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Ms. Codex 176: “Pastorcillos” or “Little Shepherds”: Exploring a Miscellany Manuscript from Spain’s Early Modern Period

Nayeli Riano
University of Pennsylvania

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Ms. Codex 176: “Pastorcillos” or “Little Shepherds”: Exploring a Miscellany Manuscript from Spain’s Early Modern Period

Description

An investigation and partial transcription of "Pastorcillos," a seventeenth century play written in old Castilian Spanish and in Catalan. This thesis explores the possible origins and genre of this play.

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“Pastorcillos” or “Little Shepherds”

Exploring a Miscellany Manuscript from Spain's Early Modern Period

English Honor's Thesis
Submitted on the 10th of April, 2017

By: Nayeli Riano
Thesis Adviser: Peter Stallybrass

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I. Introduction: The Material Text

At first appearance, Ms. Codex 176 looks like a typical playbook: it has a cover page that bears the title of the play and an illustration to compliment it; a text with proper formatting for a theatrical performance; a list of the actors and parts needed for the play; an autograph page; a reference at the end of the play that lists the places of various entrances and exits; instructions for stage directions and musical cues; and the text of the play itself. Upon taking a closer look, however, certain added features throughout the “playbook” suggest that this manuscript is more than what initially strikes the reader. Annexed to the end of the book are pages that reveal a list of local flowers and an Advent calendar that contains planting instructions for particular flowers. What’s more, these pages are written in an entirely different language from the play that takes up the majority of the book. While the play is written in old Castilian Spanish, the end of the book is written entirely in Catalan, and in a different hand from the rest of the book.

Few facts were known about this manuscript, which is housed at the University of Pennsylvania’s Kislak Center for Rare Books and Special Collections, prior to the undertaking of this thesis. The manuscript was dated to the 17th century, and the information for the manuscript mentions the various titles of the play. The book is summarized as a “Christmas pageant, with dramatis personae (f. 130r), lists of exits, etc.”¹ That the book has ties to the Christmas holiday is evident by the title of the play, “Pastorcillos,” or “Little Shepherds” in English, which is a

¹ University of Pennsylvania Libraries, Franklin Record, *Naxament del Niño Jesus [manuscript]*, [n.d.] http://dla.library.upenn.edu/dla/franklin/record.html?q=pastorcillos&meta=t&id=FRANKLIN_1580590& Accessed 3 Feb. 2017.

reference to a famous Spanish Christmas carol called “Los Pastores de Belén”—the shepherds of Bethlehem.² The book does contain an alternate title, “Naxament del Nin Jesus,” which is Catalan for “the birth of baby Jesus.”

That the book is meant to serve a wider purpose than just as a playbook is corroborated by the fact that it features two distinct languages, Castilian Spanish and Catalan. The dual language of this manuscript is the first striking incongruence that made the text a project worth exploring in greater depth. Other facts about this material text that were provided by rare book conservators at the University of Pennsylvania include the following details:

- Title from heading (f. i verso). Heading also gives alternate title Los Pastores; colophon (f. 129v) gives title as Nacimiento del Niño Jesus and alternate title as Los Pastorets.
- Incipit of the play: En Belen puerta del sol / Unos Pastores alegres / en Vista del buen suseso / se dieron la noche buena. ... (f. 1r).
- Miscellaneous notes and pen trials on f. i recto.
- Foliation: Paper, 140; [i], 1-129, [x]; contemporary foliation in ink, upper right recto. There are indications of at least two leaves missing at the beginning and two at the end; they appear to have been torn out.
- Script: Written in a cursive script by several hands.
- Binding: Pasteboards, possibly contemporary. There are traces of a sketch in ink, the title Pastorcillos in ink, and a possible shelf mark (2442) in pencil on the upper cover. Binding is loose in places; last quire is particularly loose.
- Cover badly worn, especially at corners and edges; upper portion of spine lacking. Many stains and smudges. A few leaves have holes, tears and frayed edges.
- Origin: Written in Spain, probably in the 17th century (Zacour-Hirsch).³

² Felipe Godínez, *Auto y Coloquio de los Pastores de Belén*. Biblioteca, Virtual Miguel de Cervantes: 2012, <http://digital.csic.es/bitstream/10261/12909/1/20090402083907145.pdf>. Accessed 22 November 2016.

³ University of Pennsylvania Libraries, Franklin Record

The information already provided regarding the origins of this manuscript do not account for its contents. This thesis is primarily an exploration of the manuscript as a whole, including the book as a material text that provides unique examples of graphology and botany, and the book as a vehicle for a play that contains a story rooted in local culture. Not only is the content of the play “Pastorcillos” considered, but also the botanical, historical, visual and written content of the book.

II. A Bilingual Play

I have mentioned that one of the most striking incongruences about this manuscript is the dual language form in which it is written. There is a “formal” component to the book—that is, the play “Pastorcillos” that was written in occasional rhyme and was meant for performance—and an “informal” component, which contains the stage directions and gardening instructions at the end of the manuscript in a more casual font, likely meant for personal use and instruction rather than for presentation. In order for a person who is studying this manuscript to interpret the particular variances in writing style, tone, and subject, a transcription and a translation of both the Catalan and the Spanish are necessary. The largest component of this thesis is a transcription of the play, which is meant to showcase the fluid interchange between the two languages. While the entirety of the play is written in Castilian Spanish, the stage directions and additional notes are all written in Catalan, which suggests that the native language of the scribe was Catalan.

