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Orality and Textuality in Medieval Castilian Prose

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Introduction

This study evaluates several medieval Castilian prose works in light of recent investigations dealing with orality and textuality. As a homage to Father Walter Ong and his monumental scholarly contributions to communication theory during the last three decades, it offers some criteria for improving our knowledge of the creative process with respect to sources, composition, and diffusion. Until very recently, the proponents of this critical perspective have limited themselves to the medieval literature of England and France, and to that of classical antiquity (e.g., Havelock 1963), whereas researchers of Spanish literature have almost completely ignored not only the work of Havelock, but also that of McLuhan (1962), Ong (1958, 1982), and Ferguson (1959); indeed, the concept of *diglossia*, or “the co-existence of oral and written (i.e., popular and learned) systems of language in a determined environment” described in the last essay is of great importance for the present paper. To my knowledge, the only commentaries dealing with this topic in light of medieval Peninsular literature are those of Burke (1982, 1984), Gurza (1986), Rivers (1983), and Seniff (1984). Not surprisingly, these are North American hispanists, working in quite a different critical environment from that of their European colleagues, many of whom have only just recently been able to consult translations of the aforementioned scholarship of Father Ong and others.

In order to remedy this situation somewhat, I here offer some applications of the theories advanced by these and other studies in communication to the literary corpuses of Alfonso X (thirteenth century); Juan Manuel (fourteenth century); and Alfonso Martínez de Toledo, Diego de San Pedro, and Fernando de Rojas (fifteenth

century), in order to provide a critical perspective that can help us to appreciate better the artistic value of their works. Martínez de Toledo's *El Corbacho*, as we shall see, lends itself perfectly to such an analysis by means of its popular sermonizing character, which is developed in the context of numerous classical and Biblical sources, as well as from an omnipresent testimonial perspective (the famous "eyewitness account" of modern police novels); whereas Rojas' *Celestina*, in its own right, continues to enchant—and distract—with its debt to sources now Petrarchan, now popular.¹

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As a point of departure, I hasten to calm the so-called neo-traditionalist and neo-individualist groups (or oralists/Pidalists vs. the "British school" of hispanists) and to avoid immediate theoretical conflict, preferring to cite the conciliatory words of A. D. Deyermond with respect to the origins of epic poetry: "It should not be concluded that *neotradicionalismo* is necessarily wrong at every point; and we certainly cannot resolve all the problems of Spanish epic by [just] the application of. . . theories of monastic origins" (1971:48; see also Deyermond 1969). Such observations are not out of place, analogically, for medieval Castilian prose. Although there exists no work here as penetrating as is Albert B. Lord's *The Singer of Tales* (1960) for epic poetry, the contributions of Father Ong in the form of several theorems of literary history (1982) offer possible touchstones for textual evaluation. Following the work of I. Hajnal (1954), he notes that "medieval literature is. . . intriguing in its relation to orality because of the. . . pressures of literacy on the medieval psyche brought about not only by the centrality of the biblical text. . . but also by the strange new mixture of orality (disputations) and textuality (commentaries on written works) in medieval academia" (1982:157). Citing the work of Ruth Crosby (1936), William Nelson (1976-77), and John Ahern (1981), Ong proposes that "probably most medieval writers across Europe continued the classical practice of writing their literary works to be read aloud. . . . This helped determine the always rhetorical style as well as the nature of plot and characterization" (1982:157-58).

Even as a hypothetical abstract, the importance of this "strange new mixture" becomes clear in evaluating the genesis of the majority of medieval works in poetry *and* prose. The

psychodynamics of oral expression simply cannot be disregarded during the period of creation, or when the works were being diffused, either from memory or from a written text. An early poet would write down his lines, imagining himself declaiming them to an audience (real or fictional, see Gybbon-Monypenny 1965); and prose works as diverse as St. Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Theologica*, Boccaccio's *Decameron*, and Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* present narratives in objection-and-response form, so that the reader can imagine himself involved in an oral disputation with men and women telling stories to one another, that is, in the form of a "frame story," which allows the reader the fiction of becoming part of the listening company (see [Alfonso X] 1984:30-40). Regarding the oral delivery of such texts, Ruth Crosby has posited that this is most evident in "the use of direct address not to the reader, but to those listeners who are present at the recitation" (1936:100), an axiom subsequently applied to the extended romance-narrative of the *Libro del Cavallero Zifar* (c. 1301) by R. M. Walker, who has also noted remnants of epic-formulaic phrases therein as "llorando de los ojos" and "pesóle el corazón" ("crying from his eyes," "it pained his heart"), but which exist only in the original version of the work and not in later redactions (1971:39, n. 17).

