CAN THE PICTURES TELL THE STORY? REFLECTIONS ON IMAGES IN SOME SYDNEY SPANISH MANUSCRIPTS

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The University of Sydney has a significant and growing collection of Spanish or Spanish-related liturgical music manuscripts.[1] These are mostly plain working manuscripts with little or no decorative elements. Most of them came without verifiable identifying information. Some, however, have artwork that can tell us something about the contents, and which may have been particularly relevant to the non-musician, the singer who learned the music by rote, or even the non-reader (Naughton, 1998, pp. 76-110; Ong 1982, pp. 113-115; Cressy, 1980, *passim*).[2] Hence my title "Can the Pictures tell the Story?" I might even add to that "and what *kind* of story can they tell?"

This study looks at some interactions between image, music and text in three of Sydney University's Spanish manuscripts. There are no grand gestures in these manuscripts. There are no pictures of musical instruments, nor of people singing or playing musical instruments. Nevertheless, the images chosen are compelling in terms of how they can contribute to an understanding of contents and meaning. I argue that some images from these manuscripts may have a function beyond that of just "decorative add ons" and may provide the singer/reader/viewer access to contents, symbolism or even possible provenance of materials even if they cannot read either music notation or the Latin texts. Additionally, an image may function as an *aide memoire* for singers, and/or bring up questions of memory, homage, reference and allusion.

[1] This chapter is offered to Maricarmen with the greatest respect for her scholarship, and in honour of a longstanding friendship.

[2] The books that Naughton (1998) discusses show pictures of choirs of nuns singing in many places throughout the manuscripts, thus helping to provide a proper context for the manuscripts themselves. Literacy in Latin was, in the sixteenth century and before, the province of the few.

Like much music of the renaissance and beyond, a great deal of art thrives on the notion of allusion, reference and homage. Just as musicologists can recognise and contextualise references to well-known tunes or chants – like *l'homme armé* or *Dies irae* – or recognise when one composer is paying homage to another, so the art historian (or iconologist) might construct a history for a painting in which for example the light falling in a particular way from behind the head of a subject can allude to or reference many other works (Baldassarre, 2008, p. 86).[3] There are many examples of this kind of symbolic allusion in the decorative agendas of *music* manuscripts for the Western liturgy, from images drawn from Christian symbolism and iconography, to representations of Biblical descriptions of particular feasts. In addition, there are images that are both faithful or remembered depictions of aspects of the natural world which may offer clues to provenance or even dating of manuscripts. It is important to observe that art historians have traditionally carefully distinguished the difference between the disciplines of iconography – which *describes* the artwork – and iconology – which is concerned with the *meaning*s in context carried by the artwork –.[4] Although recently the relevance of these terms have been questioned, I would define this study as being in the realm of iconology, insofar as it is concerned with meanings and ways in which the images might explicate contents of the manuscripts in which they are found.[5]

[3] For early and very influential examples of this approach see the many works on Italian painters of the Renaissance by Bernard Berenson in which he defined the art historical sub-discipline of Connoisseurship. Antonio Baldassarre (2008) takes a similar approach when he relates pictures of musicians to the picture of Louis XIV.

[4] For thoughtful summaries of the history of the disciplines of iconography and iconology, together with valuable bibliography see Baldassarre, 2007, pp. 440-452; Baldassarre, 2008, pp. 55-95; Baldassarre, 2010, pp. 9-35. Most recently, Baldassarre's Keynote lecture for the RIDIM conference in Hobart, Australia (November 2019) provided a magisterial exposition of where the discipline of Music Iconography is now. This talk "Navigating the Maze: Challenges to Current Music Iconography Research" is currently being prepared for publication. Important new approaches to relationships between decoration in music manuscripts and the music itself can be found in the essays in Susan Boynton and Diane Reilly's very exciting collection *Resounding Images* published by Brepols in their series Studies in the Visual Cultures of the Middle Ages (see Boynton and Reilly, 2015).