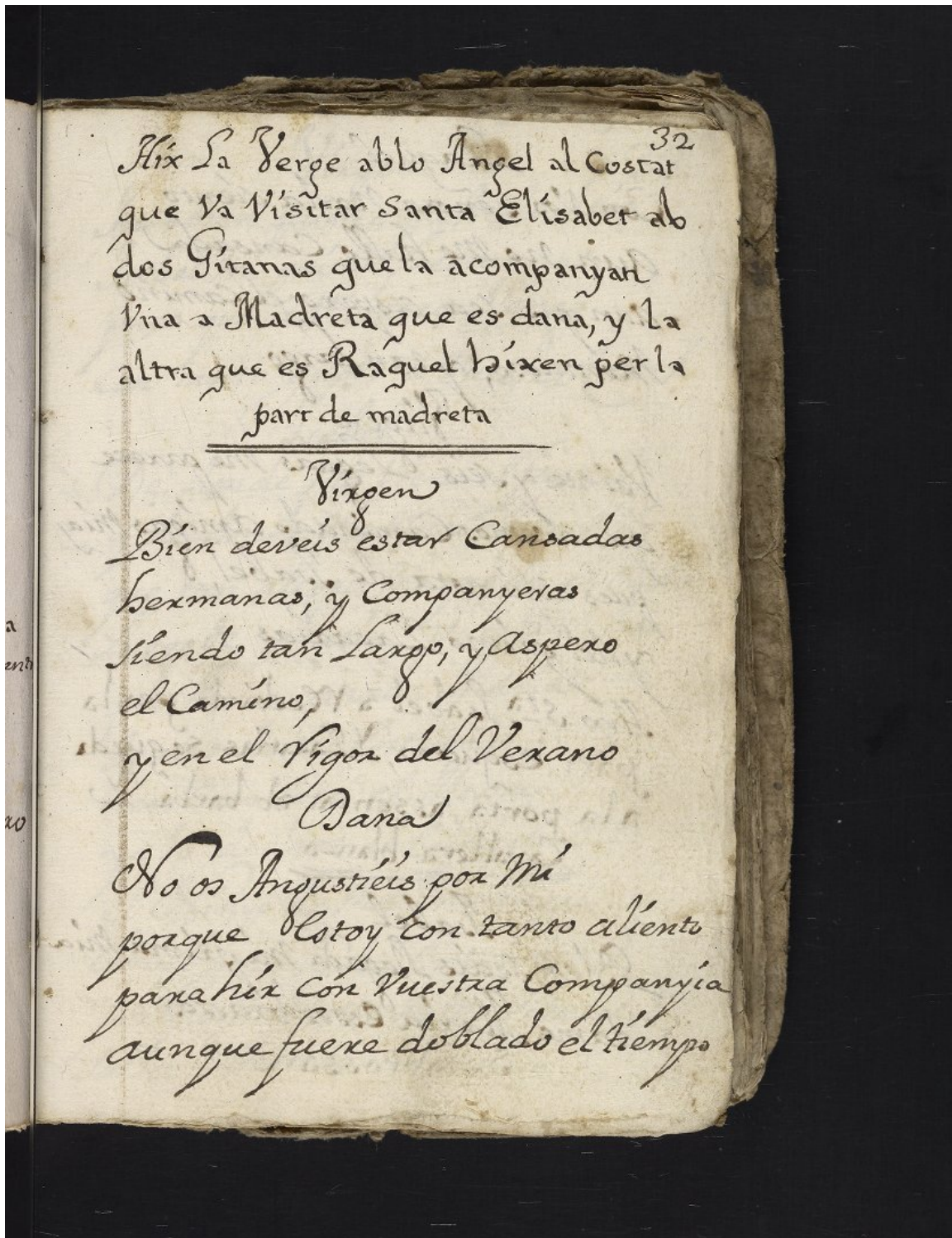


Figure 1. Ms. Codex 176, 32r: Example of the interchange between the Spanish text of the play and the stage directions in Catalan. Here, the Catalan stage direction reads, "Enter the Virgin to the Angel on the side [of the stage] who is going to visit Saint Elisabeth and two gypsies that accompany her, one at the right hand who is Dana, and another that is Raquel enters through the right-hand part."

As Figure 1 shows, there is a clear distinction between the stage directions at the top of the page and the play text below. There is no point throughout the play text where Catalan is spoken in the lines, which indicates that the play was meant to be performed in Spanish. But then why call “Pastorcillos” a bilingual play? Given that the title of the play is written in pencil on the cover of the manuscript, we cannot say with certainty that this was the original title of the play. We can say, however, that because the book is written in two languages that were historically spoken in a close geographical area, that both the writer of this manuscript and the audience watching the play would have had previous exposure to both languages.

By engaging with “Pastorcillos” as a material text, we are able to read the play from the perspective of the playwright and we are able to see it beneath the layer of production—as the object that precedes the final form. One primary point of distinction that makes “Pastorcillos” stand out is the variety of hands that played a role in writing this play. The text switches back and forth between different hands, and there are at least three distinct forms of penmanship displayed throughout the play.

Upon a closer observation, however, there is a strong argument to be made for the existence of only one author who was fluent in both tongues, and who changed his penmanship throughout the play simply to distinguish between languages, and to distinguish between play content and stage directions. This becomes evident upon looking at the spacing, in which, for the most part, the play text and the stage directions are clearly integrated with each other at the time of writing.

III. The “Scribe”

Since it has been observed that the manuscript displays several instances where the text switches from Spanish to Catalan, and that the hands in which these two languages are written are intentionally distinct, my initial conjecture was that there were two authors of the book, likely separated by some years: one who wrote the Spanish play, and one who later wrote the Catalan performance directions and also the notes at the end of the book. Finally, however, I had to reject this hypothesis as implausible: Either, there would have had to be two writers sitting next to each other, one Spanish-speaking, the other Catalan, who switched back and forth while writing on the same gatherings, or the Spanish writer would have had to allow the exactly the correct amount of blank space for the Catalan scribe to add his materials later on. Moreover, it was common in this period for scribes to be trained to write in more than one hand (e.g. italic and roman, or, in England, italic and secretary) and to alternate these hands when writing plays, so as to distinguish between the text as it would be heard by an audience and all the necessary additions for the performers (speech prefixes; stage directions; exits and entrances; use of props etc.). In *Pastorcillos*, the Spanish hand is a cursive italic, slanting to the right, whereas the Catalan hand is a hybrid roman hand, with the letters separated from each other and either upright or slanting the left. Moreover, a quill with a broader nib was used for writing the Catalan stage directions.⁴

⁴ These conclusions came from various consultations with my advisor.

