

FEMALE (CO)AUTHORSHIP IN *CANCIONERO* POETRY

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Female authorship was a contentious subject in fifteenth- and early sixteen-century Iberia. During the period, a substantial amount of poetic production was associated with social interaction, which enabled a complex negotiation of authorship and gender roles. Female discourse was central to poetic writing and to the cultural practices connected to it. However, editorial practices associated with the compilation of multi-authored *cancioneros* worked to erase women's contributions to poetic writing. The study of female authorship in the context of current notions of textuality, including that of textual agency, helps examine forms of erasure and consider the evidence found in the rubrics or contextualizing titles heading the poems¹. This evidence points to a textual imbrication of female and male discourse at several stages of poetic composition and proposes a reconsideration of existing approaches to female (and male) authorship.

The relative paucity of female-authored texts in the fifteenth century has been partially explained by prescriptive treatises that present the ultimate ideal of female discourse as that of silence. The deterrent role that male humanists, courtiers, and ecclesiastics played when faced with the conceptual oxymoron of the female author has been likewise studied as a powerful force in the shaping of women's writing. The resistance toward the publication of female-authored texts was justified by the prescriptive ban of women from the public sphere and the problematic association of public text and public woman as a textual/sexual imbrication². There are, however, serious breaches in this overall system. Scholars have pointed toward lacks in critical approaches that perpetuate the essentializing gender stratification present in prescriptive literature without interrogating the nature of dichotomic models or their operativeness in the range of more heterogeneous practices. Prescriptive treatises harbored serious conceptual contradictions as they could deter female authorial agency while

¹ On the concept of textual agency and its applicability to *cancioneros*, see Ana M. Gómez-Bravo, *Textual Agency: Writing Culture and Social Networks in Fifteenth-Century Spain*, Toronto, Univ. of Toronto Press, 2013.

² See for example Wall's study of a gendered conceptualization of the print medium in England. Wendy Wall, *The Imprint of Gender: Authorship and Publication in the English Renaissance*, Ithaca, NY, Cornell Univ. Press, 1993.

advocating for women's education or make allowances for instances of the display of female learning via civic speeches in Latin or the vernacular, accomplished writing or stylized oral discourse in situations of social interaction³. Moreover, as Barbara Weissberger points out, in Spain female sovereignty had a destabilizing effect on various spheres, including the social and cultural, that to a considerable degree shaped many aspects of male authorship⁴. Furthermore, resisting readers constituted a compelling force in «signifying skills», the female power to create meaning⁵. Ann Rosalind Jones proposed an analytical model that identified the leeway or «room for maneuver» (80) that women found in order to write in a system that, rather than completely silencing them, «provoke[d] them into complex forms of negotiation and compromise» (92)⁶. The study of the different ways by which female writers were able to negotiate the system and ultimately acquire renown invites for Jones a consideration of the situational aspects of women's writing (80), a «pre-poetics» that studies the «conditions necessary for writing» (74).

Attempts to recover women's writing have necessitated a reformulation of canonical perspectives as well as the development of strategies that help identify texts that had been embedded into other texts –with the authorial marks deleted and the textual integrity erased, and that had until recently gone undiscovered. The specific political, social, and cultural forces bearing an impact on women's writing have inevitably led toward a consideration of their relation to male authors. In the particular case of the courtly lyric, it has been emphasized that, although gendered, it is built on a two-tier system by which women dedicatees are but an intermediate step in what in fact is an exchange «between men», leading ultimately to the silencing of women⁷. Although it is crucial to understand the dynamics that bolster genres such as the love lyric, it is equally essential to examine critically the very construction of the categories involved, including class and gender and ultimately that of female authorship⁸. As

³ For a review of the emphasis on female education in Spain, see Isabel Beceiro Pita, «Modelos de conducta y programas educativos para la aristocracia femenina (siglos XII-XV)», in M. T. López Beltrán (ed.), *De la Edad Media a la moderna: mujeres, educación y familia en el ámbito rural y urbano*, Málaga, Univ. de Málaga, 1999, pp. 37-72.

⁴ Barbara F. Weissberger, *Isabel Rules: Constructing Queenship, Wielding Power*, Minneapolis, Univ. of Minnesota Press, 2004.

⁵ Barbara F. Weissberger, «Resisting Readers and Writers in the Sentimental Romances and the Problem of Female Literacy», in J. J. Gwara and E. M. Gerli (eds.), *The Spanish Sentimental Romance (1440-1550): Redefining a Genre*, London, Tamesis, 1997, pp. 173-190 (p. 179).

⁶ Ann Rosalind Jones, «Surprising Fame: Renaissance Gender Ideologies and Women's Lyric», in N. K. Miller (ed.) *The Poetics of Gender*, New York, Columbia Univ. Press, 1986, pp. 74-95.

⁷ Nancy Vickers, «Diana Described: Scattered Woman and Scattered Rhyme», *Critical Inquiry*, 8 (1981), pp. 265-279 (pp. 277-279).

⁸ See Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*, New York, Columbia Univ. Press, 1988; and Margaret J. Ezell, *Writing Women's Literary History*, Baltimore and London,

Cameron argues regarding oral discourse when considering gender roles, language is a performative act that constitutes identity, rather than identity determining language (44-9)⁹. The roles associated with a particular sex form a set of rules that can be differently combined to produce meaning in various circumstances and that are negotiated by individuals working within institutionalized practices¹⁰. In her article on the lost female voices in the *Cancionero de Baena* and other *cancioneros*, Whetnall showed how female-authored verses were incorporated as refrains into poems written by male authors, thus concealing the extent of female contributions to *cancionero* poetry. Later studies showed that *cancionero* poetry was at its root highly participatory, both in theory and practice, and that women were in fact coauthors whose contributions were erased due to an editorial politics that sought to restrict female access to manuscript publication¹¹.

Moving forward from the binaries of dominance and difference or speech and silence entails understanding the processes by which a text is constituted and an author made. In addition, the lyric must be considered in a wider context of texts and practices. In this regard it is crucial to consider how a text is produced in a particular material situation and the combined meaning of text and situation derived by negotiating agents who regard both text and object as part of a constitutive process of the self to be achieved through sociotextual interaction. Butler notes the creative thrust of the material in producing meaning, «for language both is and refers to that which is material, and what is material never fully escapes from the process by which it is signified»¹². Ross's important study on the rhetoric of female embodiment in medieval Spanish texts identifies central issues for the consideration of embodied authorship¹³. Arguing against reductionist approaches to the body and the past as textual constructs, Ross

The Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1993.