In pure contrast, Colin Smith and J. Morris have used these same "physical phrases" to support their theories on the legal (non-popular) origins of the works in which they appear (1967), a valuable contribution that nonetheless also reinforces the notion of a polarized genesis (now neo-traditionalist, now neo-individualist) of the medieval text. On the other hand, I hasten to point out that an oral-formulaic style persists even in many scientific texts of the period, as illustrated by phrases like "afevos aquí," "ya oyestes" ("here you have," "you've already heard"), and so forth. The narrator Bernardo Gordonio in his medical treatise, the *Lilio de medicina* (1495), for example, frequently offers the same "oral" prescription for different afflictions, noting that "muchas vezes la *oystes* & la *oyredes*" ("many times you've *heard* this one, and you will also *hear* it later"; fol. 96r, emphasis added). In King Alfonso XI's *Libro de la montería* ("Book of Hunting," c. 1350), the reader is frequently exhorted to understand correctly its accounts of big-game hunting, canine surgery, and geography of the chase throughout Spain; indeed, the repetition of key phrases in the 9000 locations of the last of these sections—coupled with the peculiarity

that apparent garblings of place-names in certain manuscripts actually *make sense* when read aloud—bespeak the oral genesis of this work to some degree, a phenomenon which is perhaps attributable to the dictation of royal huntsmen to a scribe or scribes. And even as late as 1599, there is evidence that some novels of chivalry were composed orally in the Peninsula and circulated as such, also being represented orally (Harvey 1974). Given these convergences of oral and written—or “learned”—sources in the same medieval work, it would appear myopic, if not incorrect, to view it from a single, rigid perspective. A critical equilibrium must be achieved and maintained.²

The Alfonsine Literary Corpus (1250-84): Diglossia in the Royal Scriptorium

There are several criteria that can assist us in an evaluation of the interaction of popular and learned aspects of medieval language—that is, diglossia—in its culminating moment: the creation of a literary work in written form. As early as 1250, before he ascended to the throne of Castile and León, Prince Alfonso showed keen interest in placing Castilian on a par with Latin as a literary language, if not above it, and this fervor characterizes his scholarly oeuvre throughout his reign. Thus the issue of diglossia is entirely apposite for understanding the genesis of the first great Castilian prose texts during the Alfonsine period. In evaluating the popular and learned aspects of the literary corpus of the Wise King and of later writers, I have found the following divisions, some of which have been studied by Lord (1960), Gurza (1986), Powell (1983), Walker (1971), and others, to be of value in establishing a general context for interpretation, and will allude to them at appropriate points in this paper.

Oral Aspects

1. Degree and type of formulaic expression in the text;
2. Degree of direct address, exhortation, and epideictic “demonstrative” expression (*mio fío, oyeste* “my son, you’ve heard” etc.);
3. Anomalous or sporadic narrative changes, suggesting dictation;
4. Systematic textual distortion, which may also suggest dictation;
5. Use of proverbs, apologues, comedy, popular tales, etc.;
6. Nexus with epic, ballad, or other popular poetry;³
7. References to the acts of reading, hearing, writing, speaking;⁴ to

words, sounds, and silence itself.

Textual/Written Aspects

1. Character of the prologue (if one exists) and of the narrative in general with respect to structure, specific sources, goals, historical aspects. Excessive dependence on rhetoric or declamation throughout?⁵
2. Presence of legal and scientific terminology, inventories (of names, materia medica, etc.), geographical sources, or disputations of a juridical character; Biblical and theological elements, e.g., of Thomas Aquinas. Are Latin, Greek, or Arabic quotations, translations, or transliterations given? Catachrestic or other philological commentary provided?
3. Degree of “literary” embellishment present *vis-à-vis* a primitive version.⁶ Are amorous or chivalric elements present? Existence of epistles between protagonists (antagonists)? Existence of commentary on the creative literary process, or on problems associated with transcription?

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The *convergence* of such oral and textual components (some of the latter perhaps of popular origin) is made clear in the *Primera crónica general* (“First General Chronicle,” c. 1270) of Alfonso X, specifically in chapter 755, “De como Almançor fue uençudo et de la su muerte” (“Regarding How Al-Mansour Was Conquered, and His Death”), when the redactor cites the work of Lucas of Túy, who in his Latin *Chronicon Mundi* (1236) quotes the monorhyme tristich, “en Cannatannaçor/ Almançor/ perdio ell atambor” (“in Calataiñazor/ Al-Mansour/ lost his drum”), for R. Menéndez Pidal “the most ancient *villancico* that we are familiar with” (1968:97-98; my trans.). The placement of a verse that was apparently so well known in the learned Alfonsine chronicle gives credence to the nickname “a medieval folklorist” for the Wise King, as proposed by J. E. Keller (1965)—or rather, for the royal scriptorium team that prepared the work (cf. Oral Aspects, No. 6 in the above schema).