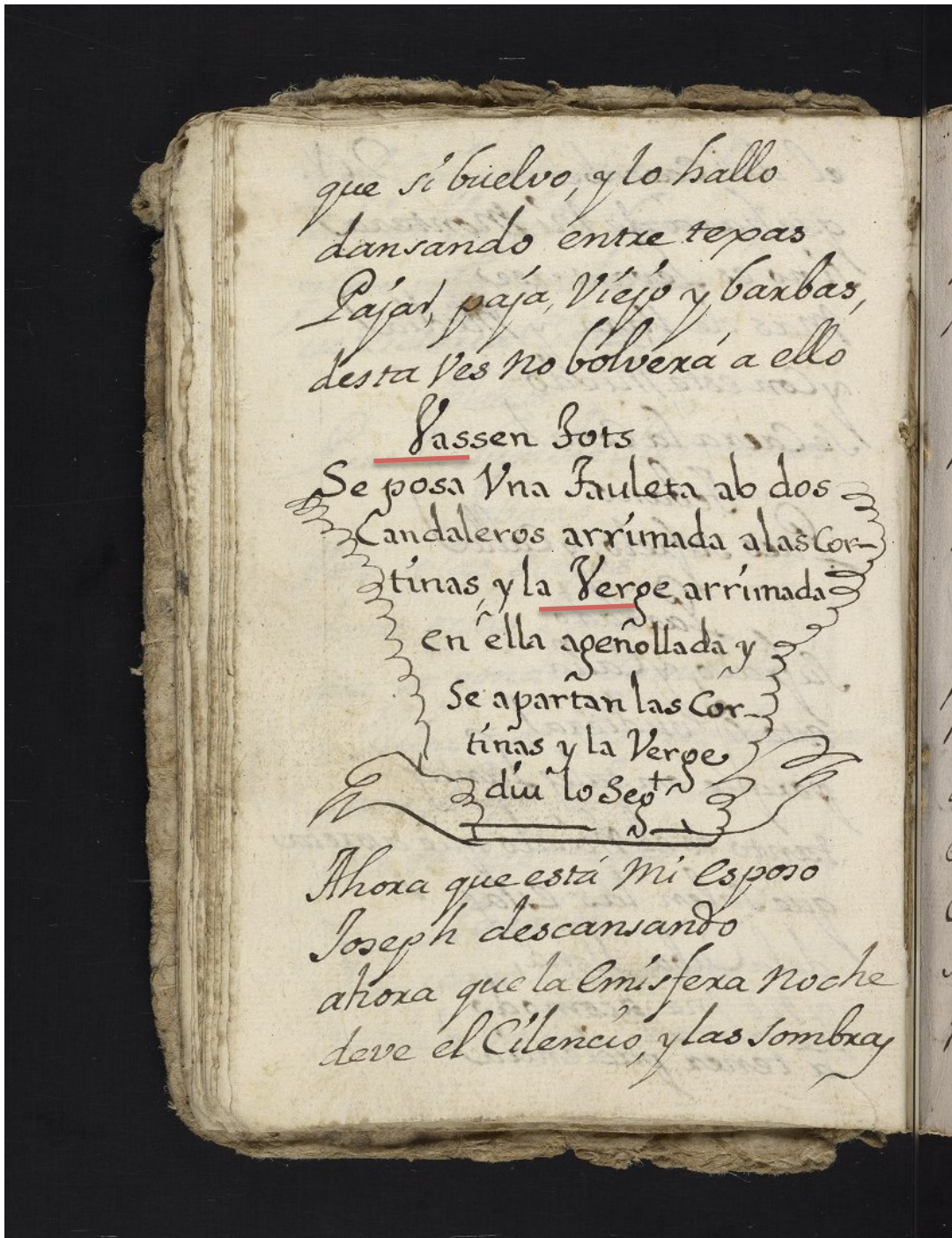


Figure 2. Ms. Codex 176, 21v: Example of the change in font and language throughout the play, and also of the precise space given for each language. The red lines bring attention to the letter "V," which changes in slant from the first time that the scribe writes it to the second, indicative of the fact that he was adjusting to changing between fonts. The scribe-type decorations around the stage directions were common practice for professional scribes who knew multiple hands.

Figure 2 displays a perfect example of the scribe's changes in calligraphy: He begins at the top of the page with the right-slanted cursive that he reserves for the Castilian Spanish content of the play; the middle section of the page displays a clear example of the hybrid roman hand that is used only with the stage directions written in Catalan. But the key feature in this page that supports the hypothesis of these two hands belonging to one scribe is the first letter "V." When the scribe writes "Vassen tots" (everyone exits), the letter V is still slanted in the same fashion of the Spanish text—it is as though the scribe were just starting to get used to changing back and forth between fonts, and this first letter was likely a mechanical mistake where his hand kept writing in the font it was accustomed to before the scribe actively realized that he needed to change his font to mark the change from line text to stage directions. Further down the Catalan stage directions, the scribe requires the use of a capital letter "V" once again when he writes the word "Verge" (Virgin) and it is clear to see in that instance that he has corrected his penmanship and the "V" is much more straight than the initial letter.

Another feature of this page that is important to highlight are the decorative designs that surround the stage directions. It was common practice for trained scribes to have an array not only of different fonts that they could use in their writing, but also of different decorative designs that they would use to embellish their pages and bring attention to particular parts of the text. The stage directions in Figure 2 that bear these ornamental bands and bird heads surround a text that states that the Virgin Mary is entering the scene: The text states, "Everyone exits. A tablet and two candlesticks are placed near the curtains, and the Virgin, close to [the

curtain] is kneeling and the curtains open up and the Virgin says the following.”⁵ It could certainly be that the scribe included decorative bands in these specific stage directions because it is signaling the entrance of the Virgin Mary, who represents one of the holiest characters in the entire Nativity story.

I mentioned that one of my original conjectures regarding the authorship of the play was that the manuscript was co-authored, but this idea was immediately dismissed because of the impracticality of the process of trading the text back and forth whenever a stage direction was necessary. The previous demonstration of a stylistic “error” where the scribe wrote the first letter of a Catalan section as if he were still writing in the Spanish also detracts from the plausibility of a co-authorship. It seems much more likely, given the historical coexistence of Spanish and Catalan and their linguistic similarities, that there was a single author who was fluent in both languages. Catalan and Spanish share enough linguistic similarities and geographical proximity that many people living in the region of Catalonia and the surrounding Spanish towns would have known both languages. It is likely that the scribe was one of these people.

This conclusion, however, raises more questions: if the author was fluent in both languages, or at least possessed a working knowledge of both, then why not simply write the entire manuscript in one language? What is the purpose for writing a book in two languages? Certainly, it would have been possible for the scribe to maintain both of his “hands,” or fonts, to indicate changes between lines and stage directions while still maintaining one written language throughout the play. There

⁵ The translation is my own

could have been an advantage to writing the play in two languages; perhaps, if the actors were Catalan, it was much easier to instruct them in their native language, but then again, we must remember that the scribe also intended for the actors to be able to memorize several lines of Spanish for the execution of this play, so the actors needed to have a fairly good working knowledge of Spanish. The more I analyzed the language switches throughout the play, the less likely it became that the scribe was writing a play in Spanish and including stage directions in Catalan at the same time for his own caprice.