⁹ Deborah Cameron, «The Language-Gender Interface: Challenging Co-optation», in V. L. Bergvall, J. M. Bing, and A. F. Freed (eds.), *Rethinking Language and Gender Research: Theory and Practice*, London and New York, Longman, 1996, pp. 31-53.

¹⁰ Susan Gal, «Between Speech and Silence: The Problematics of Research on Language and Gender», in M. di Eonardo (ed.), *Gender at the Crossroads of Knowledge*, Berkeley, Univ. of California Press, 1991, pp. 175-203.

¹¹ See Ana M. Gómez-Bravo, «“A huma senhora que lhe disse”: Sobre la naturaleza social de la autoría y la noción de texto en el *Cancioneiro geral* de Resende y la lírica cancioneril ibérica», *La Corónica*, 32 (2003), pp. 43-64. An early study by Whetnall proposed that women had voluntarily restricted the public dissemination of their poems. Jane Whetnall, «Lírica femenina in the Early Manuscript Cancioneros», in S. Bacarisse, B. Bentley, M. Clarasó and D. Gifford (eds.), *What's Past Is Prologue: A Collection of Essays in Honour of L. J. Woodward*, Edinburgh, Scottish Academic Press, 1984, pp. 138-175. For an excellent overview of the different recovery efforts of women's writing undertaken in recent scholarship, see Liz Herbert McAvoy and Diane Watt, eds, *The History of British Women's Writing, 700-1500*, Vol. 1, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

¹² Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'*, New York, Routledge, 1993 (p. 68).

¹³ Jill Ross, *Figuring the Feminine: The Rhetoric of Female Embodiment in Medieval Hispanic Literature*, Toronto, Univ. of Toronto Press, 2008.

calls attention to the «situational nature of the body» (8), which in her view entails a study of the historical body not as a linguistic construct, but as a recognition of the «fusion of materiality and meaning anchored in history» (8). Ross views the body as «both generating meaning and as being shaped by historically contextualized systems of meaning» (6). In addition, it should be argued that when particular speech acts become embedded in social interaction and material circumstance, the production of meaning becomes tightly dependent on the situation, however abstract or conventional the language. Embodied authorship, material text, and situation invite a look past prescriptivity and into the complexities of actual practice.

The positive appreciation of female discourse coexisted with the prescriptive passivity of women's roles. Hernando de Ludueña claims that the need courtiers had of women to serve as audience and critics is the ultimate defense for the inclusion of women in social interaction. Without women, men's singing, dancing, dressing, and jousting would be «like a fountain without water»¹⁴. The long sections in his poem detailing the many aspects of active female participation via stylized discourse contradict the static representation of women's actions as just mere props for the men. Luis Milán's *Libro de motes* makes explicit the need to constitute a heterosocial partnership on the grounds of invention, but in fact goes further by presenting the male point of view that a caballero is constituted a *galán* only by the ladies' word. For this reason, the ladies are addressed as the mirror in which the men need to look in order to see themselves:

Tambien con mucha razon os podemos decir espejo de gala, pues nunca se tiene el caballero ni es tenido por perfecto galan, de muy bien aderezado de cuerpo y de alma, sino cuando las damas dicen que lo es; pues si el caballero no es galan si las damas no lo dicen, con mucha razon las podemos tener por la misma gala, pues el buen parecer dellas es espejo de gala, donde nos habemos de mirar para parecer bien [We can also with good reason call you «mirror of gallant grace» because the caballero is not considered a perfect gallant, well appointed in body and soul, but when the ladies say he is; for if the caballero is not gallant if the ladies do not say so, then with great reason we can consider the ladies as gallant grace itself since their good opinion is the mirror of gallantry where we need to look in order to appear fitting]¹⁵.

Women were so central in social interaction because they embodied the ability to produce a stylized self not only as it regarded physical

¹⁴ Hernando de Ludueña, *Dottrinale di gentilezza=Doctrinal de gentileza*, Giuseppe Mazzocchi (ed.), Napoli, Liguori Editore, 1998 (vv. 1145-1155).

¹⁵ Luis Milán, *Libro intitulado El cortesano, Libro de motes de damas y caballeros*, Madrid, 1874 (pp. 474-475).

appearance and manners, but also in discursive ability. Their power to create the ideal male through their word made women's speech the keystone upon which the constitution of the social self rested.

But female discourse was both necessary and resented. This dependence on female discourse and bodily presence not only gave women an autonomy that some felt needed to be bridled, but also was actively repelled for its power of relativizing male discourse. As Leupin found when studying Richard de Fournival's love request to a lady in the form of his *Bestiaires d'amours*, in such a context man «is no more than a signifier, a trope that woman produces (for herself), invents (for herself), discovers (for herself)»¹⁶. In addition, woman herself defies inscription, both her body and her mind being un-inscribable, like water. For that reason, the man that attempts such inscription will find himself «writing on water» («en l'aygua scriu») as Jaume Roig raged in his mirror or *Spill*¹⁷. Roig's misogynistic poem is in line with Pere Torrellas's slanderous *maldecir*, the poem that became the epitome of slander against women in *cancionero* poetry. In Torrellas's poem, women are likened to water creatures like eels (v. 21), because they are equally slippery¹⁸. Women's discourse is likewise deceitful and hard to contain:

dissimulan el entender,
 denuestan lo que desean;
 fingen de enojo plaser,
 lo que quieren non querer
 y dubdar quando ma's crean (vv. 32-6)

[women feign innocence, / deride what they desire; / they pretend to be pleased when angered, / not to want what they want, / and to waver when most certain].

The similarities between what has been identified as a courtly poem (Torrellas's) and an urban one (Roig's) are proof of the overlap between both environments, which coexist without a clear separation, the authors and their work belonging to both the court and the cities and sharing in a pan-Iberian tradition¹⁹. Much like Torrella's

¹⁶ Alexandre Leupin, *Barbarolexis: Medieval Writing and Sexuality*, Cambridge, MA and London, Harvard Univ. Press, 1989 (p. 158).

