

Performance Matters in the *Libro de Buen Amor*

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Critics now widely accept that the *Libro de buen amor* is a performance text, written for oral transmission. The near-universal recognition of the importance of performance in and of the *Libro* is, however, the mere tip of the iceberg. Questions about how performance determined its context, form, and transmission generate lively debates because the surviving textual evidence provides only slight clues to the performance practices hidden below the surface. Scholars can analyze the representation of performances within the text as well as the performance texts included in the book, the sermons and dialogues and debates and tales and songs and prayers. It is, however, hazardous to extrapolate from the meager textual evidence found in extant *Libro* manuscripts to reconstruct probable performance techniques and scenarios.¹ The problem is exacerbated by the marginal status of Iberian studies within the larger field of medieval studies. Unfortunately, the recent explosion of publications about medieval literature and performance has not generally included medieval Iberian studies, with a few notable exceptions.²

Yet more unfortunately, some work that has tried to reconstruct possible performance scenarios for the *Libro* has done so with little serious consideration of performance as a distinct communicative form. A case in point is Jeremy Lawrance's "*Libro de buen amor: From Script to Print*," in which he examines how various forms of transmission have affected reception of the text. Lawrance's detailed reconstruction of a *Libro* performance shows his lack of understanding of performance theory and his desire to limit the theoretical and practical issues raised by oral transmission. He focuses not on the performer of the text but on its audience *qua* consumers when he explains that the *Libro* would have been recited because "when people wanted entertainment they chose to get it, as Ruth Crosby says, 'by means of the ear rather than the eye'" (50, citing Crosby 88). This explanation avoids the issue how a performer would influence the shape and meaning of the text. Lawrance is uninterested in what a performer would do with the *Libro*:

This is as far as we need go in reconstructing how the *Libro* was performed. Speculation on the histrionic role of mime, gesture, or music

¹ Medieval descriptions of performances are unreliable guides to actual performance practices because they were often written by theologians and legal writers hostile to entertainers and certainly not by objective scholars who wished to describe accurately actual performance practices. For a discussion of such descriptions, see Filios 13-16 and Waters 44-50. All references to the *Libro de buen amor*, including stanza numbers, from Blecua.

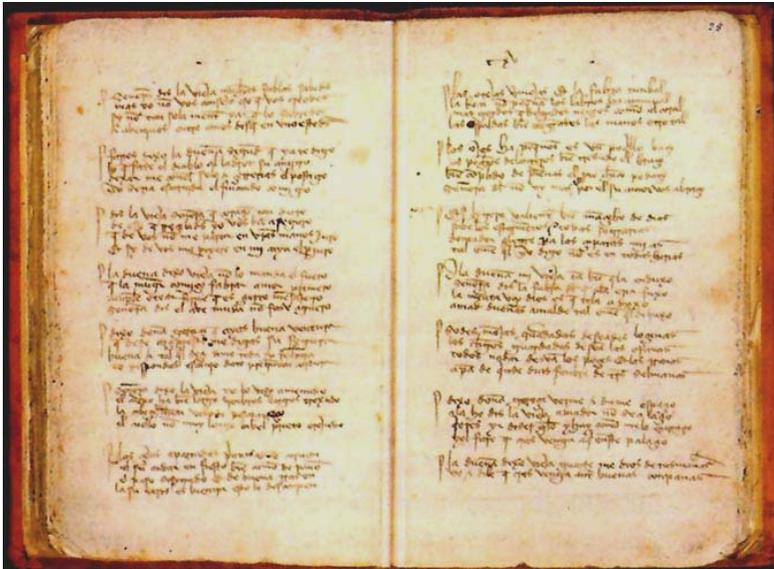
² Holsinger mentions only one study of medieval Iberian literature, that of Dagenais; the edited volume *Performing Medieval Narrative* does not include Iberia. More recent studies of performance and medieval Iberian literature include Barletta 2005, 2010 and Haywood.

is, from a literary point of view, idle; the features of orality which bear on the *Libro's* aesthetic coherence and social function do not reside in such externals but are immanent in the text (53).

Lawrance's qualification that non-textual elements of performance are irrelevant "from a literary point of view" marks the boundary between literary and performance studies and attempts to remove the latter from consideration in studies of "the *Libro's* aesthetic coherence and social function." His denial of the importance of histrionic performance techniques is surprising, given the prominence of the silent debate between the Romans and the Greeks (st. 47-63) which hinges on equivocal gestures.