A more likely response to these questions is that the book was not intentionally written in two languages, but instead that the author of “Pastorcillos” was actually a Catalan scribe who was copying down a pre-existing Spanish play—*Pastorcillos*—and adapting it for a performance with Catalan actors, which is why the stage directions were written in Catalan. The play could have been performed either in Catalonia or elsewhere in Spain, though it is quite possible that since the actors were Catalan, and since popular plays such as this one were not typically plays that toured or traveled outside of their local town, that the play was performed somewhere in Catalonia. If the play was likely performed in Catalonia, however, it is necessary to address the issue of the native language of the community for which the play was adapted: Would the audience understand the play if it were performed in Spanish? Does the scribe assume a bilingual audience because of the fact that he switches naturally between the two audiences? These are questions that can be more adequately answered after analyzing the content of the play itself.

IV. *Pastorcillos* Transcribed and Analyzed

Where there is much to say about the material text of *Pastorcillos* there is also much to be said about the content of the play and its rhetorical devices. A main purpose for having transcribed this play is to provide a platform for future scholars who want to explore the play more in depth in terms of its contents and literary value. This section will take some excerpts from *Pastorcillos* that highlight important plot points in the play. These particular excerpts also demonstrate how the playwright implemented various rhetorical tactics, such as comedy and rhyme, in constructing this nativity play. Three specific examples that I want to expand on are the biblical references, poetry and imagery, and humor in *Pastorcillos*.

A. *Biblical References*

Gypsy 1:
He sent the Prince Gabriel
So that he could redeem her [i.e. womankind]:
Though one woman was the harm
Another woman is going to remedy it

Pascal:
Near the Incarnation
There is a beautiful Damsel
With one-thousand Guardian Angels
*And she is filled entirely with grace*⁶ (1v-1r)

⁶ Translation is my own

The beginning of the play places the reader at the moment of the Annunciation. "Pastorcillos" opens with a chorus of gypsies that narrate what is about to develop in the story, and they contemplate the birth of Jesus by placing an emphasis on the key role played by Mary. A point worth noticing in the first gypsy's speech is that she refers to Eve as that woman who "was the harm" and brought the Fall of Man, but she juxtaposes Eve's sin with Mary's salvation by calling her the "remedy." The play introduces Mary as a key figure not just by making her the solution to Eve's sin, but by also re-stating key lines from the Hail Mary prayer: when Pascal says that she is "filled entirely with grace," he is alluding to the prayer to the Virgin Mary, with which most people in a predominantly Catholic region of Spain would have been familiar. By nature of *Pastorcillos* being a nativity play, the rest of the piece is replete with biblical references, but the fact that the play recounts these events in a very poetic and original way is what makes the verse of *Pastorcillos* worth analyzing through a more literary lens.

B. Poetry and Imagery

There are particular moments throughout the play, typically during longer soliloquies, where the characters display a very poetic and lyrical form of verse that stands out from the rest of the play. The text of *Pastorcillos* does not simply go through the motions of the required components of a nativity play. Instead, the author of the play takes advantage of these scenes to demonstrate his ability in verse and rhyme.

Risuelo Gracioso:

*There is more than my tongue can ordain
 On this joyous night,
 Because God is born in it.
 Because of the light and one immense light
 It is just that it be called day.
 And Saint Gabriel demonstrates it
 When to some shepherds he gave
 The marvelous news
 Of the sacred birth
 Of our well being and consolation.
 This night is the sun of justice:
 Its rays disperse in it
 And it is called the day of peace
 With clarity in its darkness.
 Light for full three hours
 According to St. Thomas.
 Today remains without mist.
 The royal saint prophesied
 Well when he said that a clear day
 Would appear on a black night
 Today the heavens occupy themselves
 With such high mysteries... (3r-4v)*

Parts of *Pastorcillos* display sophisticated verse from various characters. The excerpt above has Risuelo Gracioso extolling on the wonder and joy of the night of the nativity; playfully juxtaposing the light from the day with the light of Christ's birth. Although it takes place at midnight, the birth of the messiah is a source of light, described by Risuelo as "the sun of justice," providing "clarity in its darkness:" so much so, that Risuelo deems the night so special that "it is just that it be called day." Risuelo's entire soliloquy discusses the theme of light in various biblical contexts such as what St. Gabriel and St. Thomas prophesized, and she performs this scene entirely in rhyming verse when recited in the original Spanish.

Although the topic of the nativity is typically portrayed as a joyous event, *Pastorcillos* also features scenes of arguments, sorrow, and farce. After various characters discuss the significance of the nativity, *Pastorcillos* includes scenes that deviate from the traditional plot of a nativity play. One particular example is a scene that is comprised of two characters, a scribe and a drunkard (named as Scribe and Drunkard) who engage in a conversation that the drunkard uses for wordplay, turning several of the scribe's words into libations-related phrases that rhyme with what the scribe originally stated.

C. Humor

Perhaps the most unique aspect to this nativity play aside from its dual-language display is the use of humor that takes place in scenes completely removed from the story of the nativity. The excerpt below features the Scribe and the Drunkard exchanging words and engaging in a comical interlude for the play. I should note that although this scene is not explicitly described as an interlude, it does come after a scene with the Virgin and before a scene with the Virgin and an angel, which indicates that both the Scribe and the Drunkard were serving some comical purpose in the play that was not necessary for the actual plot of the nativity play, but that the author felt compelled to include nevertheless. The excerpt below will be divided in two: the first part will be translated to demonstrate the way in which a farcical effect was conveyed by the characters, and the second part will not be translated to highlight and explain the humor in the rhyme scheme implemented

in this section. In the scene below, the drunkard repeats the scribe in a mocking manner, while he stubbornly refuses to stop drinking:

(CATALAN: Virgin exits, enter a scribe with a pen [Notari]⁷ and a paper in his hand, and a drunkard with a jug in his hand.)

*Scribe:⁸
Say as I say.*

*Drunkard
Drink as I drink. (drinks)*

*Scribe:
I wasn't telling you that, drunkard,
Say as I say.*

*Drunkard:
Ha, say as I say.*

....

*Scribe:
See how the wine commands,
Now you can barely talk.*

*Drunkard:
Good for him who gave it me (drinks)
That way he is consoling me
With such peregrine liquor.
Bad for him for whom it tastes bad.
Leave me now Scribe
So that I may continue with this wine (drinks)*

*Scribe:
Drunkard you are about to fall.
Think about stopping.*

*Drunkard:
Well if we must discuss it
I want to drink again (drinks) (36r-38v)*

⁷ There are occasional words that I had difficulty translating because I could not find the original Catalan word for it—this might be because the word was incorrectly transcribed, or because the spelling of the word changed drastically. I ultimately translated the word “notary” as pen, because it made the most sense considering that the Scribe also had a paper in his hand.

