

# Enarratio

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Dürer's engraving of St. Jerome in His Study (1514).

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EDITOR'S FOREWORD:  
SPECIAL ISSUE ON HISPANO-MEDIEVAL STUDIES

This issue of *Enarratio* is dedicated, first, to Hispano-Medieval studies, and second, to complexity. The interaction which led to the conceptualization of such a volume came about in 2014 during the Medieval Association of the Midwest (MAM) Annual Conference in Madrid, hosted by Saint Louis University, Madrid Campus. Two conversations which came to merge inquired into the scope of MAM: One discussed the convergence of scholars from all over America and Europe, while the other examined the pluralism of scholarly arenas. The conference included language and literature specialists from several language communities as well as historians with equally varied interests, and a diverse range of Humanities researchers as well. Some of the European participants expressed delight to observe how easily MAM members handled what they imagined many of their “old school” colleagues would surely describe as confusing. They drank in the assertion that the Middle Ages was the only unifying element required. The more information, the better, and we believed that we may well belong to a generation that embraces the confusion, the chaos, and the complexity with our erudition.

This perspective resonated and reverberated among several of the Hispano-Medieval scholars who were present, including me, and most especially among those of us who study the writings of Juan Ruiz, Archpriest of Hita. It did not surprise me to discover that *Libro de buen amor* (*Libro*) aficionados were also people who appreciate the order of disorder, who feel comfortable with chaos, unthreatened by complexity and secure amid intricacies. For some the *Libro* may seem forebodingly complex, dense, knotty, perhaps even convoluted and byzantine, while for others that is part of what we love about the work. The archpriest himself seems to take delight in complexity and frustrates the “mono” with the “poly” on many occasions, often engaging in multiple recitations of the same episode, entangling the audience in compound understandings and misunderstandings. Also, he may have already spoken to us on the subject.

Found between stanzas 123 and 165 is an episode introduced with the words: «AQUÍ FABLA DE LA CONSTELACIÓN E DE LA PLANETA EN QUE LOS OMNES NASÇEN E DEL JUIZIO QUE LOS ÇINCO SABIOS NATURALES DIERON EN EL NASCIMIENTO DEL FIJO DEL RREY ALCAREZ» (“*Here the Archpriest tells of the Constellations and of the Planets Under Which Men are Born and Also*”).

*of the Prophecies of the Five Sages Uttered at the Birth of the Son of King Alcaez*"<sup>1</sup>). In this episode the reader finds our poet's endorsement of science, in this case astrology, as a central thesis. The archpriest first cites Ptolemy and Plato, thereby buttressing his position with their authority. He then engages in a short enumeration of generally failed attempts to refute the cogency of the science. Next, he introduces an example that might better illustrate his point. The illustration begins with a Moorish king named Alcáez to whom is born a son. The king, desirous of learning under which star and planet the son was born, sends for his wise men. Five answer his summons, and, after making the appropriate calculations, each communicates to the king in what manner or under what circumstances the son will meet his end. The first concludes that the son will be stoned to death; the second says that he will burn to death; the third declares that he will fall to his death, the fourth asserts that he will be hanged, and the fifth claims that the king's son will die by drowning.

The king is not amused by five different prognostications of death for only one son. He finds their determinations fraudulent on this basis alone and orders each of the wise men imprisoned. While the scholars languish in prison, the son grows up and one day asks his father's permission to ride out in order to hunt deer in the forest. Permission is granted and, while he is hunting, a storm cloud forms and begins to drop hailstones upon him and upon his companions. The prince's tutor happens to be a member of the group and he, upon remembering the words of the wise men, proposes that they all withdraw so as not to prove the first scholar correct. All flee and the prince, while crossing a bridge in great haste, is struck by a fiery bolt of lightning which also shatters a portion of the bridge, through which the prince falls and becomes entangled between his own coat-skirts and a tree on the riverbank which overhangs the river. Dangling from the tree and unable to free himself, he drowns in the river while the rest of his party look impotently on. The events, once related to the king, convince him of the merits in the wise men's science and skill. The king has the scholars released, provides them with some compensation for time served and, most importantly with regards to the thesis of the archpriest, declares that they are to practice their science, which is no longer to be doubted.

Amid the verses alluded to, the poet advocates in favor of science, in this case astrology: referring to it as «una buena sabencia». And embedded in the tale concerning the king, his son, and the five wise men

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<sup>1</sup> Elisha Kent Kane, *The Book of Good Love* (Newark, Delaware: Juan de la Cuesta, 1933), p. 27.

there lies an enquiry into the scientific, or scholarly, method. The king, though ignorant of the intricacies of the science practiced by the scholars, possesses the power to determine the appropriateness or relevance of their erudition. He expects a cogent report and judges his astrologers' efforts on the basis of a single trial. Should the wise men's conclusion (singular) prove consistent with a result (also singular), it would seem that the science that they advocate should also be regarded as a worthy endeavor.

