the power of the text through its unraveling rather than repressed meanings that suddenly flash back onto the surface of things” (42).

The passage on *dueñas chicas* in the *Libro*, parodies savagely the dissecting gaze and logic-chopping methods of scholastic exegesis (see Lawrence), as it invites the reader to scrutinize it closely and look for, speculate upon, and extend its sense imaginatively to other meanings (“mucho ál y fallaredes, adó paráredes mientes” 1609d). Doubtless aware of the potential for

humor and, especially, ironic contradiction and subversion in the possibilities of this text, the illustrator of *Palacio* was prepared to pursue them and create a distracting visual gloss based on the *Libro de buen amor*, which he placed at a solemn juncture in Juan Agraz's elegiac poem: at the point where the speaking voice in it intones with moral finality that "mi fin aquí se çier[r]a, / la carne come la tierra / el alma va a Purgatorio."

Agraz's elegiac poem, evokes the premature, tragic death of don Juan, Conde de Mayorga, scion of the powerful Pimentel family, on 14 February 1437, at the age of 27. Accordingly, it resounds with the stern and somber echoes of *contemptus mundi*. Spoken by the young Conde from the grave, the text invokes the deceptive pleasures of youth and the vanity of privilege when confronted with the rigors of death and the reality of physical decay. It is a morally austere composition that summons the ravages of mortality and portrays the subject's repudiation of callow frivolity, indiscretion, and worldly sensuality. In the latter's place, don Juan's ghostly voice counsels the renunciation of earthly delights in favor of cultivating *gravitas*, devotion to the Virgin, and the hope of eternal salvation. By adopting an autobiographical voice, Agraz would have us believe that the Conde's words written on the page embody direct experience and express deep personal remorse, contrition, and atonement for a reckless youth.

Yet the illustrations that form the historiated capitals to each stanza on folio 60v of Agraz's composition stand both as mute sketches of the passions the young Conde rejects as well as eloquent emblems of an engaging exuberance that speaks unmistakably of the joy of the world and the pleasures of seduction. Far from abhorrent images of eternal damnation that might compel a viewer to heed carefully the cheerless words spoken by don Juan and think twice about succumbing to worldly ardor and enjoyment, they portray in full and alluring abundance an animated, seductive, corporeal, even elegant, universe populated by images of physical desire, fertility, vitality, and change.

The conspicuously pregnant lady, who forms the capital E of the verse "En las justas et ar[r]eos" at the top of the page, striding merrily as she plays a phallic bag pipe (a standard carnivalesque sign for the penis and the scrotum) in a gesture of unmistakable *fellatio*, visibly stirs the rest of nature with her Orphic tune, arousing the hares in the grass, making them and the hounds that form part of the capital P further down the folio--all with manifestly erect penises--stop their traditional pursuit of one another and jump, run, and dance to her lascivious pipe. Deployed below her, there are two youthful women, the lower one defaced by a later hand that sketched in a pair of spread legs protruding from below her peplum;³ the upper one, who comprises the capital of "A todos sea notorio," presumably the smaller of the two and hence the more desirable, wears the beckoning banner on her breast with the reference to the *Libro*, connoting the possibility of reading the verse as "A todos sea notorio / de las dos a la menor." And finally, just below the center of the page, on the left, there is a long-nosed male figure, part of the initial P of "Por lo qual yo's requiero," whose cap is formed by a fish that devours his head and whose tail becomes the tail of one of the dogs or, when viewed anamorphically, provocatively penetrates the dog's anus.