⁸ The character’s name, translated, is literally translated “scribe” or “he who scribes”

Both characters radically disrupt the narrative of a nativity play. And while it might be taken as a morality interlude, with an implicit rebuke against one of the deadly sins (gluttony, which included drunkenness), the Drunkard retains the upper hand over the moralizing Scribe. The actual scribe of the play seems here both to control the actions of the play's Drunkard by the placement of his stage directions and to mock the fictional Scribe within the play, who has no effect on the Drunkard.

Figure 3 below shows how the scribe writes in specific actions for the drunkard to execute. This level of direction is worth noticing because the creative license on the part of the play's scribe suggest that he was adapting the pre-existing nativity play for a new performance and perhaps even for a new audience. We might infer that the scribe's inclusion of stage directions for a man who is clearly portraying a drunkard is meant to emphasize his words with his actions: if the play was, in fact, meant for a Catalan audience, then it would make sense for the scribe to add in stage directions (in Catalan) that the actor would execute in order to visually act out the humor of the performance if in case the audience did not understand the language completely. Catalan and Castilian Spanish, after all, have similarities that would have been generally understood by a Catalan audience, but since rhyme and humor combined can often make it difficult for a non native speaker of a language to grasp the joke, so to speak, it served the scribe well to reinforce the Drunkard's lines with his uncontrollable drinking. The scribe's inclusion of stage directions demonstrates how he attempted to control the action – even if the action, as here, subverts the main narrative of the nativity.

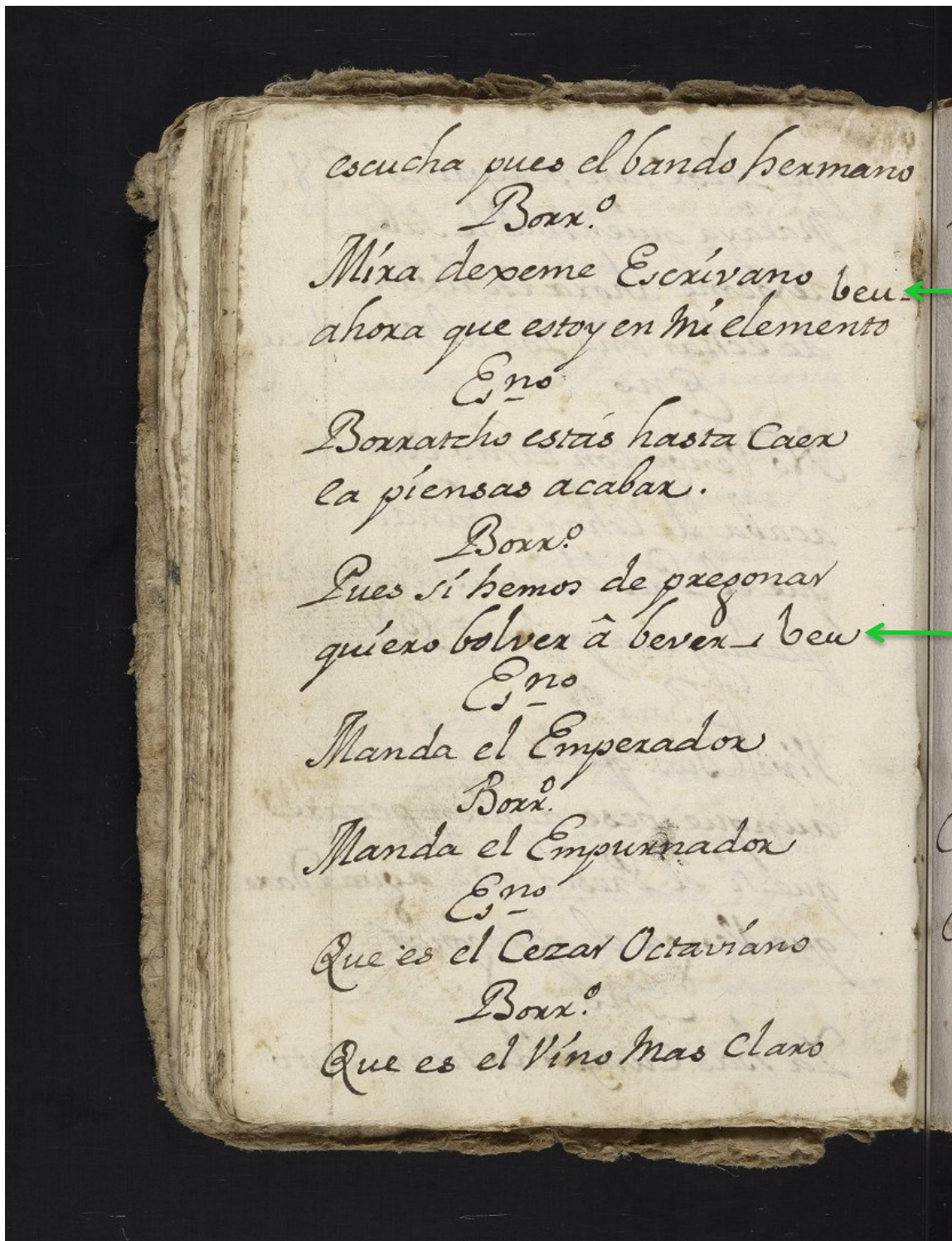


Figure 3. Ms. Codex 176, 38v. Page displaying the comedic exchange between Escrivano and the drunkard, with arrows to distinguish the stage directions written in Catalan and in a different hand.

Although the Catalan scribe presumably follows a prior Spanish text, his insertion of the Catalan stage directions for the Drunkard to keep drinking parodies the very control that the fictional Scribe seeks to exert – just as the Drunkard himself subverts the officious Scribe’s attempt to reduce everything to its written forms. The scene below is a continuation of the conversation between the Scribe and the drunkard. This left portion, however, is not translated in order to demonstrate (in green) the rhyming between the two characters.

<i>Es^no:</i> <i>Que es el Cezar Octaviano</i>	<i>Es^no:</i> <i>Who is Cezar Octaviano?</i>
<i>Borr.^o:</i> ¹⁰ <i>Que es el vino mas claro</i>	<i>Borr.^o</i> <i>What is the clearest wine?</i>
<i>Es^no:</i> <i>Y Querrino Juez Romano</i>	<i>Es^no:</i> <i>And Querrino Juez Romano (a name)</i>
<i>Borr.^o:</i> <i>Que son seytunes con vinagro</i>	<i>Borr.^o:</i> <i>What are olives with vinegar</i>
<i>Es^no:</i> <i>Que envie por Governador</i>	<i>Es^no:</i> <i>Send for the Governor</i>
<i>Borr.^o:</i> <i>Que envie por bevedor (<i>beu</i>)</i>	<i>Borr.^o:</i> <i>Send for the drinker (drinks)</i>
<i>Es^no:</i> <i>Que mujeres, Ninos, y hombres.</i>	<i>Es^no:</i> <i>What women, children and men.</i>
<i>Borr.^o:</i> <i>Que lechugas, pimintos y cogombres</i>	<i>Borr.^o:</i> <i>What lettuce, peppers and cucumbers</i>
<i>Es^no:</i> <i>Vengan ha escribir sus nombres</i>	<i>Es^no:</i> <i>Come to write your names</i>
<i>Borr.^o:</i> <i>Vengan a beber todos los hombres</i>	<i>Borr.^o:</i> <i>Come to drink, all men</i>

(38v-39v.)