Lawrance's treatment of performance underlines the discomfort that some excellent, established medievalists feel when forced to confront the fact of medieval performances to which they have little access and which they were not traditionally trained to analyze. His comments further reflect the unnecessarily tense relations between performance scholars and textual scholars, whose work can and should support each other. A serious examination of *Libro* manuscripts is an essential step in developing an understanding of *Libro* performances and in tracing how performance affected the shape of the text represented therein. Textual scholarship alone cannot explain how the *Libro* was primarily transmitted nor how oral transmission affected its reception and reworking by readers and/or listeners. A full understanding of the social and cultural function of the *Libro* in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Iberia requires a *rapprochement* between textual scholars and performance scholars. This article is an attempt to bring these two approaches together, to demonstrate how they support and enrich each other.

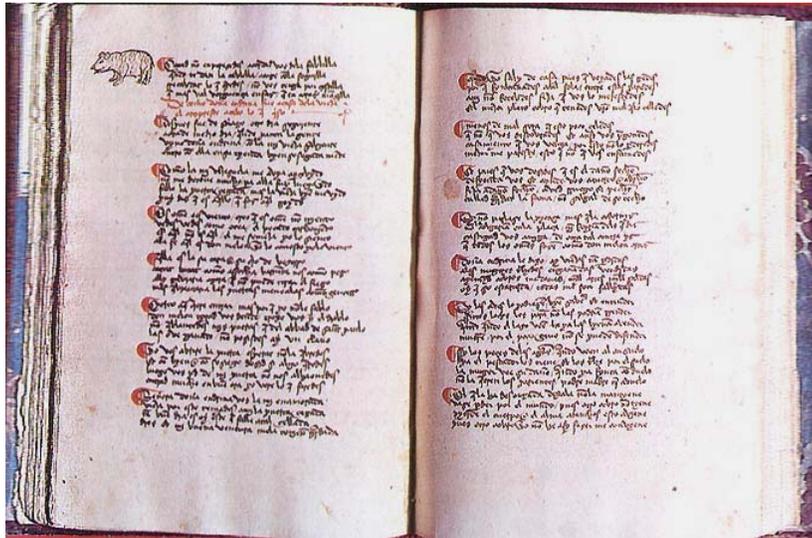
While I question Lawrance's stance on "histrionics," his suggested performance scenario is probable, although it excessively privileges the written text. Lawrance suggests the entire *Libro*



would have been recited by a professional performer reading from a book in sessions lasting about two hours; he estimates that three to six sessions would have been necessary to present the entire text, less the introductory and end materials found in the Salamanca and Gayoso manuscripts (i.e., st. 11-1648). He identifies

a number of places where he sees a break alluded to in the text, dividing it into performable segments. Lawrance suggests the *cuaderna vía* portions could have been recited and the lyrics sung, perhaps to instrumental accompaniment, and that the audience could have been a heterogeneous, educated and urban group of secular and clerical elite, male and female (48-55).

The aspect of Lawrance's performance scenario that I find least probable is his suggestion that the entire *Libro* would have been recited, from start to finish. This suggestion privileges the book as defining a complete work, and it bears little resemblance to medieval reading practices. Both private and public readers read selectively, skipping around in the text; their selection depended upon their individual tastes, interests, and previous knowledge of the text, as well as that of their audience if they reading aloud. Various time considerations affected their selections, the liturgical and/or agricultural calendar and the time of day as well as the duration of the performance. Place also affected the passages presented, whether a public square or a private residence, a large salon or a smaller, more intimate room. The audience influenced the choice of materials in their expressed preferences and in the reader / performer's judgment of what would be appropriate and pleasing to them.³



Because there is no extant transcription of a *Libro* performance, by force scholars enter into the realm of speculation when considering how, when, where, for and by whom, why and what parts of the *Libro* were performed and/or read aloud. Such speculation, nonetheless, is neither idle nor baseless. The extant MSS and documented medieval reading and performance practices provide a firm basis upon which to build.