[5] Although there is an ongoing discussion regarding the relevance of the term iconology, it is used here with its original signification of the *meaning* of the art object within its context. For an exciting series of papers on iconography and iconology resulting from a conference sponsored by the Index of Christian Art at Princeton see Cassidy, 1993.

Taking the three manuscripts in chronological order (Fisher 358, 406, 367) in each case I will look at some ways in which the pictures may tell the story.[6]

All three manuscripts have now either been the subject of publications completed or in progress, and two scholars have carefully described and discussed aspects of the decoration in the manuscripts that they have studied (Andrés Fernández, 2018; Polson, 2016; Polson, 2020, pp. 41-76). While relying on their descriptive material, I am taking a slightly different approach from either of them in considering just what the images might tell us.

I. TWO PROCESSIONALS FOR SEVILLE CATHEDRAL (FISHER RB ADD. MSS. 358 AND 406).

The two manuscripts identified as being from Seville Cathedral (Fisher RB Add. Mss. 358 and 406) are the subject of a recent book on Spanish processionals now at Sydney University. David Andrés Fernández has located these two books to Seville Cathedral on codicological and liturgical grounds and made a full and first-rate study of their contents. With these two luxe manuscripts made for Seville Cathedral we enter a world well known and much travelled by historians of manuscript illumination – the so-called Ghent-Bruges style of the sixteenth century**,** and the work of known masters Simon Bening and Gerard Horenbout and their school/s –.[7] While some of the painters have been identified, many others have not.

Can one be precise and certain about individual authorship when there was such a flourishing tradition? I doubt it. Art historians cover themselves in such situations with terms like "the workshop of, the school of, followers of" and so on. It is quite clear that many unnamed painters were involved in the decoration of manuscripts in this style, that the style itself travelled well beyond the Ghent-

[6] The full RISM identifiers for these manuscripts are AUS-Sfl RB Add. Mss. 358, 406 and 367. They will be identified here simply as Fisher [number]. Digital images of all of these manuscripts are available at <https://digital.library.sydney.edu.au/nodes/index/q:AELOA/source:2>.

[7] The Ghent/Bruges style of manuscript painting has been well studied. Some useful sources that are relevant here are the following: Kellman, 1999; Thoss, 1999; de Hamel, 1994; de Hamel, 2016; de Hamel, 2018; A good survey of Ghent-Bruges manuscript illumination is that of those manuscripts now in the British Library is McKendrick, 2003. See also Schmidt and Leitmeir, 2018.

Bruges borders, and that it is documented in Spain even though individual artists cannot always be identified.[8]

Characteristic of material emanating from the workshops of or attached to this school of manuscript painting were elaborate borders containing aspects of the natural world, and inhabited or historiated initials that described, represented or symbolized the liturgical moment that was to come. Plants, birds and insects in such borders were often anatomically correct, are still identifiable today, and might even offer clues as to the place of the manuscript's decoration.[9] Such is the case of the borders of Fisher 358 (known today in its home library as the Turkey manuscript), page 4.[10] Here, we see both an anatomically correct painting of a turkey, and some strawberries and other material from the natural world that may aid in locating the manuscript (Fig. 1).[11]

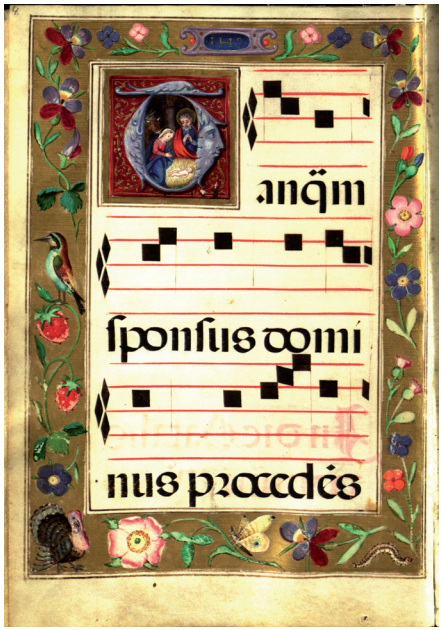

Fig. 1. Fisher 358, page 4

The best discussions of a possible Flemish-Spanish relationship in the Ghent-Bruges style, are by David Andrés Fernández in his recent book *Mapping Processions* and Anna Muntada Torellas in her magisterial

[8] For a discussion of illuminators in relation to the Spinola Hours and other related manuscripts including the Rothschild Breviary now in Perth Western Australia see de Hamel, 2016, pp. 540-545.