⁹ This is how the “Pastorcillos” scribe abbreviates Escrivano’s name

¹⁰ This is how the scribe abbreviates “drunkard” or “borracho” in Spanish.

The humor of the drunkard's mocking of the scribe is heightened because of the fact that he is also trying to rhyme in order to sound like the scribe and what he's saying. When the scribe calls forth "mujeres, niños, y hombres" (women, children, and men) the drunkard replies to him saying "lechugas, pimintos y cocombres" (lettuce, peppers and cucumbers). The humor in this statement comes from the rhyme between "hombres" and "cocombres," which have the same ending. The difference being that while the scribe is attempting to summon people for a political reason, the drunkard is mimicking him calling people over for festivities, food, and drinking.

The play's use of humor is a perfect segue for exploring *Pastorcillos* as a genre play. While nativity plays such as *Pastorcillos* could have been performed inside churches, they could have also been performed outside or in other locations where townspeople could gather to celebrate a larger event. The humorous parts where the drunkard is drinking from his jar do not seem like appropriate scenes for a play inside of a church, but since the end of the booklet features a series of planting instructions centered on the celebration of the Advent, we can infer that *Pastorcillos* was a nativity play that took place within the larger celebration of the Advent. If it is the case that *Pastorcillos* was part of this holiday, then the play could have just as easily been performed outdoors or somewhere else for locals to enjoy. This emphasis on the humor and the audience of the play is important because it is what categorizes *Pastorcillos* as what is called a *Pastora Leonesa*, which is a form of Spanish popular plays that were not meant for formal presentation: these popular plays were typically reserved for festivals, which is why humor was so often included.

V. The *Pastora Leonesa* as a Genre for Popular Performance

The concept of 17th century Spanish “popular theater”, that is, theater that was written and produced by local townspeople, is now generally recognized within the modern scholarly tradition.¹¹ The role that theater and play writing had in Spanish literary culture was popularized throughout Europe thanks to iconic Spanish playwrights such as Miguel de Cervantes, whose plays were widely performed and published. Popular theater, however, deviates from the literary role of theater that was established by Golden Age professional writers in Spain. Indeed, it was not recognized as a distinct literary genre at first because there were so few recorded remnants of such plays by which to judge them—at least not until they were discovered centuries later. But recently, developments in manuscript scholarship have uncovered a range of examples of these popular plays, and exploring the content as well as the material text of the play can provide substantial insight into the use of these playbooks both within a literary and a historical context.

Theater during the seventeenth century was not such a commonplace entertainment as it is today, nor was it as easily accessible, and many theater productions were reserved for special occasions. Christmas was one of the most important occasions for which towns assembled plays, and religious holidays served as a primary motivation and cause for group celebration.¹² These days where townspeople would come together to celebrate a particular holiday was the perfect opportunity for cultural developments in the realm of theatrical performance.

¹¹ Felipe Godínez, *Auto y Coloquio de los Pastores de Belén*, pp. 12-20

¹² Godínez, p. 15.

The “popular play” in Spain developed from such celebratory occasions that served as the perfect platform for theatre to develop in rural locations. It emerged from cultural practices that combined local customs with ecclesiastical ceremony and celebration. Large and small communities could stage a popular play for annual festivities as a form of local entertainment that not only affirmed their town’s cultural traditions but also developed them in new directions.

Advent as it was celebrated in Spain during the early modern period is an example of a holiday tradition that combined aspects both from the religious and native traditions of Spanish society and turned them into a long period of celebration leading up to the Nativity itself at Christmas.¹³ One characteristic of these celebrations is that they started early enough in the Spanish agricultural year to encompass local crop and harvest cycles as well as the religious holidays around December. Commonly referred to as the “*pastora leonesa*” in Spanish literary tradition, these festivities followed the traditional medieval play format but also had an identity of their own in adapting the religious recounting of the birth of Jesus to the specific places in which the plays were performed.¹⁴

The *pastora leonesa* falls within the style of nativity plays, and they can be compared to the “Corpus Christi” plays in England, which also centered on the Nativity and were originally meant for performance rather than as texts to be read.¹⁵ The *pastora leonesa* differs from the Corpus Christi plays, however, because

¹³Ana Maria Contreras, *Los Autos de Navidad de Antonio Mira de Amescua, Edición Crítica y Filológica*, pp. 12-20

¹⁴ Alvarez Barrientos, *El teatro popular y sus representaciones*, p. 7

¹⁵ Maria Luisa Garcia Martinez and Lujan Ortega, *Los Autos de Reyes Magos en la Huerta de Murcia*, pp. 4-5.

of the *ways* in which these types of plays adapted the story to incorporate local cultural practices. The religious and the folkloric became one through the adaptation of the theater for the purposes of these local celebrations, and in so doing it became a custom of its own that, by the nature of it being a written play, eventually became a part of local literary cultures.

It should be clarified that these types of plays were never meant to be read as literature during the time of their composition and that they were typically either discarded or re-cycled for the next advent season after the conclusion of a performance.¹⁶ The *pastora leonesa* was meant to be seen and heard, and if we are going to read the play instead, we must do so bearing in mind that the most important characteristic of this type of play is that it was meant to be performed: that is, that it was not meant to stand alone as a work of literary value.¹⁷ The manuscript that will be the primary object of analysis, *Pastorcillos*, corroborates this notion because of clearly written stage directions pointing to the emphasis on music and flowers, which demonstrates that the playwright was relying on other cultural factors to deliver the production as a finished product.