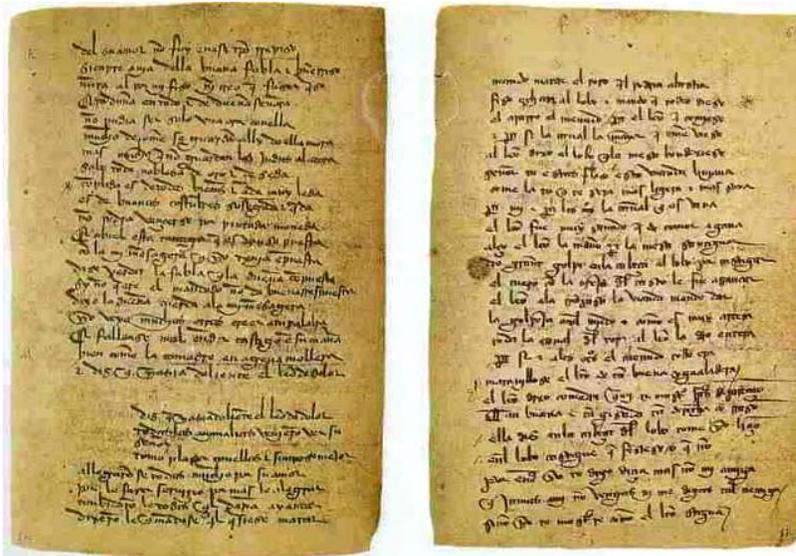
Performative reading practices are inscribed in the text and in the three principal surviving manuscripts of the *Libro*. The most fragmentary MS, Toledo (hereafter *T*), dates to 1368; in its current state it contains 48 folios out of its original 126 folios. The second most complete MS, Gayoso (hereafter *G*), is dated 1389 and retains 86 of its original 132 folios. The most complete MS, Salamanca (hereafter *S*), was copied by

³ My comments in this section draw upon Coleman and Dagenais.

Alfonso de Paradinas ca. 1437, and contains 104 out of its original 114 folios. Each of these MSS accommodates visual readers in various ways in the *mise en page*.⁴ Both *T* and *S* mark stanza divisions spacially and by placing a *calderón* or stanza mark by the first line of each stanza, a layout that facilitates silent reading. *S*'s rubrics divide the text into very manageable sections and label them, making it easy for a reader to locate particular passages, thus further facilitating silent reading. The *S* subtitles, as Lawrance comments, foreground an autobiographical reading and sometimes divide the text erroneously (57-58, 60), imposing a misguided interpretation upon its readers. This evidence suggests that *S* was designed for silent reading.

In contrast, *G*'s *mise en page* impedes silent reading. *G* does not mark stanza divisions. While in the *cuaderna vía* portions *G* mostly maintains verse division (i.e., a verse is written as a single line), in the lyrics up to four verses (as written in *S*) are placed in a single line. The *G* layout forces the user to read aloud in order to identify the rhyme and meter of the lyrics and to appreciate the poetic qualities of the entire text. Like *S*, *G* divides the text with twenty-three carefully-placed capitals, so a reader familiar with that MS can easily locate particular passages; such a layout would facilitate both silent and public reading. More accurately, the *G* scribe(s) left spaces for twenty-three capitals, few of which were completed. As John Dagenais observes, most of the *G* capitals mark exemplary tales, supporting his argument that many medieval readers saw the *Libro* as a collection of extractable wisdom material (123-24). However, initial capitals also mark the beginning of the doña Endrina episode (st. 596), doña Venus's *castigos* (607d), the adventures in the *sierra* (capitals found in ss. 951,

959, 987, and 1022), 959, 987, and 1022), and the description of Amor's *seña* (st. 1242). The erotic nature of these passages means that extractable wisdom material was not the only element marked as worthy of attention by the *G* scribe(s). *T* also may have been designed for oral delivery, although it lacks any illustrated capitals or rubrics, making it



⁴ For a discussion of *mise en page* designed to facilitate reading aloud, see Busby. The images of the three MSS are from <http://www.spanisharts.com/books/literature/clerxiv.htm>.

more difficult to locate a certain passage.

The possible inclusion of a popular lyric further suggests that *G* was designed for oral presentation. An unmarked, intercalated line, “Quan[d]o los lobos preso lo an a don Juan en el campo,” is found on f. 1v before the first lyric, a *gozo de Santa María*. Jean Ducamin identifies this verse as the first line of a popular lyric, used here to indicate a well-known melody to which the *gozo* could be sung (9n19). This information could facilitate oral presentation by a reader who had not previously heard the *Libro* presented or could be an aid to memory. Several well-known pre-existent melodies could fit the meter, and different readers could have selected different tunes in their performances; this melody may simply represent one reader/performer’s preference. Lawrance suggests that some lost MSS may have contained musical notation (52). It may be that “Quan[d]o los lobos . . .” was written in the margin of the copyist’s source and that he copied it as if it were part of the *Libro*. Dagenais argues that is the case with another intercalated line, a somewhat garbled Latin citation on f. 2v, the original of the authoritative saying paraphrased in the vernacular in st. 44 (161-62). If so, then a previous user’s performance practice was incorporated into *G* and affected later readers’ reception and reproduction of the text.