¹⁷ Jaume Roig, *The Mirror of Jaume Roig: An Edition and an English Translation of MS. Vat. Lat. 4806*, María Celeste Delgado-Librero (ed. and trans.), Tempe, AZ, ACMRS, 2010 (v. 7971).

¹⁸ Text and translation in Emily C. Francomano, *Three Spanish Querelle Texts: Griseld and Mirabella, The Slander against Women, and The Defense of Ladies against Slanderers: A Bilingual Edition and Study*, Toronto, Canada, Victoria Univ. in the Univ. of Toronto, Centre for Reformation and Renaissance Studies, 2013 (p. 56).

¹⁹ See Gómez-Bravo, *Textual Agency*, *op. cit.*, for many aspects of this overlap concerning *cancionero* poetry. For the larger tradition of misogynistic discourse in an Iberian setting, see

poem, Roig's misogynistic mirror provides a balancing counterpart to positive mirror images such as those in Suero de Ribera, Ludueña, or Milán by presenting a hyperbolic narrative of the evils of women from all walks of life.

In Roig's purview, women's «evil arts» are inseparable from their bad rhetoric, which is filled with jarring errors («caçefatons») that are paradoxically «subtle», «genteel» and «vile». Their discourse is likewise slippery, and hard to contain in one category, for it is «equivocal and amphibological»:

l'estil be scur
 he males arts
 tots son brocart
 he ab retochs
 dits equiuochs
 he amphibolichs
 may son catolichs
 la llur retoricha
 es metaforicha
 he uarions
 caçefatons
 gentils e uils
 d'estils subtils
 saben ben dir

[Their obscure style and evil arts are all lies; their equivocal and amphibological language is never catholic; their rhetoric is metaphorical; they know how to say ravings well, errors in their discourse, genteel and vile in a subtle style]²⁰.

Counterposing their «bad arts» with their ability to «dir bien» is a clear reference to the definition of rhetoric as «ars bene dicendi» of extensive use in the poetry of the period²¹. The venomous result of such a combination is the destruction of men, because, aided by its slippery subtleness and deft application of rhetorical devices, it cannot be controlled. When this discourse was to be set in writing, the anxiety turned into surveillance of the written word produced and preserved in private spaces in the home or chamber, away from prying eyes. The young wife in Roig's *Spill* constantly had her fingers stained with ink, filling reams of paper with her writing, which she

Robert Archer, *The Problem of Woman in Medieval Hispanic Literature*, Woodbridge, Tamesis, 2005, and Francomano, *op. cit.*

²⁰ ²⁰ *Spill*, *op. cit.* vv. 8034-47. I have translated the *Spill*'s verses here as literally as possible trying to preserve the rhetorical terminology used by Roig in order to make transparent the terms of his argument.

²¹ See Ana M. Gómez-Bravo, «Retórica y poética en la evolución de los géneros poéticos cuatrocentistas», *Rhetorica: A Journal of the History of Rhetoric*, 17 (1999), pp. 1-38.

cautiously kept private, until her eager husband found her writing materials and she was forced to defend herself by violently denying everything:

ma de paper
 ploma y tinter
 ella tenia
 que'n escriuia
 may o sabi
 per cas trobi
 tot en la plegua
 que fos seu negua
 porfidiega
 cridant brauega
 puga la quinta
 mas yo de tinta
 ses mans sullades
 viu prou uegades (vv. 2585-98)

[She had paper booklets, pen and inkwell, though I never knew what she was writing. By chance I found everything in her desk, but she persistently denied that it was hers, screaming wildly and raising her voice as much as possible; but I saw her hands stained with ink many times].

The tension between the competing needs to display and to control female speech and female writing became woven not only into poetic anthologies through the creative process involved in the composition of the poem, but also into the very fabric of the constitutive forces of fifteenth-century poetic compilations or *cancioneros*.

In this context, the references to female textual agency contrast markedly with the scarcity of extant texts²². The circumstances of erasure and inclusion of female discourse in *cancioneros* deserve close inquiry. A case in point is that of Diego Martínez de Molina, whose poetry is featured in the *Cancionero de Baena* (PN1), a *cancionero* that, though ostensibly dedicated to King Juan II and his court, shows a strong focus on urban Andalusian poetic production, mostly that of Seville and Cordoba²³. Diego Martínez de Molina was *jurado* (member of the city council in charge of defending the public order) of Seville as well as one of the twenty-four aldermen

²² For an overview of medieval Spanish women's lyric traditions, see Miguel Ángel Pérez Priego, ed., *Poesía femenina en los cancioneros*, Madrid, Castalia, 1989. For a useful compilation of heterosocial poetic exchanges centered around love, see Antonio Chas Aguión, *Amor y corte: la materia sentimental en las cuestiones poéticas del siglo xv*, Noia, Toxosoutos, 2000.

²³ Julian Weiss, *The Poet's Art: Literary Theory in Castile c.1400-60*, Oxford, The Society for Mediaeval Languages and Literature, 1990 (p. 45).

(*veinticuatro*) of Seville²⁴. Dutton and González Cuenca date the poem before 1394²⁵. The gushing praise that Diego Martínez de Medina lavishes on Isabel González throughout the forty lines that comprise his poem gives an acute sense of her worth as a writer. Her poetry («poetrias») is imbued with philosophy and rhetoric in a way that is innovative and that marks her as a consummate and learned poet (ID1455, vv. 9-16)²⁶. Her poems are «perspicuous», «polished» and «mellifluous», and are imbued with sharp knowledge, so much so that they defy any attempt of a reply (vv. 25-32). Francisco Imperial was likewise a Sevillano and also seemingly an admirer of Isabel González. Isabel González seems to be the woman addressed by Francisco Imperial in ID1373, in which he extolls her poetic art, ingenious rhymed compositions, rhetoric, and faultless eloquence («¡Oh, tú, poetría e gaya çiençia! / ¡Oh, dezir rímico ingeniosso! / ¡Oh, tú, rectórica e pulcra ‘loquençia» *Cancionero de Juan Alfonso de Baena*, ed. cit., vv. 25-27). However, the questions posed by Diego Martínez de Medina to Isabel González, whom he calls «muy eçelente poeta» and «discreta» (vv. 6-7), have only one extant reply made by a friar (ID1456). In fact, none of her poems are extant. In contrast, there survives a short exchange between Diego de Sevilla and a praised female poet named «Vayona», a lady of the entourage of Leonor de Foix, Countess of Navarre (ID2147, ID2148). Vayona, whom Diego de Sevilla describes as being full of «discreçion», concurs with him in praising the countess. Like Vayona's poem, other women's compositions seem to have survived, even if only sporadically, because they were included in a male poet's compilation. The terms under which these poems became part of male compilations and the factors that contributed to their preservation were subject to complex negotiation.