Since they were local plays, there was usually only a small budget set aside for a production. That small budget that implied monetary restrictions to what the play could feature also came with a creative freedom for the playwright since the play was not going to be produced for a large audience in a professional playhouse. There is a complex balance of creativity and tradition under which the playwright

¹⁶ Maria Luisa Garcia Martinez and Lujan Ortega, *Los Autos de Reyes Magos en la Huerta de Murcia*, pp. 12-15

¹⁷ Martinez and Ortega, p. 13.

had to operate when crafting his play, but as is seen with *Pastorcillos*, the playwright often shifted the plot and the dialogue in his creative favor because of the informality of the play's production. The subject of a *pastora leonesa* was intransigent because it needed to tell the story of the nativity shepherds, which meant that much of the plot and its characters were already determined and needed to be incorporated in order for the play to be suitable for the advent. Yet, the playwright had complete freedom in writing the dialogue of the play: he could allocate how much speech a particular character would receive and modify the form in which different speeches would be delivered (either through song, verse or prose).¹⁸ Since these plays were small-scale and low budget, it is likely that the playwright played the role of director and that he was also in charge of the aspect of the production regarding costumes, music, stage decorations, and stage effects. The *pastora leonesa* could be considered to have literary value insofar as the playwright of created a theatrical value that in production would have had a complete effect on the viewer that would have, in turn, not been possible without the existence of the material book.

That the play is written in verse and is meant to feature musical accompaniment suggests that some care went into its creation and performance. But the pages at the end of the manuscript give extra information on the harvests of each month leading up to Advent, showing the extent to which the play was situated within a local agricultural society rather than with an eye to professional staging.

¹⁸ Martinez and Ortega, 87-99.

VI. A Different Type of Book: The Miscellany

The varied uses of this manuscript render it a product of its time, which encapsulates forms of Spanish Early Modern leisure and celebration. The botanical instructions at the end of the suggest how the author, and other local citizen, would have spent his free time gardening throughout the months of the year. The humor in the nativity play itself demonstrates to the reader what types of jokes would have entertained an audience of that time. Many focus on drinking, town drunkards, and marriage disputes. While the reader of this manuscript does not have access to the type of music that would have accompanied the play, its content suggests that the music would have been celebratory, incorporating both liturgical and ballad elements.

If the reader of this manuscript is going to approach *Pastorcillos* as a miscellany, it is important to understand the various components that constitute the book. The main details within the book that imply this notion revolve mainly around the back-end of the book that is replete with gardening and planting instructions for various types of Catalan and Spanish flora, but it is also worth noticing the vital role that the author's switch in handwriting and language plays in order to corroborate the book's purpose as one for various usages. Last but not least, it is helpful to take a look at the "nonsense" pages throughout the book, namely in the beginning and the end of it, as well as the material of the book cover, in order to see the casual use of the book and the practical role it played for its owner. The coherence and the variety of uses within this book become evident upon closer analysis of its contents:

A) The botanical Advent calendar

The final pages at the end of the playbook contain information of local harvest cycles leading up to Advent, and the writer focuses mainly on the planting and growing of particular flowers—flowers which he also includes in the list of stage props included earlier in the booklet. The handwriting that describes the proper planting method for these flowers is the same as the one that adds stage directions throughout the play in Catalan, indicating that the person who wrote the play also had an extensive understanding of botany, or that he consulted someone who did. There is an argument to be made about whether or not the Catalan writing at the final pages of the book is identical to the Catalan writing throughout the play, but from my initial observations they do seem to resemble one another closely.

The botanical advent calendar outlines the proper planting and caring instructions for specific regional flowers while also aligning their proper blooming and harvesting with specific religious holidays and Saint's days. All of the instructions are written in the imperative, as if the author intended this section of the book to be used as an instruction manual of sorts for whoever wanted to grow these particular types of flowers. When talking about what flowers to grow in the month of September, for example, the author writes:

In this month one ought to plant the spurs, carnations Estalla Maris, roselles; if you want them to flower in May, and if in case they are too thick one ought to clear a place of one palm's distance from another plant, and early when it is planted one must look that it is on the Equinox that is at the 21st of that month [ix verso]

Reading the entirety of the botanical Advent calendar demonstrates that the gardening and preservation instructions appear to have nothing to do with the play *Pastorcillos* itself; instead, the use of these final pages hints that the book started off as the play, but then had leftover page space that the author utilized for other activities.