[9] For some examples of this naturalistic border style see Manion and Sutton, 2015; the discussion of the Spinola Hours in de Hamel, 2016, pp. 540-545; and Muntada Torrellas, 2000, p. 98 for an example by Bernadino de Canderroa.

[10] This manuscript is unfoliated and has been provided with later pencil page numbers. They will be used here.

[11] For a full, and detailed discussion of the turkey, the strawberries and other anatomically correct images in the borders of Fisher 358, page 4 see David Andrés Fernández, 2018, Chapter 3. All of the images in this chapter are reproduced with the permission of The University of Sydney Fisher Library, Rare Books and Special Collections.

study of the *Misal Rico de Cisneros*.[12] Andrés pulls together a huge amount of relevant information and is able to demonstrate connections between a number of manuscripts probably made in Spain in the Flemish style;[13] and Anna Muntada's discussion of the decoration by the Spaniard Bernadino de Canderroa (d. 15??) in the *Misal Rico* suggests to me that his work may well be related to the decoration in Fisher 358.[14]

Both Andrés and Muntada allude to the fact that the Ghent-Bruges decorative agendas were very fashionable in sixteenth-century Spain, and in fact the inclusion of the turkey image in Fisher 358 may offer a clue to provenance of this manuscript.

In addition to the Ghent-Bruges style border, this page 4 contains the only inhabited initial in the book. If (as may have been the case) the recipient of this luxe manuscript did not read music, this historiated initial immediately identifies the liturgical occasion of the chant as Christmas Day (see Fig. 1). This picture is the size of a postage stamp, but the detail is quite extraordinary. Equally, the image could act as an *aide memoire* to the singers who would then be able to recall the appropriate chant, the Responsory verse *Tanquam [*sic*] sponsus* almost certainly learned by rote.[15]

So, this manuscript contains two kinds of image. One, the borders which give one kind of information – actual and anatomically correct – and the other a "story picture", telling the observer what the opening liturgical occasion is in this manuscript. One could of course tell this story quite differently, and just regard the border decoration as "a template picture" as many art historians have done in similar circumstances.

Then we move to the second of these two Processionals (Fisher 406), which, on the basis of calligraphy and decoration is clearly a pair to the Turkey manuscript. However, this second manuscript, while sharing much decoration with

[12] Muntada Torrellas, 2000, *passim*. For a discussion of the nationality of Canderroa and his possible Toledo connections see Muntada Torellas, 2000, p. 115 *et seq*. See also pages 141 and 133 *et seq.* for a summary discussion of the *Misal Rico* and illustration of the book in Castille.

[13] Andrés Fernández, 2018, Chapter 3 covers the decorative material in both Fisher 358 and 406 in great detail.

[14] For a suggestion that indeed Canderroa may have also been active in the production of manuscript decoration in Granada see <https://catedraldegranada.com/la-catedral/musica/libros-corales> (accessed January 23 2020).

[15] For a discussion of the place of this chant in Fisher 358 see Andrés Fernández, 2018, p. 31. The same author offers a relevant and extended discussion of the place of processional antiphons in Andrés Fernández, 2014, pp. 103-109.

Fisher 358, only contains text. There is no music. The texts define this manuscript as a Processional for Seville Cathedral for the Liturgy for the Dead and identifies the location within the Cathedral for each station of the procession. Like Fisher 358 it is a luxurious manuscript probably intended to be used at the Chapel of Scalas in the Cathedral.[16] However, the most telling of the images here are symbolic. An anatomically correct picture of a peacock lies at the base of folio 32 (Fig. 2). The peacock was the medieval symbol for Eternal Life, and on the same folio we have another symbol of death, the Lily.[17]

Fig. 2. Fisher 406, folio 32v

While not necessarily related to the clear symbolic references to death in Fisher 406, the two manuscripts (Fisher 358 and 406) are joined by another aspect of their decoration – that is, the appearance throughout both manuscripts of two

[16] Andrés Fernández, 2018, p. 42.