To be sure, the image of the long-nosed man and the allusion to the hounds and the hares, all traditional sexual signifiers, seem also to be evocations of the passage which immediately

³ Throughout the *Cancionero de Palacio* several hands from different generations have either enhanced the lasciviousness of many of the images, as in this case, or intervened to censor them by blotting the figures with ink, especially their genitals.

follows that of the *dueñas chicas* in the *Libro*, namely the one which describes “Don Furón, moço del arcipreste” and the procurement of women in terms of cony hunting (1618-25). Although don Furón, as his name indicates, is portrayed as a ferret (not insignificantly, a long, furry animal that penetrates holes, in search of *cuniculae*), the Archpriest, despite don Furón’s disheveled appearance, boasts of his prowess and says “a las vezes mal perro rroye buena coyunda” (1623d). As Louise Vasvari (1995, 1999) has pointed out, the figure of Don Furón is, perhaps like the long-nosed character depicted on the folio of the *Cancionero*, a penile “double shafter,” or a rogue whose tastes make him apt not to discriminate in sexual commerce between women or men, and may even bend toward bestiality. The propinquity of the male figure of the *Cancionero* to his canine companion should, thus, not be a source of surprise or conjecture.⁴

In this way, the text of Juan Agraz’s somber poem proclaiming the Conde de Mayorga’s contrition for past sins and pronouncing his final admonition to renounce the world is haunted at the margins by striking visual images of luxuriant desire, carnality, and an exultant, fecund nature symbolized by the playing of music and moved primarily by bodily imperatives. We literally enter some of the solemn verses of don Juan’s valedictory to worldly ways through images pilfered from the *Libro de buen amor* that serve both as capitals and as graphic, carnivalesque statements that contradict the thrust of the texts they inaugurate. The visual signs comprising the alluring woman with the banner invoking the love of small women become the gateway to Purgatory and the grave words of the speech recorded in the poem.

When examined carefully, each affirmation in Agraz’s composition finds its thematic and moral opposition in an image on the edge. In this way, the page reflects the process of subversive, dialectical reading characteristic of the *Libro de buen amor* itself (see Brown 116-44 and Burke 162-82) as each image and idea is shown to contain and conjure its antithesis. The images’ contradictory messages in binary opposition to the Conde de Mayorga’s words create at the level of the manuscript folio an ambiguous idiom composed of both verbal and visual elements that is itself not unlike the dichotomous rhetoric of the *Libro de buen amor*.

The conflicting messages posed by the anonymous illustrator’s initial A, P, and D at the edge of Juan Agraz’s poem in the *Cancionero de Palacio* are, then, sophisticated visual as well as literary expropriations from the *Libro*, evocations of Juan Ruiz’s burlesque parody of exegesis as set forth in the verses of the *dueñas chicas*. Through this intentional, doubtless comical, misappropriation the illustrator sought to extend the thematic and epistemological frames of Agraz’s poem so as to include the presence of their opposites. By adopting certain discrete images from the *Libro*, the artist inscribed his own complex, resistant understanding of Agraz’s poem to reveal the omnipresent allure of temptation even in the most somber moments of pious meditation and renunciation.

The illuminations on folio 60v of the *Cancionero*, beyond being visual citations of the *Libro de buen amor*, are thus instructive in that they allow us to see what could be conjured by the late medieval imagination when confronted with a carefully crafted elegy intended to evoke both the ravages of death and the vanities of the world. When Agraz’s text is experienced in the context of the manuscript and its framing illuminated images, a new intellectual dynamic emerges that takes on highly ingenious forms and generates ambiguous meanings in the struggle staged by the

⁴ Burke calls attention to the imagery of penetration in the *Libro* and interprets many of the work’s aspects in terms of the sacred and profane connotations of it (162-82).

medieval mind to grapple with the world, the flesh, and the promise of salvation. The illustrator of *Palacio* ironically grafted sexual energy on to Christian devotion, casting the shadow of the conflicting emblems of desire over piety in order to give the lie to their dichotomy. By means of these illustrative images spirituality and eroticism are revealed to coexist, one as determiner and boundary of the other. In the synthesis of the libidinal images of love with the solemn language of Christian penitence, the illustrator inverts the message contained in the poem, challenges it from the margin, and reveals the implicit ambivalence and sublimations of piety, which in the medieval mind can never free itself from desire. The outcome is a highly nuanced idiom nurtured by both text and image that produces an intrepid interrogation of the Conde de Mayorga's declaration of contrition; an ingenious questioning of his words that exposes the abiding attraction of the world and, as a result, probes the endurance of all moral tenacity. Agraz's elegy as it appears in the *Cancionero de Palacio* can only be fully understood within the larger sphere of the seductive forces of nature and the world that, like a siren's song, call forth at the height of Christian resistance to tempt the devotion of the pious heart even from beyond the grave.