Some of the variances between *T*, *G*, and *S* could reflect omissions or expansions by readers, performers and/or scribes. Two passages that are found in *S* but not in *G* and *T* seem likely performance variants. These are ss. 910-49, which introduce Trotaconventos into the Archpriest storyline and develop their relationship via a successful albeit brief love affair, and ss. 1318-31, several minor, failed love episodes featuring Trotaconventos before she recommends nuns as ideal love-objects. The second omission eliminates a redundant beginning formula found in quick succession in *S* (1315a, “Día de Quasimodo” and 1321a, “Día era de Sant Marcos”). *G* also lacks five stanzas of the extended grotesque description of Alda, the fourth *serrana*, as found in *S* (ss. 1016-20), a passage which contradicts the narrator-protagonist’s statement that “yo non vi en ella ál” (1015b). These variants could be examples of textual *mouvance* produced by any number of factors related to transmission; but, the aptness of these particular variants, combined with *G*’s *mise en page*, suggest that they reflect performance choices made by patrons, readers, and/or scribes, that is, by active *Libro* consumer-performers.

While *G* is designed for reading aloud, the text it contains would have been adapted for oral presentation. As mentioned earlier, a performer would need to consider time, space, and audience, and select materials appropriate for delivery on that occasion; this is the case whether the performer read aloud from a written text or recited from memory. A section like the don Amor episode (ss. 180-575, 395 stanzas, 1580 lines), which contains varied and highly performable materials, would require some two hours to present in its entirety. While it is possible the entire passage could be recited as written, it is more probable that it was abbreviated at the discretion of the performer and/or audience. An experienced poet-performer could also expand on the *Libro*, inserting lyrics as appropriate and his or her own *cuaderna vía* passages. The

Libro's structure, organization, and heterogeneous content suggest that its compilers, author(s), patrons or scribes preferred variation; their selection and organization of materials constructed performance sequences that would require a variety of delivery techniques. A single performance session of *Libro* materials may have consisted of several short episodes of mixed recitation and song, delivered without reference to a written text; it may have consisted entirely of a lengthy dramatized recitation and/or singing, with or without musical accompaniment, with frequent references to the written text; it may have mixed these two approaches. Other materials not from the *Libro* could also be presented, unless the reading/performance were dedicated solely to that one text. All performances would have strayed from the text as written, adjusting it to fit the performance context and audience's tastes, reshaping and transforming the *Libro*.

Readers' performance practices not only affected the text as represented in extant manuscripts, they also conditioned the reception and reworking of the *Libro*. Dagenais has studied readers' great interest in the *cánticas de serrana* evident in the marginalia in *S* and *G*, in Santillana's discussion of the *Libro* in his *Proemio y carta*, and in the many *serranillas* in fifteenth-century *cancioneros* (174-75). The *Libro*'s reworking by *cancionero* poets reflects not its circulation in writing but its existence in oral tradition, memorized and sung by professional and amateur entertainers and their audiences. I suggest that the two quite distinct *Libro* reception traditions evidenced in fifteenth-century Castilian literature reflect its simultaneous yet separate modes of transmission and reception, primarily written versus primarily oral. The moralistic-clerical reception of the *Breviloquio de amor y amiçia* by Alfonso Fernández de Madrigal, el Tostado, and of Alonso Martínez de Toledo's *Arcipreste de Talavera*, is reflected in *S*, designed to facilitate silent study in a university setting (Dagenais 192-95, 206-07). The more ludic reception by *cancionero* poets may be reflected in *G*; however, the texts poets received, recited, and reworked probably circulated primarily in the elite oral tradition of the courtly-intellectual communities they inhabited. The two writerly communities of the university and the court are not mutually exclusive, and any written exemplar can be put to many uses by readers who employ various reading techniques. Nonetheless, these writers' reception and reworking of the *Libro* reflect basic differences in their use of the received text and in the text they received, differences that stem in part from the form(s) and methods of *Libro* transmission and the transmission of their own work, primarily oral or primarily written. While a vast amount of late Castilian courtly lyric was preserved in writing, it was composed for oral performance and was preserved in individual living memories as well as in writing. Memory and recitation of the *Libro*, especially of its lyrics, underlie its centrality as a key shared text of the *cancionero* poetic community.⁵

Performance also conditioned the composition of the text. John K. Walsh (1979, 1990) suggested that much of the *Libro* was generated in performance clusters, that is,

⁵ Gerli 1995 discusses the *Libro* as a primary subtext of *cancionero* poetry.

performance sequences of varying length, setting, theme, and characters, that were later committed to paper. These performance clusters were probably developed in a variety of ways: through improvisation before a live audience; composed in writing for later live performance; received texts (whether popular or the work of another poet-performer) adapted in performance to suit the new context; or, a combination of these techniques. The original performer would probably have been the author of the performance sequences (author in the medieval sense), who may have worked alone or with other performers and who may have performed the sequences on more than one occasion in order to develop and refine them.