The popular/oral tradition also provides the basis for the Oriental short stories that Alfonso and his brother, Prince Fadrique, had translated from Arabic and other languages. Such is the “Enxenplo del omne, e de la muger, e del papagayo, e de su

moça” (“Account of the Man, and of His Wife, and of His Parrot, and of His Maid”), from Fadrique’s 1253 translation, *El libro de los engaños* (“Book of the Wiles of Women”), in the tradition of Sindibad, Joseph (*cum* Potiphar’s wife), and other virtuous noblemen:

— Señor, oy dezir que un omne que era çeloso de su muger; e conpro un papagayo e metiolo en una jabla e pusolo en su casa, e mandole que le dixiese todo quanto viesse fazer a su muger. . . ; e despues fue su via a rrecabdar su mandado; e entro su amigo della en su casa do estava. El papagayo vio quanto ellos fizieron, e quando el omne bueno vino. . . mando traer el papagayo. . . ; e el papagayo contogelo todo lo que viera fazer a la muger con su amigo. . . ; e la muger cuydo verdaderamente que la moça la descubriera, e llamola estonçes.

E dixo: — Tu dexiste a mi marido todo quanto yo fize.

E la moça juro que non lo dixiera: — Mas sabed que lo dixo el papagayo.

E quando vino la noche, fue la muger al papagayo e . . . començole a echar agua de suso como que era luvia; e tomo un espejo en la mano e parogelo sobre la gabla, e en otra mano una candela, e paravagelo de suso; e cuydo el papagayo que era rrelanpago; e la muger començo a mover una muela, e el papagayo cuydo que eran truenos. . .

E despues que fue la mañana, vino el marido e pregunto al papagayo: — ¿Viste esta noche alguna cosa?

E el papagayo dixo: — Non pud ver ninguna cosa con la gran luvia e truenos e rrelanpagos que esta noche fizo.

E el omne dixo: — En quanto me as dicho es verdat de mi muger commo esto, non a cosa mas mintrosa que tu, e mandarte e matar. — E enbio por su muger, e perdonola, e fizieron paz (Fadrique 1983:15–16).

(“— Sire, I once heard about a man who suspected his wife of infidelity, so he bought a parrot to watch what she did and to report this to him. Once the man had gone, the woman’s lover came in; the parrot saw everything they did, and reported this to his master when he returned. The wife, furious, called the maid, for she thought *she* was the one who had denounced her.

And she said:— ‘You told my husband everything I did.’

— ‘Not I, ma’am. It was the parrot.’

That night, to fix the bird, the woman began to throw water on his cage, as if it were rain; and she took a mirror and held it over the cage along with a candle, and the bird thought it was lightning; and the woman began to turn a grindstone, and the bird thought it was thunder. . .

The next morning, the husband asked the parrot:

— ‘Did you see anything last night?’

— ‘Nothing,’ he replied. ‘A big storm passed through; I couldn’t see anything.’

To which the man held the bird to be a liar, and promptly killed it, thereafter restoring his wife to his good graces”) (cf. Oral Aspects, No. 5 above).

The collection of tales known as *Calila e Dimna*, has, as does Fadrique's *Engaños*, an edifying goal that transcends its own humorous aspects. As a point of departure, the work's "Introduction by Ibn al-Muqaffa" is firmly anchored in Arabic Scholasticism, which indeed may have influenced the thought of St. Thomas Aquinas, inasmuch as the fables and apologues that the *Calila* contains are meant to assist the growth of the listeners' philosophical knowledge in order to transport them to the "limitless expanse that is the house of God. . ." ([Alfonso X] 1984:90, 121; my trans.). Clearly, such a convergence of popular tales and moral philosophy is but another example of the phenomenon of diglossia in the genesis of Alfonso's literary corpus, the *Calila* apparently having been translated by him while still a prince (1249-50).