[17] See George Ferguson, 1954 and Andrés Fernández, 2018, *passim*. The image of the peacock appears quite regularly in connection with texts related to death. See for example fol. 234 in the Rothschild Prayer Book for the memorial to St Helen. This image is reproduced in Manion and Sutton, 2015, p. 57.

faces – possibly even the same two faces – in some of the initial letters. The two right facing faces seen in Fig. 3 are clearly the same (real or imagined) person. This face appears many times with a number of expressions, and is joined by another face, seen on pages 28 and 66 of Fisher 358, and folios 8, 45, 46v in Fisher 406. Such faces are quite within the norms for manuscript decoration, and similar images can be seen in many manuscripts for Seville and Granada cathedrals.[18] More curious however is the fact that on each of these two right facing faces in Fig. 3, we can see, looking the other way, five images of faces that are to all intents and purposes "hidden".[19] If, as David Andrés has suggested, both of these luxury manuscripts were commissioned by a private person from Seville Cathedral, and may have been used by a dignitary from the Chapel of Scalas within the Cathedral, one is drawn to contemplate a possible meaning of these images.[20] While pursuing this is beyond the remit of this chapter, having seen these hidden faces one cannot pretend that they are not there. Was the artist "playing" with his readers? Might the number five have had some symbolic meaning within the life of the Cathedral? For example, one recalls the importance of the celebration of the *cinco llagas*, and its *cofradía* in the life of the Cathedral. Since the five wounds are portrayed symbolically in many ways in different manuscripts and art works, one cannot resist the possibility that these five hidden reverse faces might have been an obscure reference to them, only to have been understood by the cognoscenti.[21]

Fig. 3. Fisher 358, page 4 (left) and Fisher 406, folio 32v (right)

[18] I would like to thank Juan Ruiz for his helpful discussion of these and other images from Granada and Seville.

[19] Other reverse "hidden faces" can also be seen elsewhere, for example in Fisher 406 folio 50.

[20] For further discussion of these issues, see Andrés Fernández, 2018, pp. 33, 53, and chapter 4.

[21] There are, for example a number of flowers that symbolize the *cinco llagas*. These include among others, the rose and the passionflower, each of which has either the colour red (blood) or five petals or stamens. For an extended discussion of relevant Seville *cofradías* see the article "Sevilla" in the *Diccionario de historia eclesiástica de España* (Madrid: Instituto Enrique Florez, 1972-5). Here we find a heading *Hospitales y otras institutiones benéficas* (vol. 4, p. 2453). More than one hundred such institutions existed in Seville in the sixteenth century. Among them was *el de la Sangre o de las*

Then on folio 25 there is an image of the Stork, a symbol of prudence and vigilance at the opening of *Fidelium Deus*, and clearly here intended as a reference to the faithful departed. The text translates as "O God, Creator and Redeemer of all the faithful, grant to Your departed servants the forgiveness of their sins".

As processionals often end with the material for the Office and/or Mass for the Dead, this manuscript in a sense "completes" the Turkey manuscript. And, if our observer is non-literate in Latin, he (as it probably was a he) would have been alerted to the liturgical contents of this manuscript by the Peacock, the symbol of Eternal Life, the Stork for the Faithful Departed, and the Calla Lily as a symbol of Death.[22]

2. AN AUGUSTINIAN *ANTIPHONALE* (FISHER RB ADD. MS. 367)

The third manuscript is considerably later than the other two. It's an Augustinian *Antiphonale* that probably dates from the early eighteenth century.[23] While Simon Polson has been meticulous in describing and categorizing the images in this manuscript, I want to draw attention to just two images and consider what they might tell us in terms of meaning.