Was this original performer a professional entertainer? It is possible; if so he (probably not she) had a through clerical education and may also have been a working secular cleric (a priest or similar office), although working clerics were prohibited from working as *juglares* and entertainers could not dress as clerics (*Partida* 1.6.35 and 1.6.36).⁶ This suggestion may take too literally the narrative *persona*, but given the erudite, ecclesiastical materials he plays with and his familiarity with urban life, it would be hazardous to assert otherwise, and certainly the figure of the goliard provides a precedent (Menéndez Pidal 57-61, 268-83). As Brian J. Levy shows, medieval preachers performed a variety of oral genres in their sermons, including *fabliaux*, an eclectic combination of materials that parallels that of the *Libro* (123-26). I question whether the author was named Juan Ruiz, and I don't think it is necessarily helpful to attribute that name to the author (who probably was multiple).⁷ Levy's suggestion that the mention of an author's name is a performance technique primarily intended to "whet. . . [the] audience's appetite for a good tale by a reputed author" (129) is certainly relevant to the question of the status of "Juan Ruiz."

The written version of the *Libro* adapted the performance text to writing. Surviving medieval performance texts are fragmentary and usually lack context and framing that help make the written text intelligible, since the text would be contextualized in the performance itself (Gómez Moreno and Pérez Priego). The surviving *Libro* MSS are not working performance texts, nor was the archetype from which all the extant versions descend. The *Libro* as it survives in MSS consists of performance sequences combined with segments that contextualize and bridge those sequences, knitting them into a book whose wholeness reflects its bookishness, not its continued, fragmentary existence in the performance tradition.

Other professional entertainers adopted *Libro* materials for their own use. These subsequent performances may or may not have been explicitly presented as the work "Juan Ruiz." The fact that Gonzalo Argote de Molina attributes one of the *Libro*'s *cánticas de serrana* to Domingo Abad de los Romances, a thirteenth-century minstrel, could support my argument that some minstrels performed *Libro* materials as their

⁶ See also Waters 33-50, 78-92, who brilliantly analyzes the problem of the preacher's too material body whose presence, combined with gesticulation and other histrionic techniques, made preachers dangerously similar to professional entertainers. Haywood also addresses this question.

⁷ For a different opinion, see Haywood 9-10; see also Jurado.

own compositions (Dagenais 175-76 and Lawrance 62-63 n67). Subsequent performances differed from the original performance due to various factors, not least of which is the performer's contribution to the materials she/he received and which she/he would make her/his own through performance. The original performer would never himself perform the same material in the same way. Just as *mouvance* is characteristic of written transmission, so it is of performance texts. *Libro* materials adopted by performers for their own use would have been transmitted and received orally rather than in writing. It is possible that professional performers memorized a performance piece from a written exemplar, as Joyce Coleman suggests (42-47), evidence suggests that performance texts were learned orally, as is reflected in the lack of written testimony for most medieval music and performance texts.

The question of the *Libro's* audience has provoked much debate. Lawrance argues, "The listeners for whom Juan Ruiz wrote were no vulgar crowd of market-goers, but a select and educated group with cultured tastes in courtly and clerical literature" (52), and he justifies that argument by citing the terms used to address the audience (*mancebos*, *clérigos*, *amigos*, *señores*, and *dueñas*). However, such terms are conventional, like the "ladies and gentlemen" address used by modern performers, an address not intended to identify accurately the social status of members of the audience. In addition, not all of the text requires familiarity with clerical and/or courtly culture. The lyrics in particular are accesible to a broad audience and they could well have been performed separately from the rest of the text. The lyrics play with erudite religious language, as Louise O. Vasvári demonstrates in her analysis of "Mis ojos non verán luz / pues perdido he a Cruz," ss. 115-20. However, such imagery is intelligible to laypeople who are familiar with the mass. The *cánticas de serrana* are addressed to an urban audience, but town-dwellers of all social classes could appreciate their humor. Elsewhere I reconstruct a hypothetical performance of ss. 115-20 and of the *cánticas de serrana*, where I argue these lyrics could have been performed in an urban setting, probably in a marketplace, by a single male singer or perhaps by a few singers who could have voiced the various character's roles (Filios 106-09, 148-56). Haywood's discussion of the stand-up Archpriest sees the poetic I as an Everyman character who gains specificity in his dress, behaviors, and speech while remaining a stock character, a middle-aged lascivious cleric whose pretentions and failures could provoke laughter in a broad audience (97, 131-33).