Indeed, the situation is similar for the Wise King's *General estoria* and various epic legends as well as the *Primera crónica general*, with their indebtedness to various epic legends as well as to Petrus Comestor's *Historia Scholastica*, the works of Lucan and Suetonius, the *Speculum Historiale*, Ovid's *Heroides*, the *Physiologus*, the Bible, and other Latin, Romance, Arabic, and Byzantine sources (see, for example, Gómez Pérez 1959 and Eisenberg 1973). Herein, the *textual* exposition is at times based on an *oral* one, or, vividly maintaining the impression of written communication, an epistolary one, which is in turn derived from another textual source, as in the case of the famous "Letter from Dido to Aeneas," full of passion and emotion, translated by Alfonso's team from *Heroides* 7 for inclusion in *Primera crónica general* 59 (Impey 1980:284-88). Without doubt, the dramatic element of such a text is enhanced through the medium of dialogue and its attendant oral components; just as much here as in official documents like the "Testament of King Alfonso X Proclaimed in Seville on 8 November 1283," which is directed at "todos los homes que este escrito *vieren*, e *leyeren*, e *oyeren*" (Alfonso X 1966:224, emphasis added; "everyone who might *see*, and *read*, and *hear* this document"), with its clear visual, textual, and oral exposition.

In the Alfonsine juridical corpus, the importance of *lex naturalis* must also be emphasized (cf. Textual/Written Aspects, No. 2). This philosophical concept, which inheres in the *Summa Theologica* (particularly 1-2, Q91, a2), describes the "participation of the Eternal Law in the rational being," by means of which man, through his natural reason, can deduce an ethical code. For St.

Thomas, to do good and avoid evil were obvious derivations from this principle (Aquinas 1947:I, 685). Other conclusions, some of which are more remote, were attained through the process of Scholastic reasoning as formalized in the *disputatio*, an integral part of the *studium generale* in European universities before the end of the twelfth century which also served as an effective pedagogical tool for the training of lawyers and rhetoricians.

This emphasis on “the natural” is clearly stated in the Alfonsine *Libro de las leyes* (“Book of Laws”) as regards the Church’s right of patronage:

Natura & razon mueue a los omnes pora amar las cosas que fazen & pora guardar las quando pudieren, que se meiores. . . . Assi cuemo el padre ama a su fijo que engendro, el guarda quanto puede, que biva & dure en buen estado. Otrossi el que llanta algun arbol, plazel con el. . . . Otrossi las criaturas que han entendimiento o razon aman & deuen amar & seruir & onrrar. . . . E por esta razon el que faze la elesia deue la amar & onrrar cuemo cosa que el fizo a seruicio de Dios” (Alfonso X 1978:fol. 89v).

(Nature and reason move men to love the things that they create and to protect them as much as is in their power so that they may be improved. . . . Thus does the father love the child that he engendered, protecting him as best he can, such that he may live and flourish. Also he who plants a tree is pleased by it. . . . Too, creatures with understanding or reason love and must love and serve and honor. . . . Therefore, he who builds a church must love it and honor it as something he created in the service of God.)

However, the culmination of oral and written currents—of diglossia—appears not in the Wise King’s literary corpus, but in that of his son, Sancho IV (1284-95), the “literary bridge,” according to R. P. Kinkade (1972), between Alfonso and the fourteenth-century raconteur, Juan Manuel (1282-1348). A work attributed to Sancho, the *Lucidario*, in particular, offers an excellent example of moral/natural philosophy expressed in the dialogic mode, as the following chapter titles indicate: “Cómo el discípulo preguntaua al maestro si querría que le preguntase más” (xxxix) and “Sy ay alguna alimalia que aya tan complidamente los

cinco sentidos como los a el home” (xli) (“How the Disciple Asked the Master if He Wanted Him to Ask Him Anything Else”; “If There Is Any Animal That Has the Five Senses So Perfectly Developed as Does Man”). For Kinkade, “While Alfonso paints the polychromatic exterior of human history, Sancho attempts. . . to describe man’s interiority on the basis of his beliefs and own chemical composition, i.e., his Catholic faith (*lex divina*) and four elements with their corresponding humors (*lex naturalis*). [Also of] extreme importance in the *Lucidario* is the central fiction of the dialogue, which assumes an increasingly realistic character: from the initial ‘Student’s Discourse’ [to] chapter xxxix’s ‘How the Disciple Asked the Master. . . Anything Else,’ which treats the neophyte’s growing uneasiness that he might be importuning his mentor excessively” (1972:1042-43; my trans.).

The Dominican Legacy and the Works of Juan Manuel: Oral Sources, Written Sources

The success of the diffusion of Thomism in Iberia after 1300, especially in Castile, appears to be due largely to the pedagogical activities of the Dominican Order. While a detailed examination of textual transmission is not feasible in the present study, it seems probable that the works of the Aquinate were received in the Peninsula soon after they were written and that the Dominicans adopted them immediately for instructional purposes. It is significant in this respect that Thomas’ spiritual brethren included among their number some 1500 teaching members—half of whom dedicated themselves to theological instruction—holding positions in conventual, cathedral, and monastic schools as well as in the universities (Hillgarth 1976:137). The nobleman Juan Manuel (d. 1348), the nephew of Alfonso X, was devoted to the order (for whom he founded the monastery of Peñafiel) and was deeply influenced by the climate of opinion created by the writings of Aquinas, particularly the element of Natural Law. At the same time, the fundamental orality of many of his works cannot be denied, as numerous studies have indicated.⁷

