Iberian Theater and Performance

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Introduction

Medieval Iberian theater and performance maintains a peculiar status within, and between, performance and medieval disciplines. In theater studies, medieval Iberia has received minimal scholarly attention, and standard theater history textbooks contain only traces of Iberian material, if any at all. Despite the existence of Catalonian and Castilian archival materials that indicate performance traditions unique to the peninsula, scholars of Spanish literature (outside of the notable exceptions below) generally view Iberian medieval theater as an anomaly. One of the main reasons for this situation is that Iberian theater has yet to emerge fully from traditional historiographic parameters predicated upon the narratives and liturgical forms of the Christian Church. The dearth of liturgical performance evidence in Castile—whether due to the dominance of the Mozarabic rite on the peninsula through the 11th century, Muslim occupation, Iberia’s unique religious and cultural history, or the destruction of church documents—should not preclude future research into Spanish medieval theater. The broader field of medieval European theater has moved forward to embrace a wider range of public acts, including jongleur performance, mock battles, performative reading and viewing, devotional practices, festivals, tableaux, court entertainments, and processions, and new approaches and forms of performance are just beginning to take hold in Spanish studies. The second reason for the discipline’s uncertain presence in the academy has to do with the linguistic and cultural heterogeneity of the medieval geography we now call Spain. Prior to unification under the Catholic monarchs, Aragon, Andalusia, Castile, Catalonia, and Galicia were at one point or another autonomous political kingdoms with unique religious, linguistic, literary, and performance traditions. Despite decades of Francoist polemical historiography that stunted research and promoted a nationalist narrative of Castilian, Catholic centrality, the medieval performance archive reveals diverse, regional traditions. It is perhaps the motley complexion of Iberian performance that has discouraged theater scholars from entering the field. Despite these hurdles, important foundational scholarship, new discoveries, and interdisciplinarity, provide the bases for continued growth of an Iberian performance discipline. Charlotte Stern’s call in *The Medieval Theater in Castile* (Stern 1996, cited under General Overviews) for a “new poetics” appears to be taking hold: other scholars have embraced performance theory in their work, made inroads into aspects of popular entertainments, considered Islamic and Jewish participation in performance culture, and broadened the conversation by examining scenography and theatrical space. The present bibliography bridges the gap between old and new scholarship by including traditional texts and approaches along with primary materials often excluded from the conversation on Iberian drama, as well as critical works that engage the subject matter in an interdisciplinary manner.

General Overviews


The Second and Seventh laws address issues of performance, including popular entertainment, court minstrelsy, and plays in churches. There is debate about how much we can depend on these codes for evidence of theatrical activity in 13th-century Castile, but the most recent scholarship tends to view a connection between the laws and historical fact. Available online from Internet Archive, and reprint published in 2011 by University of Toronto Libraries.


Jones, Joseph R. “Isidore and the Theatre.” In Drama in the Middle Ages. Edited by Clifford Davidson and John H. Stroupe, 1–23. New York: AMS, 1991. This essay details the ways in which Isidore compiled and transcribed preexisting historical literature on Greco-Roman entertainment, resulting in ideas about ancient theater that are sometimes ambiguous.

López Morales, Humberto. “Alfonso X y el teatro medieval castellano.” Revista de Filología Española 71 (1991): 227–252. López Morales concludes that the Siete Partidas should not be taken as evidence of the existence of profane or liturgical theater in 13th-century Castile. He arrives at this interpretation through a philological engagement with the source material for the Partidas—the Fuero Real and Espéculo (Iberian legal codes) and papal decretals.

Shergold, N. D. A History of the Spanish Stage from Medieval Times Until the End of the Seventeenth Century. Oxford: Clarendon, 1967. Shergold has organized the material generically, providing evidence of dramatic tropes in the Easter and Christmas liturgies (Latin and vernacular), auto sacramentales, miracle drama, entremeses, momos, tournaments, royal pageants, moros y cristianos, and farsas from Portugal, as well as the influence of Italian commedia troupes. Late medieval and early modern playwrights (Encina, Torres Naharro, Vicente, Fernandez, etc.) are also discussed.


Surtz, Ronald E. The Birth of a Theater: Dramatic Convention in the Spanish Theater from Juan del Encina to Lope De Vega. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979. Surtz argues that the conventions, allegories, themes, and structures in the humanist and religious dramas of Encina, Fernández, and other early 16th-century drama were modeled on an active medieval theatrical tradition in Castile. This important book discusses entremeses, momos, autos, comedias, coloquios, introitos (comic prologues performed by rustic characters), pageantry, and early commercial theater.

Throop, Priscilla, ed. and trans. Isidore of Seville’s Etymologies: The Complete English Translation of Isidori Hispalensis Episcopi Etymologiarum sive Originum Libri XX. Charlotte, VT: MedievalMS, 2005. As a synthesis of sacred literature and texts from a range of branches of learning, Isidore’s descriptions probably reflects continuing ancient traditions more than 7th-century culture and language. However, Isidore’s descriptions of theater and entertainment in Books 15 and 18 are useful, because out of these descriptions emerged a concept of theater that shaped medieval performance.
Anthologies

The play texts in Álvarez Pellitero 1990 and Surtz 1983 are canonical. Massot i Muntaner 1962 contains rare fragments of a play in the vernacular, and Romeu i Figueras 1957 includes a vast array of saint's plays from Catalonia. Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes and the University of Liverpool's Electronic Corpus of 15th Century Castilian Cancionero Manuscripts are electronic databases that include facsimile images and transcriptions of primary materials.