An unidentified lady («una dama») addressed a long question («pregunta») to Diego Núñez (ID6558). In the poem, the lady praises Núñez's poetic ability, knowledge, and «discreción» while using self-deprecatory language to refer to herself and her work, which she calls «a clumsy poem» («torpe dezir» v. 28) and the result of her imperfection («mi gran imperfection» v. 44), being as she is but an imperfect man («soy ombre imperfecto» v. 40), in clear reference to theories of sexual difference also present in other poems such as Pere

²⁴ Isabel Montes Romero-Camacho, «El converso sevillano Nicolás Martínez de Medina (o de Sevilla), contador mayor de Castilla. Apuntes para una biografía», *Espacio, Tiempo y Forma*, Serie III, Historia Medieval, 27 (2014), pp. 343-380 (pp. 347-348).

²⁵ *Cancionero de Juan Alfonso de Baena*, Brian Dutton and Joaquín González Cuenca (eds.), Madrid, Visor, 1993 (p. 583n).

²⁶ I use the poem ID numbers and manuscript abbreviations found in Brian Dutton, ed., *El cancionero del siglo xv, c. 1360-1520*, 7 vols, Biblioteca Española del Siglo XV, Salamanca, Univ. de Salamanca, 1990-1991. Quotes from *cancionero* poems refer to Dutton's edition unless otherwise noted. Most *cancionero* poems are also available in electronic form at <http://cancionerovirtual.liv.ac.uk>.

Torrella's infamous misogynistic composition. For these reasons, she asks that her poem remain private so as to forestall any ridicule it may inspire («no sea publico el reyr / vos solo señor lo ved» vv. 29-30). The self-effacing presentation of one's work was common for both male and female authors when approaching a fellow poet of perceived higher esteem, but some of the terms included in her writing echo those of other female authors seeking to both acknowledge and prevent any gender-based criticism. She closes her poem by kissing Núñez's hands, asking pardon for any mistakes and requesting that the poem be kept private «as if between brother and sister» («qu'esto este como entr'ermanos» v. 74). The survival of this poem rests with the also seemingly chance survival of the scant sample of Núñez's corpus, a bare five poems that were the result of Hernando del Castillo's indefatigable quest for poetic texts. The circulation of her poem along with those by Núñez, however limited it may have been, shows that poetic petitions for textual privacy were recognized as literary humbleness but not necessarily as a command to be heeded. This is a similar dynamic as that found in other male-female written exchanges, as is the case of Fernando de la Torre and his female correspondent studied by Weiss²⁷. These examples show how prolific the calls for privacy and silence could be. By acknowledging and working around the pressures silencing female discourse and limiting its publication, women could continue to write and to participate in socioliterary exchanges that would keep them at the center of literary production.

As these examples show, women's poems were actively circulated in heterosocial networks. Women wrote replies to male-authored poems on their own account, even when not requested to do so. Some of these replies have survived the action of the many hands through which the poem circulated before finally resting in a *cancionero*. One such survival is that of the reply by a lady that happened to be among a group of nuns to whom Álvarez Gato directed a poem after having sent them some meditational writings for Christmas Eve (ID3110). The poem requested that the nuns comment on their Christmas devotions. The lady addresses Álvarez Gato as another Homer («traslado domero» v. 1) and, after replying to his questions, ends by asking the poet to return to visit them (ID3111). More rarely, there have survived homosocial poetic exchanges between two women. One such case is ID2040, which is comprised of two stanzas, each penned by a different woman on the particular subject of the theft by one of them of a present intended for the other. Elvira and Mencía exchange elegant rebukes that veer toward the practice of poetic banter or *motejar*, each poem playing with a proposed word substitution in order

²⁷ Julian Weiss, «What Every Noblewoman Needs to Know: Cultural Literacy in Late-Medieval Spain», *Speculum*, 81 (2006), pp. 1118-1149.

to maximize the reproaches («presentes» for «enamorados», «hombres» and «mugeres» for «mayordomo» and «mi»). Elvira is not only a thief of presents but also of lovers. In contrast, Mencía is good to men, especially to the majordomo that brought the gift, but cruel to all women and to Elvira in particular. Cases such as this show rare glimpses of female homosocial relations, directing our gaze toward works such as Roig's that, while clearly misogynistic, portray male anxieties toward a female speech that becomes completely irrepressible when reciprocal.

A powerful lady was sometimes allowed the last word, as when Queen Juana wrote her alleged reply (ID2803) to Rodríguez del Padrón's «Vive leda si podrás» (ID0125), a surprising and chronologically impossible exchange in which Rodríguez del Padrón bids a painful farewell to an unknown lady, whose identity is appropriated in the queen's poem declaring that upon his departure he takes with him her freedom and freewill («mi libertad y aluedrio» vv. 5, 14). It should be noted that the queen's poem appears in the manuscript tradition and as part of the purported exchange only in *cancioneros* MN15 and MN65, while Rodríguez del Padrón's ID0125 appears in *cancioneros* LB1, LB2, ME1, MN54, MN65, MP2, PN1, PN12, PN8, RC1, and SV1 alongside other poems. The explanatory titles or rubrics heading individual poems in PN1 and MN65 explicitly state that Rodríguez del Padrón's poem is addressed «to his lady» upon his departure. Since MN65 is a copy of MN15, and MN15 contains some *única* by royal favorite Beltrán de la Cueva, the plausible explanation is that the *cancionero* contains a partial corpus of poems from King Enrique IV's court and that Queen Juana may be indeed identified as Enrique's wife. Although the meaning of the queen's poem may extend beyond its initial nature as a reply and suggest other addressee(s) (perhaps Beltrán de la Cueva), penning a reply to a famous poem by an earlier author and thereby appropriating the poem's message and its prestige, shows a clear and assertive authorial persona.