Once recognized, the ingenious visual evocations of the *Libro* created by the illustrator of *Palacio* allow us to conjecture upon the way the Archpriest's work was understood and interpreted in the centuries after its composition. The nature and clarity of these pictorial allusions invite speculation on the illustrator's sense of *dueñas chicas* and Don Furón and on their application in the *cancionero*. They prompt us to test our own suppositions concerning the logic of their presence in the manuscript. From the images on the page, one thing remains sure: that the *Libro* served as a medium for the perception and expression of opposites. Through reference to it, the surface implications of texts and language could be destabilized and readers and lookers could be led to uncover the deeper, binary tensions that structure and define them. Through the *Libro*'s visual and verbal invocation the virtue advocated by the Conde de Mayorga's voice is suddenly circumscribed and marked off at its boundaries by sin, just as vice is by virtue. The illustrator of *Palacio* read the Archpriest's *dueñas chicas* not as mere text evocative of physical descriptions, but as a catalogue of erotic emblems, or as a storehouse for the evocation of ethical themes and ideas that bring forth contradiction and serve as a touchstone for a specific style of dialectical reading and interpretation. By conjoining Juan Ruiz's images of procurers and wanton women with Agraz's evocation of Purgatory and atonement, the illustrator of *Palacio* pointed to the clashing forces that define the medieval understanding of the Christian life. His visual reconstruction of the *Libro de buen amor*, not only paid homage to Juan Ruiz's virtuosity but guided his reading of Juan Agraz's elegy, exposing the ubiquity of temptation and its allure even at the most pious moments when it is devoutly forsworn.

Extending the notion of *barbarolexis* (a language that substitutes direct gratification with an exuberant idiom stemming from the express prohibition of speaking about forbidden pleasure) beyond words themselves to the images that accompany them at the margins of manuscripts from Alexandre Leupin's study of medieval writing and sexuality, James F. Burke speculates that drawings like the ones in the *Cancionero de Palacio* constitute "a kind of barbarolexis of the eye." The visual images thus provide for "the portrayal of actions and attitudes violently counterposed to renderings of serious subjects" (18). At the same time, according to Burke, they embody the ever-present desire that gives rise to proscription and the law and are central to understanding the seeming contradictions posed by the medieval mind, whose cognition was characterized by a continuous perception of a dichotomy between an inside and an outside. In binary opposition, the inside and the outside, the law and the forces that subvert it, serve to

describe each other as parts of a larger, unifying whole, exposing the dialectical character of the cultural logic of the late Middle Ages. Because moderns segregate the sacred from the profane and seek to quarantine the inside from the outside the overt coexistence of temptation and denial at the level of the manuscript page seems enigmatic and makes them uneasy. Rather than mystify their conjunction, however, the medieval mind understood, appreciated, and expressed their complementarity.

The *Cancionero de Palacio*'s evocation and "reimagination" of the *Libro de buen amor* in the illustrations on its edge authenticates the artistic centrality of this source yet distinguishes and distances itself from it. It appropriates the text from the *Libro* and, through its pictorial rendering, produces both a thematic and discursive opposition to the text that it itself frames. Only until we realize that the illustrator has conflated Agraz's poem with the *dueñas chicas* and Don Furón passages to produce an extended interpretation of the latter can we fully relish the erudition, intellectual intricacy, originality, and subversive humor lurking at the extremities of the page. Through the abstruse conjunction of the images and language of the *Libro* (though doubtless images and language not so recondite as to be missed by alert readers), the illustrator of *Palacio* effectively divulges that he is not merely decorating Agraz's work but interpreting it, or further extending and complicating its meaning. In effect, he visually proclaims that he is playing a double role as both illustrator and commentator, as pictorial artist and textual exegete.