On page 113 an elaborate inhabited initial L tells the story of St Augustine on the beach contemplating the mystery of the Trinity when he encounters a child trying to fill a hole in the sand with the whole ocean (see Fig. 4). When St Augustine pointed out that this would be impossible, the child replied that equally, St Augustine could not fit the Trinity into his brain. While page 113 does contain the rubric *in festo St Augustine* – even if the reader was not literate – this picture and its meaning would have been well known to both the religious and the laity, as indeed it still is today. Like the inhabited Christmas image in Fisher 358, this picture might operate as an *aide memoire* for the singers who would immediately have known what to sing.

Cinco Llagas, 1546. For further relevant reading see also Brooks, 1988; Susan Verdi Webster, 1992, and Ismael Yebra Sotillos *et al.*, 2016. For a discussion of the *cinco llagas* in sixteenth-century Toledo manuscripts see Candelaria, 2008.

[22] Ferguson, 1954.

[23] Polson, 2016, has recently re-examined the manuscript in a study in which he discusses it together with another Augustinian manuscript recently purchased by the University of Sydney. See Polson, 2020, pp. 41-76. While at this point it is not possible to assign a definite date or provenance to this manuscript, some tantalizing clues exist in the form of a number of bird images scattered throughout, symbolizing, among others, the South American macaw.

Fig. 4. Fisher 367, page 113.

My final image is from the same manuscript and brings up questions of memory, homage, reference and allusion. The Office for the Dead at Vespers starts with the text *Placebo Domine*.[24] And in its proper place at the start of Vespers (Fisher 367, page 165), sheltering in the P for Placebo we see the image in Fig. 5. Behind this very simple and rather basic image lies a huge history of images and traditions related to death. Just as the image of the peacock in our second (and much earlier) manuscript

Fig. 5. Fisher 367, page 165.

[24] Wagstaff, 2020, pp. 229-252, provides a rich context for material for the Dead. I would like to thank both Grayson Wagstaff and David Andrés for discussion of this image which, while clearly in the general tradition of ossuary chapels might equally represent an actual place.

was the symbol of Everlasting Life, so the image of a skeleton represented by two skulls here brings forth a panoply of related associations. First there is the tradition of the *ars moriendi*. This was the name of two related Latin texts dating from about 1415 and 1450.[25] The first of these was predominantly text, and the second shorter version consisted of a series of images produced for the mainly unlettered, allowing them to follow the story, in much the same way as one can follow a modern graphic novel or comic book. This text was enormously influential from its inception right through to at least the eighteenth century. Not only were there manuscript versions, but it went through many printings in many countries. Most Christians of the time would have known about these books. Some of these prints were from moveable type, and some had xylographic images.[26]

I believe that the appearance of this death image in its appropriate place in these and indeed many other manuscripts would have served to *a*) remind the reader/singer of the liturgical moment to come, *b*) pay homage to the *ars moriendi* tradition and its related images, *c*) possibly reference other similar images, and *d*) allude to the whole tradition.

While one can (and many do) look at the artwork in liturgical music manuscripts as purely decorative and describe them within the parameters of the discipline of art history, I believe that in many cases there may be a more subtle story to be told. If we take into account the *function* of the manuscript within its liturgical context, its *position* in time or place, or its probable *recipient* one is immediately drawn into questions of *meaning* of the images. The layers of meaning thus exposed may include the following: images may lead to provenance, they may function as *aides memoire* for singers, and they may bring up questions of memory, homage, reference and allusion.

[25] The authority on the history of the *Ars moriendi* and its sources is O'Connor, 1966.

[26] Closely related were texts and images for the *memento mori* and the Dance of Death. Indeed, in assessing this material it is often difficult to separate the traditions, and they very likely played off against each other. For an image from the *Dance of Death* (*La grãt danse macabre*), Lyons, 18 February 1499 see Poole and Berry, 1966, p. 72. Compare this with the much more sophisticated image (also for *Placebo*) from the Ghent-Bruges school in the Rothschild Prayer Book (fol. 165), 33. This image is attributed to Gerard Horenbout from the Ghent-Bruges School. See fn. 8.

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