That written participation by women in poetic exchanges was expected is made obvious by the existence of the rebuffs to which willfully declining to respond often inspired. Such is the case of Luis de Meneses when a lady did not reply to his *moto*: «De dom luys a huma dama que lhe nam rrespondeo a huum moto» (ID5809). The sense of urgency and the coaxing strategies used to gain a response from an addressee are evident in the urging tones of some of the poems. Sancho de Villegas wrote to his lady in his own hand («de mi mano» v. 10), as he emphatically put it, describing his sorrowful state in love and requesting, as was customary, her help, in this case necessitating only paper and ink («Con solo papel et tinta»): «Resistir puede tu letra / la mucha tristeza mia / el dolor que me penetra / Tornaras en alegria» [Your letter can combat / my great sadness; / the pain that pierces me / you will turn into happiness] (ID0044, MN54, vv. 40,

42-45). Villegas additionally implores her not to skimp in her reply, a task that he believes would cost her little. Petitions to women for written replies are present in *cancioneros* even when female answers are missing, evidence to the encouragement for female writing. Two unnamed competitors wrote to their lady (also unnamed), one being in bed and the other holding a candle while the first wrote to her (ID2067). The poem claims that the lives of both men are equally in danger for her love and asks her to reply on whether she will favor the one who has all but lost his life or the one who is on the verge of dying. Similarly, some «discretas señoras» (v. 6) are addressed in Juan de Dueñas's versified love riddle (ID2494) in SA7, for which there is no extant reply.

The ample references to female participation in literary exchanges makes for the interrogation of the extant evidence in *cancioneros*, the ultimate repositories of the poetic paper, and of the shaping power of the compiler. The fifteenth century witnessed an astounding proliferation of poems and authors in fifteenth-century Iberia. Once written, the poem was disseminated in the form of loose paper or booklet in multiple copies in circles that were close to the author, from where they were transmitted farther. Conscious efforts were made to obtain a copy of a particularly interesting poem and to preserve it²⁸. Dissemination was within the power of the author but, once a poem had been put into circulation, other agents also held the power to further disseminate it and to secure its preservation. After a substantial number of poetic papers and booklets had been accumulated, there arose a need for a more permanent form of safekeeping that would help avoid the loss of the loose paper, which was by definition a more ephemeral support. Often, a fair copy of the bundle of loose papers that had been gathered over a period of time was produced, either on a blank book or on blank booklets (*cuadernos*) that would be later bound. Because the act of dissemination took a poem out of the immediate context from which it arose, authors, copyists and compilers took great care to explain the circumstances that gave way to the poem so that its text could be better understood and the wit of the poet better appreciated. Compilers were careful about giving the particular situation of a poem and telling the story that surrounded it in detail. This was done through explanatory titles or rubrics that had different degrees of complexity as well as within the text of the poem. Rubrics marked the dissemination of the poem and its inclusion into the book archive or *cancionero* via a compilational process that was subject to socioliterary and political forces. Information provided by poems and their rubrics situate the poem in a creative matrix that reveals the complex constitution of both authorship and text and the

²⁸ For a full study of the passage from loose paper to book and the political and cultural forces that played in the process, see Gómez-Bravo, *Textual Agency*, *op. cit.*

socioliterary situations from which they arise. It also makes evident the key role of the compiler.

When intended poetic exchanges include the compiler, there is much to be learned on the subject of the sexual politics of compilational inclusion. A case in point is that of Garcia de Resende, who compiled the grand *Cancioneiro geral* or *de Resende*, an extensive collection of fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century Portuguese poetry, which includes an ample selection of Resende's own poetry. Resende's micro corpus displays a keen interest in exhaustiveness and a reluctance to edit out contextualizing information, including that on his female interlocutors, that may flatter Resende's wit. Resende's micro corpus illustrates the ways in which self-publishing exhaustiveness may promote editorial transparency. In addition to the wealth of information contained in the texts themselves, equally full of meaning are the ways in which poems are woven within the compilational structure. One such instance is the series that contains a *pergunta-resposta* exchange between Garcia de Resende and Joam da Silveira (ID7246, ID7247, ID7248, ID7249, ID7250, ID7251), initiated by Resende on the subject of love in the *Cancioneiro de Resende* (16RE). In contrast, this exchange is preceded by a similar one initiated by a woman (*molher*) and followed by various poems addressing a woman or glossing a female-authored *moto*. In these cases, Resende fails to identify his female interlocutors beyond their gender. The question initiated by the *molher* is specifically situated in a past relationship, which had been happy but had ended in estrangement: «Pregunta duma molher a garçia de rresende com que lhe foy bem e estauam desauindos» (ID7240). As was customary in question-reply exchanges, Resende's answer follows the rhyme scheme and stanza type used by the initiator, in this case the unidentified woman (ID7241). Two poems by Resende follow where the poet complains to the *senhora* about his love tribulations and appear to be meant as a further follow-up to his earlier reply (ID7242, ID7243). There follows the exchange between Resende and Silveira and then a number of compositions addressed to a female alternatively identified as a «*molher*» or a «*senhora*» on the subject of her lavishing her attention and care on a sick man (ID7261) and on the subject of a *moto* sent by the woman (ID7254, ID7255; and ID7259, ID7260), or on a female-authored *moto* without specification on whether the woman had intentionally sent it to Resende (ID7256, ID7257; ID7264, ID7265; and ID7266, ID7267). These fit squarely into the common practice of the male gloss of female *notes/motos* in both Portuguese *cancioneiros* and Spanish *cancioneros*²⁹. In the same series, following ID7256-ID7257, there appears a long poem (ninety lines) by Resende addressed to a *molher/senhora* who confessed to

²⁹ On this practice, see Ana M. Gómez-Bravo, «“A huma senhora que lhe disse”», *op. cit.*

love him but «would do nothing for him» (ID7258). The poem then goes through the obligatory complaints on the subject, pressing her to show her love with deeds. In this case, female-authored poems seem to have been included in Resende's *Cancioneiro* as a display of Resende's poetic abilities in both homosocial and heterosocial exchanges on the common subject of love. As a careful self-compiler, Resende preserves the texts of his interlocutors, in several instances making female authorship transparent, even though individual female authors are not identified by name. In spite of the fact that this relative transparency is intended to highlight Resende's poetic abilities in heterosocial interaction, it contributes to the corpus of female authorship in a similar way to that facilitated by other male *cancionero* poets studied by Whetnall³⁰.