How would the *Libro* have been performed; what sort of histrionic techniques would performers have used to captivate their audiences and create a memorable, enjoyable experience? They would not have performed only the lyrics, although those texts are obviously performance pieces and could have constituted the primary interest of various performance sequences. Despite my criticism of Lawrance's approach to performance, I greatly appreciate his careful work on the lyric poems (45-47), which has made me reconsider my previous work on *Libro* performances. Before, I focused only on lyric spectacles; however, in fact, there are only a small number of extant lyrics in the *Libro*. Only twelve lyrics are found in the main text as preserved in *S*, ss.

11-1648, with another twelve in the end materials. *G* contains eleven lyrics in the main text and only six in the end materials, the final two of which, the so-called *cantares de ciegos*, are not in *S*. There are no lyrics in *T* in its current form. This evidence indicates that the vast majority of the text would not have been transmitted in lyric spectacles.

That having been said, the lyrics nonetheless do feature prominently in the *Libro* and could serve to define performance sequences, since those that survive in the received text are found in close proximity to each other. Three lyrics are clustered toward the beginning in ss. 11-121; a second lyric sequence is found at the mid-point, ss. 950-1066, where seven lyrics are clustered. The remaining lyrics are found after the concluding st. 1634. Yet more suggestive in terms of performance are the twenty or so lyrics that are announced in the *Libro* but that are not found in the text as transmitted in extant MSS. These announcements tend to occur in short narrative sequences, and the missing lyrics tend to be erotic songs written as a gift for a female object of desire. No such lyrics are found in the extant end materials. The absent lyrics would have embellished and amplified brief erotic episodes. They could have been omitted from the written texts specifically to allow a reader/performer to insert appropriate lyrics in their place.

For example, st. 80 begins “Enbiél esta cantiga, que es deyuso puesta,” alluding to a love song the narrator-protagonist sent to an unnamed *dueña* who is the first object of desire mentioned in the *Libro*. This episode (ss. 77-104) also alludes to at least two additional lyrics that are not included, in ss. 91-92 when the lovelorn *dueña* orders the narrator-protagonist to compose a sad song for her to sing, and in ss. 103-104 when the narrator-protagonist says he composed “estas cantigas” to protest the *dueña*’s having broken off their relationship. This quite developed erotic episode also features two exemplary tales narrated by the *dueña* to the narrator-protagonist’s unnamed *mensajera*, and so resembles the two longest erotic episodes, those of the doña Endrina and doña Garoza.

Additional absent lyrics are announced in st. 171, 915, 947, 1319, 1325, 1328, 1498, 1507, 1509, 1513, 1514, and 1625 (Lawrance 46). As this list shows, there are many absent lyrics toward the end of the *Libro*. As with the extant lyrics, announcements of the absent ones occur in rather close proximity to each other. The small number of lyrics and their clustering in groups at different points in the *Libro* suggest that those passages form performance sequences of relatively short length, between 110 and 130 stanzas each. Such a short sequence could easily be memorized and recreated in performance by a professional or amateur performer, with or without instrumental accompaniment, in a variety of settings and on various occasions.

There are no extant lyrics in the two extended erotic episodes, those of doña Endrina and of doña Garoza. Two lyrics are announced in the doña Garoza episode, in st. 1498 and 1507; the first alludes to love songs the narrator-protagonist sent to Garoza as gifts, the second to an *endecha* he composed on her death. There is no allusion to an absent lyric in the entire Endrina episode, a fact that could be explained

by its being an adaptation of the *Pamphilus de Amore*. Other extended sequences that lack lyrics (meaning both that they contain neither extant lyrics nor references to absent lyrics) include: ss. 181-891, the narrator-protagonist's diatribe against don Amor, Amor's *castigos* and those of doña Venus, and the Endrina episode; ss. 1067-1314, the don Carnal-doña Cuaresma episode and the Carnal-Amor episode; and ss. 1518-78, the diatribe against death. Of the longer episodes, only that of Garoza (ss. 1331-1507) may have included some lyrics. This evidence suggests that while the lyrics are performance pieces, they tend to be found in the shorter sequences where they support and are supported by *cuaderna vía* narratives, not in the extended narrative episodes where they are not necessary to amplify and embellish the story.