The *Libro de la caza* (“Book of Falconry,” 1335?), for example, offers a convergence of oral and written sources in the production of a manual for falconers, the presence of which sources is manifested in the various sporadic narrative changes—characteristic of the dictated text—that it exhibits (cf. Oral Aspects, No. 3), and whose narrator, certainly *not* Don Juan, is

revealed in the following passages: “e avn dize don iohan quel *oyo dezir* quela caça delos falcones abaneros vino a castiella despues que el sancto Rey don ferrando. . . caso con la Reyna doña beatriz”; “Otrosi *oy dezir* en portogal avia vn conde que dizian don gonçalo garçia”; and “*dize* don iohan que tanto *se paga el* dela caça e por tan aprouechosa la *tiene* para los grandes señores e avn para todos los otros. . . , que si commo *fizo escriuir* lo que *el vio e oyo* en esta arte dela caça, que si alguna cosa *viere* daqui adelante que se mude o se faga mejor e mas estraña mente que asi lo *fare escriuir*” (Manuel 1880:46, emphasis added) (“and Don Juan even says that *he heard* that the chase with high-flying falcons came to Castile after saintly King Ferdinand. . . married Queen Beatriz”; “Also, *I heard* [that] in Portugal there was a count called Gonzalo García”; and “Don Juan says that *he enjoys* falconry so much and *holds* it to be so beneficial for great lords and even everyone else . . . *that he had ordered* to be written down what *he saw* and *heard* in this art of falconry; but if he witnesses anything hereafter that should be changed or made better or more extraordinary, *I will* [also] *have it recorded* as such”).

As I have shown elsewhere (1984:95), the editors of the *Caza* (Manuel 1880, 1982a) have disregarded the dynamic oral process that it entails, interpreting the preceding morphological differences as curious transcriptional variants instead of recognizing their significance as traces of a spontaneous rephrasing that occurred during dictation by Juan Manuel himself, or later when this dictation was revised by a central compiler who was apparently an expert in falconry as well. In the end, as the narrator admits, the excellence of the sport resides in the experience of the huntsman: “quantos escrivanos enel mundo son non podrian escriuir quantas cosas son mester si el falconero non ha entendimiento desuyo para conosçer la manera del falcon e lo quel cuple de fazer” (Manuel 1880:20); (“all the scribes in the world can’t write down every single matter dealing with the sport if the falconer doesn’t have his own knowledge of his animals and what the activity entails”). For Don Juan, theory is never more important than practice based on reason and understanding.

Neither does the importance of understanding—or other Thomistic principles—lack in the *Libro de los estados* (“Book of Estates,” c. 1330), with its dialogue/debate between the knight Turín and the philosopher Julio regarding *lex naturalis* and natural justice (cf. Textual/Written Aspects, No. 2)—in effect, aspects that

are structurally and thematically similar to those of Sancho IV's *Lucidario*, as can be seen in this passage from I, xxiv-xxv:

—Sen[n]or—dixo Turin—, nunca. . . se acuerdan los omes que en esta tierra oviese omne que mostrase ninguna ley çierta, et por ende non beuimos en otra ley. . . . —Sennor infante—dixo Julio—, todas las leys del mundo son en dos maneras: la vna es ley de natura; la otra ley es dada por alguno. La ley de natura es non fazer tuerto nin mal a ninguno. Et esta ley tan bien la an las animalias commo los omnes, et avn mejor: ca las animalias nunca fazen mal las vnas a' las otras que son de su linage, nin a otras, sinon con grant mester. . . para su mantenimiento. . . nin se llegan los maslos a las fenbras, sinon en tienpo que an de e[n]gendrar segund su naturaleza; et eso mismo fazen las aves, tan bien las que caçan commo las otras. . . . Et asi, pues es çierto que de la ley de natura muy mejor vsan dello las animalias que los omnes, de ualde ovieron los omnes entendimiento et razon, lo que non an las animalias (Manuel 1982c:238—40).

(—Master—said Turín—, men on this earth have never agreed that there existed a perfect law, and so we do not live under such a law. . . . —Master Prince—said Julio—, all the laws in the world are of two types: the ones found in nature, and the ones given by man. The former involve doing no harm or evil to anyone. And this type of law is also possessed by animals, even more so than by man: for animals never do evil unto each other, neither to themselves nor to those of other types, unless they have great necessity [from lions to birds]; neither do males copulate with females, unless it is their mating season. . . . And so, it is clear that the law of nature is far better observed by animals than by men, even though the latter possess understanding and reason, and animals do not.)