Much like Resende, other poets received poetic addresses by women, some of whom are left unidentified in the *Cancioneiro de Resende*. A case in point is that of a woman (*freira*) who sent Francisco de Sousa a piece of writing («hum escryto») through one of Sousa's servants. Sousa's reply and the contextualizing rubric that heads his poem (ID7224) refer to the woman's writing and the path it followed to reach Sousa, but her text is not included. A more prickly exchange is that between Ruy Moniz and a woman whom he had already «known» and who sent him a «bad reply». Moniz's countered with some stinging verses, presumably following the lead of the woman's original response, which is not included in Moniz's corpus within 16RE, but which is likely referenced in his poem (ID5437)³¹. Also missing is a composition written by an unnamed lady who wrote some verses (*motés*) to Fernam da Silveira on the occasion of his having impregnated his wife. The *Cancioneiro de Resende* includes Silveira's reply in the section containing his poems but fails to include the lady's verses, some of which may have been quoted and the rhyme scheme followed, as was customary, in Silveira's poem (ID5297). However, Fernam da Silveira's corpus in 16RE does not include the majority of the challenges, addresses, or replies to his compositions by other poets, a practice that goes against the general custom in authorial compilations.

Although there is a wholesale tendency toward the erasure of female compositions and of the name of female authors in *cancioneros*, the practice is not universal and should be considered in the context of the enveloping corpora where female compositions were included or in which they were mentioned. Garcia de Resende provides a good example of a case in which the compiler of a multi-authored *cancionero* or *cancioneiro* is intent on offering a comprehensive

³⁰ Jane Whetnall, «Isabel González of the *Cancionero de Baena* and Other Lost Voices», *La Corónica*, 21 (1992), pp. 59-82.

³¹ The rubric explains the situation: «Cantigua de rruy moniz a huma molher que elle ja conheçeo e mandoulhe huma muyto maa rreposta».

collection of his own work, extensively including the contributions of his interlocutors, both male and female. Resende's own corpus contrasts with those of other poets such as Fernam da Silveira's, where the comprehensiveness of the corpus depends on the self-editorial action of the authors or of other hands before reaching Resende's. In addition, the cases that involve an interlocutor also point to the need to look for forms of textual imbrication of the female text in the extant male-authored text, since poetic conventions require that any reply should reference the poetic address not only via its rhyme scheme and stanza choice, but also via textual allusions and content. Beyond encouraging formal referencing among different compositions, textual imbrication involves the conceptual games rooted in socioliterary exchanges at whose core lay the need for display of inventiveness and ingenuity through language. This is further evinced by the joint consideration of poem and rubric.

As mentioned above, many *cancionero* poems are headed by contextualizing rubrics that explain the material context surrounding a poem's inception and make clear the participation of other agents in the composition process. The sexual politics that operated through the social networks that produced and circulated poetry both eagerly highlighted female contributions and worked to suppress their written outcome. The will to record the workings of individual wit or *ingenio* was a compelling force in the need to preserve the immediate context of invention, thus making clear the heterosocial foundation of poetic writing and the contributions provided by the interlocutor(s)'s own inventiveness and wit³². The period's emphasis on highly personal abilities in the form of *ingenio* and *discreción* mapped rhetorical theory to daily life practice and encouraged the uses of poetry as common currency in social networks. Through this «poetics of dialogue» there has been preserved a rich record of rhetorized female discourse and significant contributions by women to a symbolic aesthetic that is central to poetic discourse through much later centuries. When specific words and ideas were presented to the poet in both random and controlled situations, the ability to produce stylized discourse probed the poet's wit and poise as much as any poetic acumen. However, exclusive authorial action did not begin where the delivery of the subject matter ended. Particular wording could be posed by both interlocutor and context in so far a detail as to suggest the specific tone and text of the poem. Through this means, the external occurrence becomes the poem's keystone and the interlocutor a participating agent or, in some cases, a joint author. Through women's key role in heterosocial exchanges, female discourse became embedded in poetic texts, inviting a reformulation of

³² I have studied the role of rhetorical invention in relation to the period's discourse on women and by women in «Women, Debate and the Power of Invention in Fifteenth- and Early Sixteenth-Century Poetry», currently under consideration for publication.

the understanding of textuality and authorship. One example is the exchange initiated by a lady in a *sala* (hall), leading Francisco Carroz Pardo to reply with a poem. The topic that anchored the exchange is the lady's perception of Carroz Pardo's countenance and its link to the tapestry before which he was standing and that in the lady's eyes functioned as his backdrop:

Otra obra suya porque estando en vna sala delante de vna señora arimado a un paño de ras mirandole la señora y conociendo en su rostro que deuiera estar apassionado le dixo soys vos la pintura del paño o soys vos el que yo veo el con vna risa dissimulo la respuesta estonces ella sabiendo que auia seruido a vna muy hermosa dama le dixo dezidme pudiesse bien amar mas del primer amor al qual respondio que no si ella era la primera y porque ella mostro enojarse de la respuesta el faze esta obra» (ID6684) [Another poem of his because standing in a hall in front of a lady leaning on a hanging tapestry, the lady looked at him and discerning from his expression that he was upset asked him, 'are you the painting on the cloth or are you the person at whom I am looking?' He laughed the question off and avoided giving an answer. Then she, knowing that he had served a very beautiful lady, asked him: 'tell me, can one fall deeply in love after the first time'. To which he answered that it would not be possible if she had been his first love. And because she seemed to be annoyed by this answer, he writes the following poem].