The folio alluding to the *Libro in the Cancionero de Palacio* is deeply implicated in a process of textual remembrance, a sort of visual as well as linguistic archaeology of medieval manuscript reading. Understanding the synergy between text and illumination does not just involve searching for visible influences and facile analogies, but clarifying the fashion in which texts and the visual images they depicted were subsumed and codified by other texts and images in their reading—in determining the manner in which residues of well-established images and language were recollected and linked together in later compositions both visibly and textually to produce new meanings, images, and new intellectual paradigms. It is clear, moreover, that one of the essential models of poetic authority and verbal virtuosity in this dynamic was Juan Ruiz's fiendishly inventive *Libro de buen amor*. When we read *cancionero* poetry and seek to understand its methods of composition, as well as measure the effects of literary tradition upon it, we may be certain that the Archpriest of Hita's examples of wit, linguistic acumen, and textual manipulation may not often be far below the surface.

Informed readers and informed seers are crucial, then, to extracting meaning from the manuscript of the *Cancionero de Palacio* and for achieving a mastery of its pragmatics, since the sense of both text and image relies on what Gerard Genette has called *transtextualité*, or "tout ce qui le met en relation, manifeste ou secrète, avec d'autres textes" (7). The full appreciation of folio 60v in the *Cancionero de Palacio* may be achieved only within a specific context: perusing Agraz's poem itself, looking at the illustrations that accompany it, and engaging the latter with a prior memory of the *Libro de buen amor*. The decorated folio and its intellectual content require the presumption of the presence of an active public educated not only in Juan Ruiz's themes, but in the textual strategies of his work. The illustrations in the *Cancionero* constitute one more emphatic demonstration that the *Libro de buen amor* endured as an integral part of the "horizon

of expectations"⁵ of courtly *cancionero* audiences, and that it was firmly ensconced in the illustrator of *Palacio's* own mind as an important poetic and moral complement to Juan Agraz's composition, yet also as an expression of his own independent pictorial craft--as a major text worthy of consideration in the construction of a more complete meaning in another context. Through this imaginative game, if that is what it may be called, it is suddenly easy to perceive why preference must be given to reading works like the *Cancionero de Palacio* in their manuscript form or facsimile.

From all this it remains clear that the *Libro de buen amor* was more than a mere text in the late medieval Castilian imaginative repertoire. As it was read and, most importantly, remembered it was also envisioned and cast off its strictly verbal manifestation to take on a life independent of the written word. The convergence of text and reader in the *Libro* extended itself well beyond the strictly ideational and virtual world of words, thought, and memory to manifest itself in the concrete realm of the visual arts. A dynamic and truly protean text, the *Libro*, thus, exercised a profound hold on the artistic imagination and was capable of being reified--literally brought closer to life--by means of mimetic images as well as strictly verbal evocations. Aspects of seemingly trivial passages in it could draw readers into them and lead them to visualize images in a fashion that then took on a formal and material reality of their own. The *Libro* was thus apt to surface, impose itself upon, and animate other texts in the most unexpected of ways as it took on physical shape by means of graphic as well as verbal representation. Its abiding presence in the Castilian poetic imagination stimulated readers of other works to conjure it and draw from it what could be implied from, but was not directly in, the texts they were reading.