Consequently, an adaptation of *written* Thomistic sources that are expounded in an *oral* context appears to predominate in the *Estados*, whereas in the *Libro de las armas* (“Book of Heraldry,” 1334?)—also known as the *Libro de las tres razones* (“Book of the Three Accounts”)—personal, oral sources of Juan Manuel and his family are recorded in written form⁸ for Friar Juan Alfonso, as is conceded in the prologue to the work (Manuel 1982b:121; cf. Oral Aspects, No. 2). The narrative is of some historical interest as three “private” questions are answered for the Dominican friar: 1) why the *armas* of wings and lions were given to Manuel, Don Juan’s father—a study in heraldry; 2) why Don Juan and his legitimate progeny can create knighthoods; and 3) what transpired in the last conversation between Sancho IV, Don Juan’s cousin, and him while Sancho lay dying in Madrid.

The brief prologue to the *Armas* lends itself well to our

investigation of orality and textuality in that it describes the Baron of Peñafiel's process for gleaning knowledge from experience, and then recording it for the benefit of others. In responding to Friar Juan Alfonso's request for information, Don Juan explains that the transfer of "things heard" to "things written" is not an easy task; similarly, it is easier to explain something verbally than to write it down. Words flow from oral sources, some of which are certainly more credible than others, and are then judged by the faculty of understanding, which acts as a filter and synthesizer; the results are then recorded, mentally and/or textually. At the same time, Don Juan prefers to attain a consensus rather than to rely on just one source. On testimony from others, he notes that "non lo oy todo a vna persona, mas oy vnas cosas a vna persona, et otras, a otras; et ayuntando lo que oy a los vnos et a los otros, con razon ayunte estos dichos (et por mi entendimiento entendi que passara todo el fecho en esta manera que vos yo porne aqui por escripto) . . . ; et asi fiz yo de lo que oy a muchas personas, que eran muy crederas, ayuntan[do] estas razones" (Manuel 1982b:121-22); ("I didn't hear things from just *one* person, but from *several*: some things from one, and other things from others. And I rightly put these bits of information together, using my understanding, in the text you have here; and I have compiled the discussions you have here on the basis of what I have heard from many people, who are very reliable sources"). This amounts to a simple but effective description of audial discrimination centuries before the studies in communication of McLuhan, Ong, and others would be realized.

In the third *pregunta* ("question") of the *Armas*, what transpired between Juan Manuel and the dying king, Sancho IV (in effect, a monologue on the part of the latter), we see the "dark side" of orality in Don Juan's oeuvre. On his own admission, Sancho was the target of his parents' invariable curses: "Et dio me la su maldicion mio padre en su vida muchas vezes, seyendo biuo et sano, et dio me la quando se moria; otrosi, mi madre, que es biva, dio me la muchas vegadas, et se que me la da agora, et bien creo por cierto que eso mismo fara a su muerte. . ." (Manuel 1982b:138); ("And my father [Alfonso X] cursed me many times during his life, being alive and healthy, and, too, while he was dying; also my mother, who is alive, cursed me many times, and I know that she is doing so now, and will continue to do so until her death. . ."). A work of the imagination—an oral fiction, as Deyermond considers it (1982)—or a true account? Indeed, Sancho

led a rebellion over the succession to his father's throne which was still in progress when the Wise King died in 1284 (see MacDonald 1965 and Craddock 1986), and there would seem to be little reason to doubt the content—if not Don Juan's delivery—of this second-hand confession.

In any case, the entire study of diglossia, and of other issues in orality, in the literary corpus of Juan Manuel remains to be made. It suffices to note that future investigations here should keep in mind its written and oral aspects with respect to sources, narrative technique, and possible audiences (see England 1977 and the Introduction to Manuel 1980). After all, as Don Juan tells us in the *Armas*, “las cosas son mas ligeras de dezir por palabra que de poner las por scripto. . .” (Manuel 1982b:121) (“things are easier to communicate via the spoken word than through writing them down. . .”); and medieval listeners could not turn back the pages to remind themselves what had come previously in his narrative. Happily, the modern reader can.

Fifteenth-Century Secularization of Fiction; Conclusion

The works of Juan Manuel represent a watershed in the evolution of Peninsular fiction with respect to their use of oral and written sources. In the fifteenth century, however, it happens that the Humanistic impulse and full flowering of courtly literature assign to a lower level of inquiry and inspiration various intellectual currents, now interpreted increasingly in more rigorously moralizing contexts. Included here is much philosophical material in the Thomistic vein, relegated to numerous doctrinaire “mirrors” for correct living and to the defense of women against misogynists, notably the *Libro de las claras e virtuosas mugeres* (“Book of Noble and Virtuous Women,” 1446) by Álvaro de Luna. As creatures of God, it was assumed, women could not be totally evil.