Since there is no explanation of the scene depicted within the tapestry, it is impossible to understand all the layers of an already complex exchange. The poem's inception is rooted in the conceptual game proposed by the contrast the lady establishes between representation and perception through the concepts of living and seeming to live as a shadow («hecho sombra y assombrado» v. 3) and attempts to answer the lady's question about first loves. It is important to note that this poem is presented as arising from a situated social exchange that becomes woven within the poem, which would then contain both the author's words and those, however much paraphrased, of his interlocutor. Similarly a product of dialogue is a poem written by Álvarez Gato upon meeting a group of ladies who were discussing the nature of beauty, of which some argued rested on the features, others said resided in gracefulness, or in the way one laughed, and yet others said it was in the clothes one wore and the way one carried oneself. Juan Álvarez Gato opined that beauty rested on goodness, which made the dark seem fair and constituted the best piece of grooming («afeite»): «hallo a vnas señoras debatiendo sobre en que estaua la hermosura y vnas dezian que en las façiones y otras que en la graçia otras que en la Risa otras que en el ayre y en los trajes hizoles esta copla en que dize que no esta syno en la bondad» (ID3119). Álvarez Gato's short

nine-line poem constitutes his argued reply, while the detailed rubric conveys the complexity of the various points commented on by the participants. In relating these particulars, the rubric is intended to set the stage for the ensuing poem and to showcase the poet's ability to capture and surpass the arguments, but through its necessary transparency it allows the reader access to female discourse, highlighting the role it plays in poetic writing in a heterosocial setting. In these and many other cases, the specific wording conveyed by female speech becomes a constitutive element of the poem.

Cancioneros are filled with such instances of female discourse. When Rodrigo de Avalos gave his lady a deck of cards, she asked him to choose what they were to play for and received what appears to be the elicited response: 'remedy for my sorrows.' Therefore, the alternative for the poet, if losing the game, amounted to losing his life in despair: «Otras coplas del mismo porque dio vnos nappes a su amiga y ella le dixo que pusiesse el precio de lo que auian de jugar» (ID6137). Returning from a journey, his lady («amiga») asked Pedro Torrella the reason for his visit due to the fact that he had to return immediately: «otra suya a su amiga viniendo de camino y ella le dixo que para que venia pues se abia de bolver luego» (ID1099). The poem furnishes the reply that such an address is obviously seeking to elicit: the trip, though physically taxing, is worthwhile just for the chance to see her, even if the visit is brief. As seen in the poem by Carroz Pardos cited above, female actions and discourse could become complexly intertwined with that of the male poet in such a way that made it difficult or even undesirable for him to conceal female participation. Similarly, women's comments added to the riddle of visual messages conveyed by men. One such case is that of Cartagena and his friends appearing in public all dressed in red, with the ladies noting the lack of congruence between the men's dress and demeanor: «Otra suya porque le dixeron unas damas que por que dezia el y otros compañeros suyos que estauan tristes quen su vestir publicauan el contrario porque yuan vestidos de grana y cartagena responde por todos» (ID0668, 11CG) [Another poem of his because some ladies asked him why he and some of his companions said that they were sad while in their dress they were publishing to be otherwise since they were dressed in red and Cartagena replies for all of them]. Cartagena's reply encourages the women not to judge the men by their cover and to look at them as living sepulchers, colored outside but dead (for love) inside. Similar puzzles are posed by women to poets with regard to dress, such as the color black interpreted as mourning (ID6109, ID6675) or ill attire (ID0815). As in these examples, it is often women's speech and actions that incite the writing of a poem. The question that a woman posed to Juan del Encina on the practical matter of how to wake up after sleeping through the night emboldens the poet to coax her to return his love and to become sleepless like

him (ID4466). Soria vented his despair after a lady asked him what more he could want for she was already sympathetic to his sorrow (ID6276). A caballero gave advice on a very material question posed by a lady as to the proper attire to wear for fleeing Valencia during a bout of pestilence in the city. The poem mixes the minute detail of the material advice with notes on the symbolism attached to clothes and baggage. Her shirt must be, for example, «embroidered with honesty» (ID6587, vv. 46-48). But the list is intended to be a very concrete answer to the lady's query and the items for the journey are listed and described in minute detail with careful attention to any contingency. *Cancioneros* are filled with poems prompted by female discourse and actions in a wide range of situations. A lady told Soria that she was sorry for his complaint (ID6289); Alonso de Cardona sighed in front of a lady and she argued that he should not sigh for he declared himself to be happy with his passion (ID6677); a lady sent a poet a message asking what she should do in order to pray as much as she was supposed to do (ID6801); another sent a poet a letter written in such garbled handwriting that all that was legible just before her signature was a suggestive quote from Psalm 42 (ID6799); a lady told Jerónimo de Artes that she was turning thoughts in her mind as to how to better annoy him (ID4360); another told Juan Fernández de Heredia³³ that she was coming from confession (ID1092, LB1); Lope de Sosa's lady playfully asked him who he was, for she did not know him (ID6221); a lady gave Juan Fernández de Heredia a coin (a «real») and then asked him what he had done with it (ID2880, MN17); Garcí Sánchez de Badajoz's lady was teaching a thrush how to say 'no' (ID0702, LB1); another lady was teaching a thrush how to speak (ID4754); while another said that men's love had no good end in point (ID0822, LB1); a lady asked Juan del Encina to stop seeing her, following her, or calling himself hers (ID4460); another put her hand on her galán's heart and finding that it was steady said that it was for his little love for her (ID6260, 11CG); when being addressed by Pedro Manuel de Urrea with amorous words, a lady told him that no woman could love a married man (ID7487).

Socioliterary exchanges frequently revolved around an object, sometimes a gift, with the poem attempting to extend the symbolic intent of the giver. Material gestures and objects serve to ground the poem and become part of the poem's generative processes because they are not mere rhetorical topoi. They are exchanged in situations of social interaction and ground the poem in the material culture of the everyday experience from whence it emerges, with the poem's worth being closely attached to its ability to transform the object into stylized language in a situated context. When an object is given,

³³ See the work of Juan Fernández de Heredia, *Obras*, Rafael Ferreres (ed.), Madrid, Espasa-Calpe, 1955.

the giver imbues it with a meaning that the recipient must interpret. In *cancioneros*, a lady gives the poet a bouquet of white and purple wallflowers and other flowers when leisurely walking in the countryside (ID4472), two colors: one green and the other tawny (ID6173), a red sash (ID4141), some thread (ID6191), a belt («cordón» ID6878, like Melibea), a ring (ID6879), a pair of gloves (ID6877). A lady also throws a snowball at a caballero (ID4398), takes a pair of gloves from the poet (ID6876), or asks him for a mirror (ID4826). The objects exchanged are often tailored toward supplying daily necessities such as food: a lady gives the poet a piece of bread (ID4470), sends him dainty foodstuffs, including a flask of rose water and some sweets (ID2745), or quince preserves as a gift (ID0211). Sometimes it is domestic trouble with regards to material needs that merits a poem, such as when meat was stolen from two sisters by a dog in the city of Murcia (ID0995). The exchange of daily objects and poetry is part of a larger practice both in heterosocial and homosocial settings