The *Libro* itself appears to be the source for suggesting the possibility of its transmutation from text into image. The prose prologue of the work in Ms. S certifies that the book may be profitably compared to other forms of material signification, all of which comprise multiple signs for the purpose of arousing memory and achieving understanding through representation. The visual shapes of writing, like painting and sculpture were, the *Libro* asserts, devised to aid fallible memory and serve as memorial anchors and cues in the discovery of understanding. They constitute a type of ephrasis, or a descriptive device intended to make thoughts and ideas visible through their depiction:

Otrosí fueron la pintura e la escriptura e las imágenes primera mente falladas, por rrazón que la memoria del omne desleznadera es [...]. Ca tener todas las cosas en la memoria e non olvidar algo más es de la divinidat que de la umanidat (108).

Painting, writing, and sculpture are thus, according to the *Libro*, all alike. They are referential only in an indirect way and serve to stimulate memory and moral deliberation. They comprise media for images that evoke ideas and make something present by acting upon recollection and stimulating association. In this way, they are essentially semiotic artefacts whose sense can only emerge by coming into contact with other images and by means of a combined series of references located in the virtual storehouse of the human memory. Perhaps heeding the prose

⁵ The term is H.R. Jauss', which he defines as "the objectifiable system of expectations that arises for each work in the historical moment of its appearance, from a pre-understanding of the genre, from the forms and themes of already familiar works, and from the opposition between poetic and practical language" (22).

prolog to the *Libro* and the very words of the passage on *dueñas chicas*, “pocas palabras cumplen al buen entendedor” (1610d), the illuminator of the *Cancionero de Palacio* sought almost to eliminate verbal signs entirely from his clever gloss, making it nearly wholly pictorial. In it an apparent trifle from the *Libro* expands and branches out graphically to endow another text with a visual counterpart that enters into an uneasy dialogue with it, problematizing its content and creating an epistemological dynamic whose subtle complexity surpasses the surface significance of the initial work.

The *Libro de buen amor* left an indelible visual as well as verbal mark on the *Cancionero de Palacio*, a work which can only be fully appreciated through the dual processes of reading and looking. In it not only texts but pictorial images materialize from texts, and looking as well as reading becomes an extension of understanding. Through the abiding circulation and perusal of his unique work, Juan Ruiz continued to guide the hands of poets and artists, as well as shape the intellectual response of readers, far into and beyond the fifteenth century. Any measure of the impact of the *Libro de buen amor* upon subsequent generations of poets, scribes, and artists must be couched in terms of its possible visualizations as well as readings or strictly verbal interpretations of it.

The visual calques on the *Libro de buen amor* encountered in the illustrations of the *Cancionero de Palacio* do more than speak of mere sources and influences. They raise important theoretical questions about the nature of medieval reading and the manuscript page and demonstrate that the latter constitutes much more than a seamless, homogenous medium of communication. In fact, when pondered it is clear that the illustrated manuscript page constitutes itself as a field of competing discourses and presences: the poet, the scribe, the illuminator, and the rubricator could all seek to rival and displace, as well as complement, each other through their use of different forms of representation. Each was independent of the other and, at the same time, calls attention to or substitutes the other in the exercise of his craft. In the case just examined, the purely graphic elements of the page fail simply to explain or describe, to illustrate, the accompanying text. They cannot be taken as mimetic renderings of the verbal into the visual, but rather must be seen as visual subversions of the verbal. In short, the illustrated folio page is never the expression of a single isolated individual with a univocal message. Its realization required the participation of a number of hands and imaginations and its perusal produces an epistemological effect that can never be captured through ordinary textual editing. The manuscript page calls for interactive reading, for careful attention to a greater heteroglossic effect, in order to capture its full, often contradictory, symbolic unity.

Beyond this, the appreciation of the interactive nature of the reading process in illuminated manuscripts should lead us to question the traditional hierarchies that govern our own modern textual economies, which unfailingly privilege the text over the image and place visual representations in ancillary roles, sometimes even dispensing entirely with them. What would happen, one must ask in conclusion, if the reverse were true? Or if the medieval imagination approached both the visual and the verbal as signs that carried equal authority?

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