Still, Thomistic “fiction” existed. J. H. Herriott (1952:274-78), for example, has identified the importance of the interior senses, a predilect concern of the Thomists, in various Spanish works from the courtly literature of the mid-1400s to the historical, theological, and philosophical texts of Bartolomé de las Casas, Suárez, and Vives almost a century later, at which point a vigorous Neo-Scholasticism would revive certain aspects of medieval moral and natural philosophy. Literature of the pulpit, moreover, offers a popularizing form of this doctrinaire mode, which reflects the functioning of diglossia at yet another level the

Biblical-patristic text expounded in an environment that is essentially oral (see Cátedra 1978, Deyermond 1980). In the case of the *Arcipreste de Talavera o Corbacho* (1438) by Alfonso Martínez de Toledo, numerous “sins of the flesh” of the faithful are vividly placed in relief by means of an omnipresent testimonial perspective (the “eyewitness account”). ““Es que non farás fornicio” (“Thou shalt not fornicate”), the narrator tells us, citing the Biblical commandment. He then proceeds to enumerate the numerous consequences of this activity: “E sy por ventura se enpreña la tal donzella del tal loco amador, vía buscar con qué lance la criatura muerta”; “¿Quántos, di, amigo, viste o oýste dezir que en este mundo amaron, que su vida fue dolor e enojo. . . e, [de que] mueren muchos de tal mal e otros son privados de su buen entendimiento[?]”; etc. (I, ii and vii; Martínez de Toledo 1984:49 and 58); (“And if by chance the young maiden becomes pregnant by her passionate lover, she would look for something with which to abort the child”; “Tell me, friend: how many people in this world have you seen or heard tell about whose lives were nothing but pain and aggravation. . . and [of whom] many die of such an affliction, others being deprived of their sound understanding[?]”).

Erroneously citing St. Paul (rather than Matthew 19:6 and Mark 10:9) in order to illustrate that “Los que Dios ayuntare non los separe onbre” (“Those whom God hath joined let no man put asunder”), Martínez de Toledo describes to us the three appellations of the progeny of those who do *not* obey this norm: “los fijos avidos de fornicacion. . . en derecho espurios llamados, e en romance bastardos, e en común bulgar de mal dezir, fijos de mala puts” (I, xv; 1984:69-70); (“children who are had from fornication are legally called spurious, and in romance [i.e., Castilian] bastards, and in common, vulgar street language, sons of bitches”). This is an excellent example of the clear linguistic interest that the work exhibits, later reinforced through the histrionics of key scenes such as that offered in the chapter “Cómo las mugeres aman a los que quieren. . .” (“How Women Love Whomever They Wish. . .”): “¡Yuy! ¡Dexadme! ¡Non quiero! ¡Yuy! . . . ¡Libreme Dios deste demoño). . . ¡O cómo soys pesado! . . . ¡Avad, que me quebráys el dedo! . . . ¡Ravia, Señor!” (II, xiii; 1984:174-75); (“Ouch! Leave me! I don’t want to! Ouch! . . . God save me from this monster! . . . You’re so *heavy*! . . . Get OFF, you’re breaking my finger! . . . God, he’s insane!”). The

Corbacho, then, is a unique case as regards dramatic and linguistic elements in a context of popular theology and morality; it offers what is perhaps the best example of diglossia in medieval Peninsular literature.

In the sentimental novel *Cárcel de Amor* ("Jail of Love") by Diego de San Pedro (1492), the faculties of understanding, reason, memory, and will of the "prisoner," Leriano, capitulate in a *tour de force* of courtly despair. These elements of the soul (so important for Thomistic-Augustinian doctrine), once "enslaved," permit the passions of their unhappy victim to file past in an environment now epistolary, now rhetorically oral, with its *exclamatio* of "Ay de mí," "O," "Triste de mí," "Guay de mí," etc. ("Oh, me!," "Oh!," "Sad me!," "Wretched me!"), as studied recently by I. A. Corfis, who notes that "literary and rhetorical traditions represent a distinctive characteristic of the *Cárcel de Amor*. Its mixture of epistles, narrative, oratory, and treatise genres creates a polyphony in the text that captures the reader's attention (1985:47, "Resumen"; my trans.).