Given the circumstances of the story, however, the king feels no need to see the experiment through to its logical conclusion before pronouncing sentence. The fact that five authorities should reach a dissimilar decision about the death of a single individual constitutes for Alcárez sufficient grounds for discontinuing the project and condemning as fraudulent each of its five practitioners. The implicit working hypothesis of the king adheres to a reductive line of reasoning that holds that the destiny of a lone son should, necessarily, find itself expressed in equally elemental terms. It does not seem to allow for a singularity dependent upon greater, rather than lesser, profusion, which is an ironic determination. In the end, the death of the king's son is a singular event created by multiple contributing circumstances. Even given the mono-cognitive approach, were the king to have followed the experiment to the end, that being the death of his son, he might have waited to see if any of the scholars was correct in his prognosis and then imprison the remaining four.

The wise men, on the other hand, exhibit a panoptic, poly-cognitive *modus operandi*. Through their efforts five components of the prince's final moments, rather than one, are brought to light. This begs the question: what would Alcárez know had six scholars interacted, or seven, or eight...? What if each had provided two or three or four revelations rather than just the one? The image grows clearer with each additional informative nuance. The king comes to recognize and accept the wisdom and relevance of the scientists. And the poet, although he too remains ignorant of the particulars of the science practiced by the five scholars and describes no more of their actual work than what is contained in the short phrase «tomaron el punto en que ovo a nacer» ("these five had theorized on what the stars would bring," 130c), nevertheless is an advocate for both their particular science and, by extension, science in general, as well as their scientific process.

Juan Ruiz orchestrates the scholars as they might themselves engage with the objects of their scholarship. Had a single wise man communicated to the king that all five fatal eventualities would come to



pass, the prognostication might have seemed more credible to him. If not, at least only one sage would have gone to prison. In this case the figure of power, who is determined to conduct his evaluation of the scientists and their science through synthetic reckoning, is forced to abandon that direction in favor of another more at peace with the fragmented image. The direction of the Archpriest's example appears instructive if it indeed urges the path of atomization for enhanced acuity and insight.

It is just such a comfortable relationship with, or perhaps an affinity for, complexity that unites the scholarly contributors to this volume of *Enarratio*. And, just as with King Alcáez, five scholars answer the call. Jason Busic initiates our erudition with his study entitled "Medieval Complexity: *Convivencia* and the Construction of Religious Identity in Mozarabic Apology (Eleventh through Thirteenth Century)," helping to wrestle the conversation away from the binary barney set in motion initially by Américo Castro and Sánchez Albornoz in order to survey deeper identity issues related to religion "in the multi-confessional atmosphere of medieval Iberia." Busic is followed by Gregory Kaplan's examination of "Sem Tob's *Proverbios morales*: A Rabbinic Voice for Anti-Rabbinic Sectarianism." Kaplan wades into a thorny thicket of contradictory, competing, even oxymoronic, voices, practices, and identities, including the intricate appropriation of Jewish and Christian languages, versification techniques, and liturgical practices. The informing dynamic and the cultural consequences play themselves out in a myriad of venues.

Robey Clark Patrick follows Kaplan with "Prescribing Behavior through Describing Life Stages in Alfonso X's *Setenario*," a study which applies a literary approach to a fusion of historical, philosophical, psychological, poetic, and even pedagogical components. After that, Abraham Quintanar's "*Cantiga 10*'s Rose-Mary: Superlative Beauty and Power" interrogates an allegorical use of Mary through deep structure and intricate intertextuality. And our final contribution is my own, "The Archpriest, Trotaconventos, Don Melón and Doña Endrina: Lost verses and Misdirected Sources," which joins the long fishing expedition engaged in landing Ovid's catch on Juan Ruiz's boat. In this, as in each of the preceding articles, the hope is that each scholar's willingness to confront and apply complexity shall be rewarded with greater comprehension, discernment, and appreciation.

*Carlos Hawley-Colón*  
Co-Editor, Special Issue

## NOTE ON SUBMISSIONS

Published annually by the Medieval Association of the Midwest (MAM), *Enarratio* is an interdisciplinary peer-reviewed journal reflecting the organization's mission to promote the study, criticism, research, and exchange of ideas related to all aspects of the medieval period. With this volume, which will be our last in printed hard-copy format, we are announcing our adoption in Volume 22 of a Creative Commons license as a feature of our open-access digital publication via Ohio State University Library's Knowledge Bank platform. We hope that this new arrangement will make our journal and its articles even more accessible to a wide audience.

Submissions to *Enarratio* should follow the conventions of the most recent *Chicago Manual of Style*, 17<sup>th</sup> edition, using footnotes rather than endnotes. For the convenience of our readers, please include a bibliography at the end of the article. Discursive notes should be held to a minimum. Papers should be submitted blind, without the author's name appearing and without embedded comments from other reviewers. Images in JPEG or TIF format are acceptable.

Our editorial policy is to publish papers written by members of MAM, even if the papers have not been presented at MAM conferences or conjoint sessions. Non-members are welcome to submit their work for consideration, but must join MAM (\$35, students and adjunct faculty \$15) upon acceptance of an article. Submissions may be addressed to either of the co-editors:

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For information about the Medieval Association of the Midwest, its conferences, publications, and other activities, please visit the organization's website at <https://mmaotm.wildapricot.org/>. Or you may

address questions about membership directly to our Treasurer, Harriet Hudson at [harriet.hudson@indstate.edu](mailto:harriet.hudson@indstate.edu).

Finally, as I leave my role as co-editor, I wish to express my gratitude again to all those who have contributed articles, evaluated manuscripts, and otherwise assisted in the production of the journal over the past fifteen years. It has been a pleasure working with all of you.

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