³⁴. Montoro's poetry makes mention of gifts of sardines and shad (ID3036), pork (ID1917), and a ration of mutton (ID1916). Other personal and domestic troubles were the subject of poetry and exchange as well, such as when Antonio de Velasco lost a tooth and his friend sent him a new one in jest (ID4392). Although the poem allows the poet to have the last word and to seemingly appropriate the symbolic power of the exchange, the poetic word becomes depreciated when severed from its situation and the action of its coparticipants. For this reason, the need for a rubric to make the processes of poetic invention clear both compromises authorial exclusivity and makes the text richer through the evidence of the larger web of material objects, situations, and co-agents that bestow the poem with layered meaning. Juan del Encina writes on the «wonders» (*maravillas*) that God performed when creating the female giver of the namesake flowers. The fragrant white flowers symbolize her graces and perfections while the purple ones represent his penitent love (ID4472). The poem would not have taken shape without female action and the symbolic meaning attached to the gift, both of which become central constitutive elements of the poem.

Women's actions and words reach well outside gallant communication to appear in situations as casual as those afforded by daily life, such as when Montoro addressed a poem to a drunken woman (ID2732), or when he wrote to two women: one a drunkard and the other a prostitute (ID6780). Jorge Manrique similarly wrote to a drunken woman who had left her dress in pawn at a tavern (ID6788), while a deaf woman who fell asleep and was loudly flatulent in front of Juan de Mendoza's lady was the subject of another poem (ID2053).

³⁴ See Ana M. Gómez-Bravo, «Situation and Textual Mediation: Toward a Material Poetics of the Fifteen-Century Lyric», *La Corónica*, 41(2013), pp. 35-60.

Other compositions show women and men in interaction both under flattering circumstances and also in the messiness of everyday life. Burguillos found a lady looking at herself in a mirror (ID2068), while the Comendador Escrivá saw his lady was combing her hair under the sun (ID6897). Less lovely but just as deserving of a poem were other occasions, as when Pedro Manuel de Urrea found his lady in an angry mood when he visited (ID7541), or when a woman called Montoro a Jew (ID3006). The Vizconde de Altamira (or Lope de Sosa) took issue with a woman that was easy and had bad breath (ID1135); a lady was or had been sick (ID0222, ID0715, ID6609, ID6800, ID6888); another was ill with measles (ID4738), which the poet Pedro Manuel de Urrea contracted (ID4739); Urrea lamented when an attractive Muslim woman died from illness (ID4751); and a lady cut her hands with a broken bottle (ID6840). The body afforded opportunities for metaphors about the sublime aspects of the physical world and for exploring rhetorical opportunities provided by the unavoidable nature of the material. Rodrigo de Reinosa fell in love with a young woman who had beautiful eyes, but found that when he addressed his attentions to her, she was not interested in his immaterial love; it was a time of famine and all she wanted was bread (ID4549). The long poem (109 lines) talks about the effect of her beautiful eyes on the love-stricken poet, but each stanza contrasts his abstract desire with the pressing material needs of the woman through the refrain «ella mas queria pan» [but she rather wanted bread]. In the end, the one-line refrain weighs more heavily than all the other lines in the composition. A poem of sublimated love ends with a yielding to the physical needs of the body for sustenance. The poet agrees to send as far as necessary for bread to give to the woman so that she may thrive and he may continue to admire her eyes, tacitly admitting that the abstract may not live without the material. As in this poem, women's words and the material needs arising from a particular circumstance ground the abstract expression of *cancionero* composition.

The situated nature of fifteenth-century *cancionero* poetry emphasized the importance of daily life and of sources that were external to the poet. Because poetry was habitual discourse for social communication, it worked alongside daily life occurrences in networks of exchange. Female discourse was in practice a pivotal element in both urban and courtly interaction, though prescriptive suppression of female discourse worked alongside its growing centrality. The emphasis on the externally sourced subject matter highlighted authorial abilities and for this reason it was transmitted both within the poem and in the contextualizing rubrics. The necessary transparency that followed illustrates the level of textual integration of female participation within poetic writing and invites questions about textual composition. When a woman provides the subject and textual elements upon which the poem is constructed, the grounding

of poetic composition upon situation exposes the composite nature of textuality and interrogates the processes that constitute authorship. It presents a text that is socially constituted, revealing its agents and the complexities of the social relations that bind them by both mastering and transcending rhetorical form.

Recibido: 23/01/2018

Aceptado: 22/02/2018



(CO)AUTORÍA FEMENINA EN LA POESÍA DE *CANCIONERO*

RESUMEN: La autoría femenina era una cuestión polémica en la Iberia del siglo xv y principios del xvi. Gran parte de la producción poética de este período estaba asociada con la interacción social, lo que permitía una compleja negociación de la autoría y los papeles de género. Si bien el discurso femenino era fundamental para la escritura poética y las prácticas culturales relacionadas con el mismo, estaban en funcionamiento prácticas editoriales que suprimían las contribuciones de las mujeres a la escritura. El estudio apunta a una imbricación textual del discurso femenino y masculino en varias etapas de la composición poética y propone una reconsideración de las aproximaciones a la autoría femenina (y masculina).

PALABRAS CLAVE: Cancionero, mujeres escritoras, poesía medieval, poesía renacentista.

FEMALE (CO)AUTHORSHIP IN *CANCIONERO* POETRY

ABSTRACT: Female authorship was a contentious subject in fifteenth- and early sixteen-century Iberia. During the period, a substantial amount of poetic production was associated with social interaction, which enabled a complex negotiation of authorship and gender roles. While female discourse was central to poetic writing and to the cultural practices connected to it, editorial practices worked to erase women's contributions to poetic writing. The study shows a textual imbrication of female and male discourse at several stages of poetic composition and proposes a reconsideration of existing approaches to female (and male) authorship.

KEYWORDS: Cancionero, Women writers, medieval poetry, renaissance poetry.