Fernando de Rojas' debt to numerous sources, both written and oral, in the preparation of his famous novel-in-dialogue, *Celestina* (sixteen-act version, Burgos 1499; a twenty-one act version appears no later than 1502), has been demonstrated by many scholars.⁹ Gurza (1986), in particular, has pointed out its affinity with a popular tradition of dramatic performance and diversion with respect to its nexus with *cancionero* ("song-book") poetry, its use of the proverb (but see also Deyermond 1961 for its dependence on Petrarchan elements), abundance of formulaic expressions, and numerous allusions to words and even silence. While this tale of avarice and the destruction of youth through unbridled passion is a contemporary exposé of moral debauchery in the cold light of social criticism, the critic D. Severin (1982 [1984]:207) has noted, however, that the heroine, Melibea, seems to be thinking about the popular lyric of the *bella malmaridada* ("beautiful unhappily married woman") when she says, speaking of the hero Calisto, that "Si pasar quisiere la mar, con él iré, si rodear el mundo, lléveme consigo, si venderme en tierra de enemigos no rehuiré su querer. . . que más vale ser buena amiga que mala casada" (XVI; see Rojas 1982:206); ("If he wants to cross the sea, I'll go with him; or wander through the world, may he take me with him; or sell me in a hostile land, I will not refuse his will: for it is better to be a good lover than a bad wife").

This is closely related to a ballad of the day which is indeed entitled “La bella malmaridada” (no. 293 in Frenk 1977:148).

This lyrical preoccupation, however, has a more rudimentary analogue in the *Celestina*'s treatment of the relationship between speech and survival: the go-between Celestina herself has the “gift of gab”; whereas the servant, Pármeno, offers an explanation (act IX) of the *primum mobile* of his class when he says “La necesidad y pobreza, la hambre, que no hay mejor maestra en el mundo, no hay mejor despertadora y avivadora de ingenios. ¿Quién mostró a las picazas y papagayos imitar nuestra propia habla con sus arpadadas lenguas, nuestro órgano y voz, sino ésta?” (Rojas 1982:143); (“Necessity and poverty, hunger: there is no greater awakener or sharpener of your wits than these. Who showed magpies and parrots how to imitate our speech with their singing tongues—our organ and voice—other than hunger?”). A key statement, such a fundamental observation on communication complements the textuality of the work (cf. Oral Aspects, No. 7), with its inventory of pharmacopoeia (I; Rojas 1982:61-62), presence of juridical terminology (“¿quemada seas!”) [“may you be burned”], “fraude hay” [“there’s fraud (here)”]; *passim*) and numerous allusions to classical antiquity. All of this in the face of *Celestina*'s culminating moment, the silent “performance” by Pleberio after his daughter Melibea has committed suicide by jumping from a tower, while his wife Alisa tragically interrogates him: “¿Por qué arrancas tus blancos cabellos? ¿Por qué hieres to honrada cara? ¿Es algún mal de Melibea?” (XXI; Rojas 1982:231-32); (“Why are you pulling out your white hair? What are you clawing your honorable face? Is there something wrong with Melibea?”). Irony of ironies: at that moment, Alisa had not yet seen her daughter’s shattered body.

* * *

Without intending either to favor or to discriminate against any particular school of critical theory in the present paper, I have had as a goal simply to make some observations on the phenomenon of diglossia, or convergence of oral and written sources, in several prose works of the medieval Castilian corpus, also offering appropriate commentary on the application of other studies in communication to them. Much remains to be done; I hope to have stimulated some interest in realizing other

investigations of the topic, in Spanish and in other languages, for the moment providing some guidelines and possible criteria in order to aid colleagues in attaining this goal. Here I have reached no particular conclusions, preferring instead to emphasize the introductory aspects of the task at hand: an evaluation of Peninsular literature in terms of that “strange new mixture” of orality and textuality and of other phenomena of human communication that Father Walter Ong studied for the first time some thirty years ago.

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Notes

¹See the case of Melibea, the prototypical heroine of the ballad of “La Malmaridada” (“The Unhappily Married Wife”), studied by Severin 1982 [1984].

²See, for example, the review by Harvey (1986) of Pattison 1983.

³For the impact of the epics on Alfonsine historiography, see Pattison 1983.

⁴See Gurza 1986 and Frenk 1984.

⁵See Faulhaber 1972 and Fraker 1985.

⁶See Walker 1971.

⁷See England 1977, Macpherson 1977, Ayerbe-Chaux 1982, and Seniff 1984. Of interest, too, is the introductory study by Alan Deyermond to Manuel 1985.

⁸A central fiction may predominate here; see Deyermond 1982.

⁹See Deyermond 1961, Gurza 1986, Severin 1982 [1984], Frenk 1984, and Fraker 1985.

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