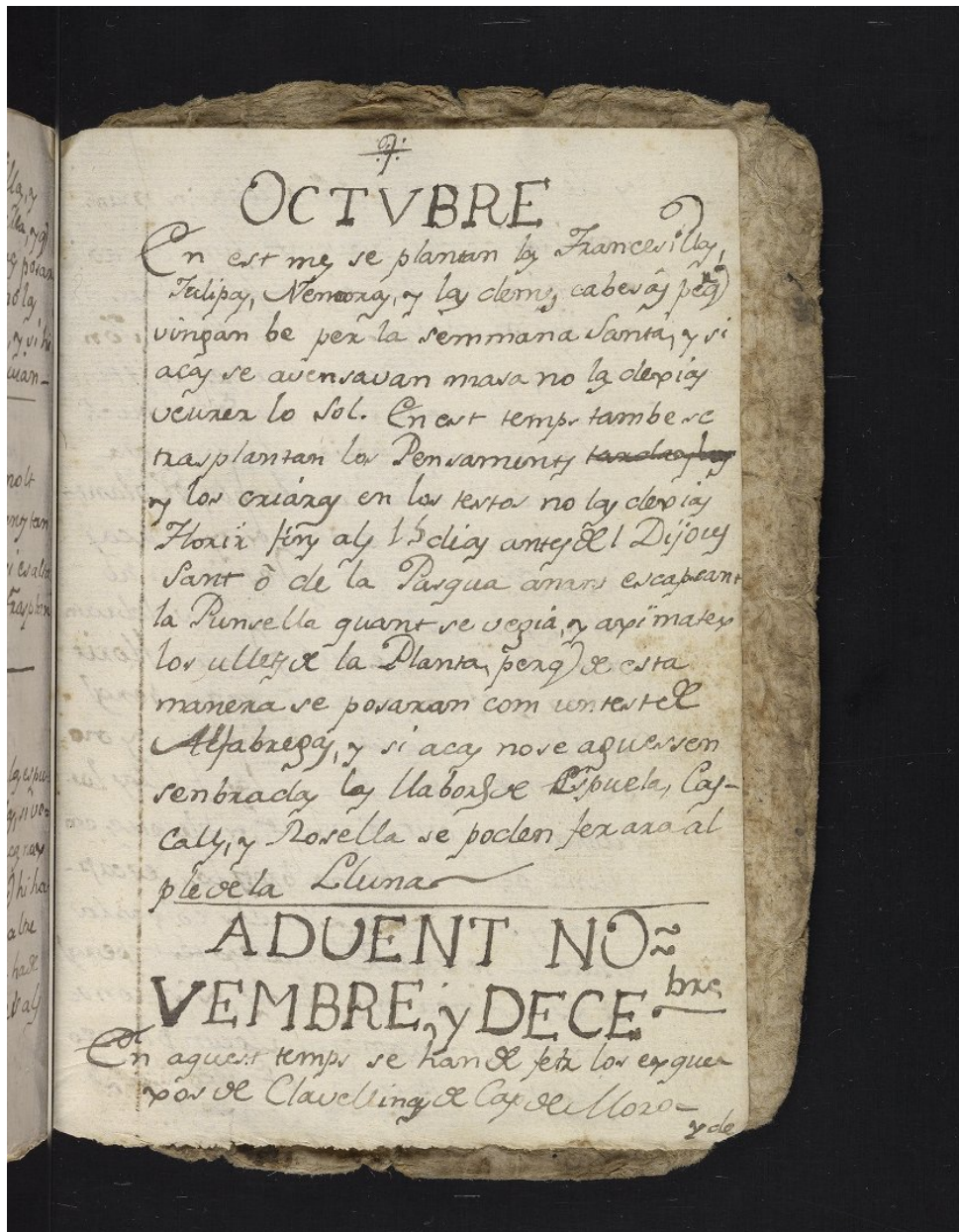


Figure 4. The end of the botanical advent calendar, the top of the page showing the month of October, and the bottom of the page marking the start of the Advent in November and December.

B) The list of regional flowers

Prior to providing his readers with the planting instructions for each flower, the author includes a two-columned table that lists all of the flowers that he considers suitable for a garden. This page is the first one that contains textual substances unrelated to the play since the flowers are not mentioned in the play itself. Just above the table, on the seventh recto of the booklet, the author writes:

*Table to be composed,
A garden of today, which ought to be
Laid out in the following way*

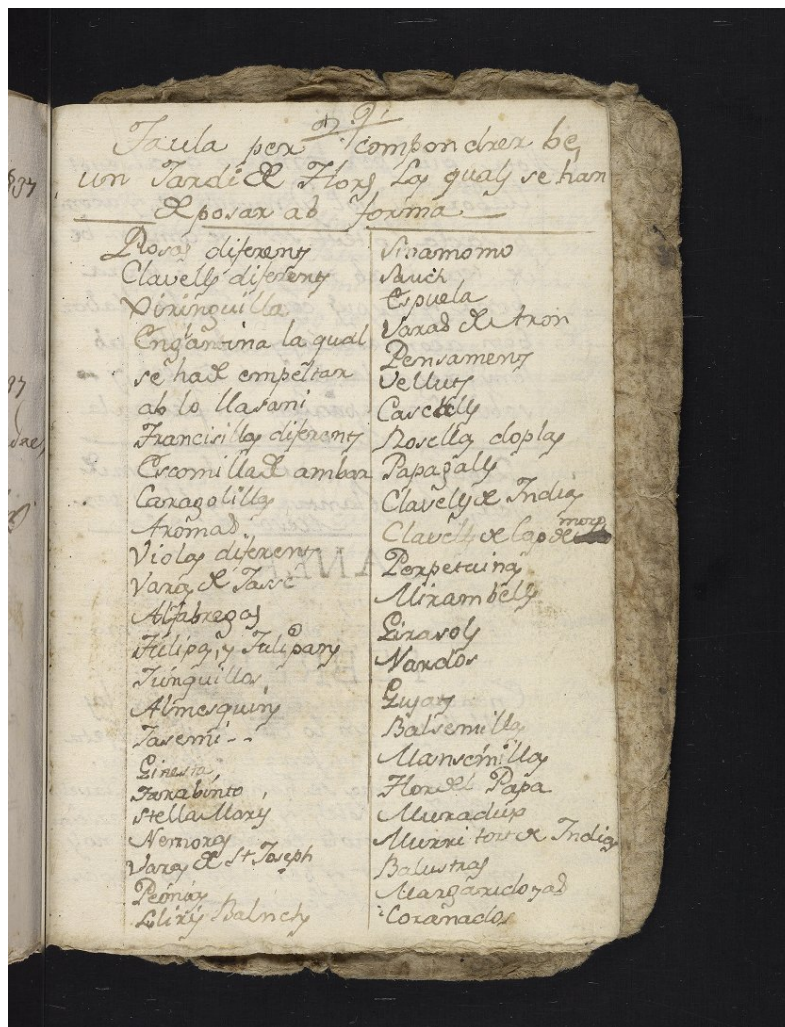


Figure 5. Table showing the list of flowers as composed by the scribe.

An important feature about this table is that it ties the material text with the region where it was likely written. By doing further research on these flowers and their known geographical locations, it would be possible to pinpoint a more specific location for the origin of this manuscript. These features, nevertheless, demonstrate how this manuscript fits the book type of a miscellany in that it contains varied elements that suggest that the book serve different uses. While it was impulsive at first to link these two facets of the book together—the play *Pastorcillos* with the botanical notes—I ultimately had to disassociate the two. There are instances throughout the play where specific flowers are mentioned, which is why I believed that the botanical advent calendar was annexed to the play in order to instruct readers on how to grow flowers that would be preserved for the theatrical production of *Pastorcillos* during the advent season. There is, however, no certainty that the scribe who is writing the botanical notes at the end of the book is the same scribe that is writing in both Catalan and Spanish for *Pastorcillos*.

VII. Conclusion

The initial purpose for this thesis was rather ambitious since I had intended to answer all of my initial questions regarding the manuscript. The truth of the matter is that *Pastorcillos* as a play and as a material text contains unique features that render the book into more of a mystery and leaves the manuscript researcher with more questions than answers. It is important to keep in mind, however, that Ms. Codex 176 is not a complete manuscript: the end of the book shows clearly that there were several pages torn out of the book, which limits greatly how much can be said about the use of the book in a definitive manner. After the undertaking of this thesis, however, I can say with confidence that much more is known about this manuscript, its origin, and its potential—and varied—uses compared to the information that was originally listed on our library's website.

The research of this manuscript and transcription of the play will benefit future scholars and researchers alike that want to explore Spanish nativity plays, *Pastora Leonesas*, or general miscellany books. Exploring this book served as a reminder that as a manuscript researcher, one cannot do everything all at once and that sometimes it suffices to facilitate the research of future researchers by contributing to the scholarship regarding these more obscure manuscripts. A final remark about the text of the play *Pastorcillos* is that it is exceptionally long. The long plot and varied scenes that are not directly related to the Nativity raises questions about the feasibility of performing this play in its entirety. In the end, this thesis helped uncover more information about this manuscript but also created new questions that will be worth exploring in the future.

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