How would the longer narrative segments be performed? The medieval preacher provides the best model to reconstruct the recitation of an extended narrative. While some of the extended narrative segments in the *Libro* are monologues voiced by the narrator-protagonist or an allegorical character (don Amor, doña Venus), the satirical, oratorical style and inclusion of comic *exempla* with a number of speaking parts not only imitate medieval sermons but make these narrative segments highly performable. Claire Waters has shown that preachers were warned not to indulge in highly histrionic techniques like exaggerated gestures and mime. Brian Levy argues not only that preachers use such techniques but that they did so purposely in order to gain and hold the attention of their popular audience, in one case explicitly impersonating an immoral "minstrel juggler" to play with the overlap between entertainers and preachers (125). Levy reconstructs a preacher's fabliaux performance, including appropriate props, voice modulations, and gestures, designed to maximize the comic potential so the congregants would laugh appropriately at the immoral behaviors figuratively enacted before them (131-40). Histrionic techniques are inscribed in the narrator's comments and in the characters' actions and speeches, in fabliaux as in the *Libro*, and probably influenced preachers' choice of materials to illustrate their moral and/or theological point. As Levy says with respect to fabliaux performances in medieval sermons, "All are sharply dramatic, with one episode following swiftly upon another [...]. Many contain telling, one-line pieces of dialogue, and all have potential for 'business' with gestures and imaginary props" (124-25). Levy argues that several short fabliaux would have been presented in a single session, while those longer than a thousand lines "might extend over more than one sitting" (126). The length of the *Libro* extended narratives, generally less than a thousand lines, would make for a very manageable performance time.⁸

How the *cuaderna vía* portions were presented, whether recited or sung, is also debatable. I think it likely they would have been sung, as is implied by the title of the *cuaderna vía* "Cántica de los clérigos de Talavera." Ramón Menéndez Pidal argues that the performance of the *Libro de buen amor* would have resembled the French *chante-fable*, in which narrative segments were recited while lyrics were sung (280),

⁸ See also Molina 295-300.

and Lawrance concurs (51). Menéndez Pidal's marketplace performance scenario is based in part on his reading of a *Libro* miscellany as a *juglar cazurro's* performance text (270, 277, 308-13, 487-93). As Alan Deyermond has shown, it is highly unlikely that miscellany was ever used by a *juglar* (217-27). John Walsh also suggests the *juglar* spoke the *cuaderna vía* portions and sang the lyrics. On the other hand, Bruce Kirby argues, "the recent discovery of a surviving melody for the metrical form in which the book is predominantly written [i.e., *cuaderna vía*], lends support to the idea that works composed in this meter were in fact *sung* (not merely recited) in public (162, emphasis in original). He cites an extant melody from the *Carmina Burana* to support this argument.

The dual existence of the *Libro* in written and oral traditions could have been productively played with in performance. Scholars differ as to whether professional performers read aloud from written texts. Joyce Coleman (83-84) finds little evidence that professional minstrels read aloud. Keith Busby (61-71) argues such professional public readings were common and continued into the late Middle Ages, even as private, individual reading became more widespread. The difficulty of deciphering a hand-written text and the time constraints of reading aloud may have exacerbated misreadings and mispronunciations, so a professional reader would have had to rehearse a text in order to read it smoothly and with proper intonation. Rather than reading from a MS, a professional entertainer might recite from memory or refer to the written text only occasionally as an aid to memory or as a performance strategy. Levy suggests that both preachers and professional entertainers would have worked from a written text, at times using it as a prop to highlight the literate nature of the materials presented, at other times ignoring it and concentrating attention on the listeners while reciting from memory and impersonating characters (126). The presence of a book in performance would be mostly a question of convention, whether it was acceptable to refer to a text in performance or not. A medieval entertainer's use of a written text could have been comparable to modern musicians' use of a score in contrast to the standard prohibition on actors' reading from a script during a play. As Levy suggests for scabrous tales, the ostentatious use of a written source enables mock deniability (128), comparable to the *Libro's* narrator-protagonist's use of Aristotle to license his speaking of sex (st. 71).

Consulting a written text during performance would increase the distance between the performer and his/her listeners. Levy's performance scenario envisions the use of a lectern by a performer standing before a seated audience, as in a church service (136). For particularly literate passages, like the *castigos* of don Amor and doña Venus or the Melón-Endrina episode, performers may have used a written text as an aid to memory and as a prop. For the impassioned diatribe against Amor, a highly rhetorical and varied albeit literate and extended passage, the imagined presence of the single fictive addressee so abused would be enhanced by direct address, strong gestures, and eye contact with the audience whose complicity with the outraged speaker is essential; use of a book would impede such a performance. A second actor could have represented

don Amor and mimed his reactions to the scandalous charges brought against him; Amor's quite cool dismissal of the enraged archpriest's diatribe suggests he would have looked on in ironic amusement and may have tried to gain the audience's sympathy with his own complicit glances and mimed asides. However, the monologic, apostrophic nature of the diatribe does not require the physical presence of its fictive addressee. The same is true for dialogic exchanges within a narrative. A single actor-singer could have impersonated Trotaconventos, Garoza, and the archpriest, modulating his/her voice and altering his/her body language to mark the change in character. The rhyme, meter, and melody would aid memory and facilitate improvisation should memory fail or the performer decide to expand on the written text to cater to a particular audience's tastes. Recitation without reference to a script would enable more direct interaction between entertainer and audience, unimpeded by the barrier of the text and/or lectern. The presence of a book would not prohibit an engaging, dramatic recitation, but it would alter its effect, increasing the distance between performer and audience and constantly reminding the listeners that the performer is mediating between them and his/her source.

As important as professional public performances were, probably far more common were amateur *Libro* readings in small groups, a performance practice that endured well beyond the fifteenth century. Such reading groups would use the *Libro* to form a textual community defined by its shared pleasure in reading and interpreting the text. Reading aloud did not merely offer greater pleasure to *Libro* audiences; it was essential for making the text intelligible, especially for those who approached it solely or principally through a written exemplar. Contemporary critical debates over the *Libro* are distant reflections of similar debates among its fourteenth- and fifteenth-century readers who displayed their erudition, wit, and good taste (or lack thereof) in their responses to the text in dialogic exchanges within their textual community. Such exchanges would form part of both professional and amateur readings. The differential status between a professional performer and his or her audience would affect the nature of such debates; the professional performer would generally have been excluded or granted an inferior role within the discussion due to his or her separation from the audience. Louise Haywood argues that the Archpriest is an abject character who is separated from his audience and whose mask of authority, created by his clerical tonsure and dress, would be comically undercut by his tales that present him as a potential sexual threat to his female parishioners. That threat is contained by his continual failure to seduce his objects of desire (131-33, 142). A professional performer's abject status would also impede his/her ability to participate in interpretive debates within the textual community that formed around his/her recitation of the *Libro*.

A performer is not a simple transmitter of text. A performer always alters the received text, always makes choices, always leaves his or her mark on the text.⁹ In performance, the histrionic techniques that Lawrance calls “externals,” mime, gesture, and music, as well as intonation and impersonation of characters, are key to the creation and negotiation of meaning. Not only would a professional reader recite and enunciate the text better, his or her use of voice and gesture would make for a more dramatized and engaging performance. Medieval readers preferred to listen to texts not only for their entertainment value but also because they found public readings more memorable than private readings. A professional recitation would be more engaging and therefore more memorable. Listeners could draw on their memory of that performance in their own performances of *Libro* materials, whether public recitations or private ruminations, as they produced their own texts in response to the *Libro*.

Oral transmission, by a professional or an amateur reader, alters the shape of the text transmitted and received. Breaking the *Libro* into performable segments would affect the overall sense of order, which is so problematic in the text as received. The choice of performance segment would further affect the shape of the text. Favorite passages would be repeatedly read and/or recited while other, less favored passages omitted. The performer’s choices would affect the text and mode of presentation, and the audience’s response and interaction among themselves and with the performer would also condition the reception and the creation of meaning. As with the written text, multiplicity and variance abound. Just as modern scholars disagree about the meaning of the *Libro*, so would have medieval audiences. Some may have found a single, consistent, moral message in the heterogenous text, as do Louise M. Haywood and John Dagenais. Some may have found in the *Libro* materials that enabled them to try on various roles that challenged dominant moral and social codes, as do I.

The most important aspect of performance is its immediacy, its transitory existence in time and place and the centrality of bodies and voices in momentarily bringing text to life. The written text is an essential part of its performance, but less central than the present, embodied voices that transmit it, and in so doing, alter it. It is only through its survival in written manuscripts that modern scholars know the *Libro*. Nonetheless, most hispanomedievalists first encounter the *Libro* in the oral context of the classroom or the academic conference, not in an act of silent reading. We contribute to its continued existence in the oral tradition in our teaching and our research.

⁹ My comments in this section draw on the work of Coleman, esp. 28-31, 91, 113-17, 128; Busby 71; and Levy. See also Lawrence 89-98, 91 for a discussion of a fictive portrayal of a female entertainer who uses others’ work for her own ends, especially to communicate her feelings.

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