The carefully edited play texts (each with its own bibliography and introduction) are among the standards of medieval Spanish theater (*Auto de los Reyes Magos, Representación del Nacimient*, *Auto de la Huida a Egipto*, and *Auto de la Pasión*). The edition also contains texts that are less well represented (*Dança de la muerte, Moner’s Momería, and an early Égloga*).

Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes.

This massive online archive of Spanish (and colonial Spanish) literature, history, and the arts contains digitized facsimiles of medieval and early modern song and poetic manuscripts (*Martín Codax, Cancionero catalán del Ateneu, Juan del Encina’s Cancioneros*), critical editions (*Alfonso X’s Siete Partidas and Cantigas de Santa María, and Archpriest Juan Ruiz de Hita’s El libro de nuen amor*), concordances, secondary literature, and video recordings of Golden Age play festivals.


This electronic database contains a number of manuscript images and transcriptions of over two hundred collections from 1360 to 1520. The site also includes informative articles and useful links.


The appendix to this study of ecclesiastical prohibitions of plays in Catalonia contains a few texts of the prophecy of Sibyl and a fragment of a vernacular play on the legend of the *Araceli*. The corresponding essay covers church prohibitions and other evidence of performance.


The collection includes many 16th-century saints plays and a boy bishop sermon from the churches of Mallorca.


The volume contains six medieval texts, with slight modernized orthography: *Auto de los Reyes Magos, Representación del Nasçimiento de Nuestro Señor, Lamentaciones, Auto de la Pasión, Auto de la Huida a Egipto*, and *Diálogo del Viejo, el Amor y la Hermosa*. With introduction, glossary, and textual notes.

Reference Resources

Surtz 1991 is a good starting place for research of Castilian and Catalanian drama, while Haywood 2001 contains an array of primary texts. The Cantigas de Santa Maria Database is an invaluable tool for *Cantigas* research. La Festa, a website authored by Héctor Câmara i Sempere and Luis A. Gimeno Berenguer, testifies to the depth of research on the *Festa d’Elx*, and Karoline Manny’s “Medieval Castilian Drama: A Bibliography” (Manny 2003) includes many examples not found elsewhere. Meredith and Tailby 1983 contains English translations of a number of medieval documents from Spain including expense accounts, properties and costumes lists, and descriptions of processional routes. Scholars interested in examining original early modern manuscripts can reference the catalogue Hispanic Society of America’s *Spanish Drama of the Golden Age* (Regueiro and Reichenberger 1984).
Càmara i Sempere, Hèctor, and Luis A. Gimeno Berenguer. “La Festa: Web de la festa o mistiri d’Elx.”
A useful, well-organized website containing a full bibliography on the history of the scenery, literature, performance, music, and iconography of the festival, as well as a few articles in PDF format.

Cantigas de Santa Maria Database.
An invaluable, near exhaustive, sourcebook for the study of the Cantigas de Santa Maria, hosted by the Centre for the Study of the Cantigas de Santa Maria of Oxford University. The database includes a bibliography for each individual poem, searchable keyword database, electronic poncelet, discography, and metrical and manuscript layout information for the poems.

This section is organized thematically and according to types of evidence, and it provides excerpts from primary sources in English translation. Covers ecclesiastical prohibitions (Alfonso X of Castile’s Siete partidas), synods, edicts, church-sanctioned drama, stage machinery, puppetry, the Corpus Christi, royal receptions and celebrations, tournaments, and monos at the Portuguese court.

This bibliography is part of a larger set of online articles on medieval Peninsular theater.

The editors include English translations of play fragments, stage directions, properties lists, actor salaries, and eyewitness accounts found in account entries, municipal and church archives, guild contracts, and liturgical music scripts from Alcala, Barcelona, Majorca, Seville, Toledo, and elsewhere.

The Hispanic Society has an impressive manuscript collection, with many books written prior to 1550. The manuscripts have been organized into three sections (Authors, Anonymous, and Collections), and each entry contains manuscript dimensions, dates (where available), approximate number of lines, and a brief description of the internal arrangement.

The essay divides its subject matter between the Iberian kingdoms of Castile and Catalonia, and provides an excellent historiographic picture of the discipline. Included is an exhaustive bibliography and a survey of religious plays (Assumption, Passion, Corpus Christi, Sibyl, Nativity, and Saints plays) and secular plays, with some additional information on folklore and late medieval oral poetry.

Journals
Journals devoted exclusively to Spanish medieval theater do not exist. However, journals on medieval Spanish literature (La corónica), early modern Spanish theater (Bulletin of the Comediantes), and medieval European drama (Medieval English Theatre, Research Opportunities in Medieval and Renaissance Drama) occasionally publish essays and review articles on medieval Iberian theater.
**Bulletin of the Comediantes.**
Publishes articles on 16th- and 17th-century Spanish theater. The journal prints Spanish- and English-language essays on a semiannual basis.

**La corónica: A Journal of Medieval Hispanic Languages, Literatures, and Cultures.**
*La corónica* is published biannually and features articles in English or Spanish on topics in medieval Spanish cultural studies, literature, and historical linguistics. *La corónica* also features book reviews, discussion forums, and special thematic issues.

**Medieval English Theatre.**
*Medieval English Theatre* is an international journal publishing articles on medieval and early Tudor theater and pageantry, including articles and records of modern survivals. Coverage is not confined to England, and a number of essays on Spanish theater have been published.

**Research Opportunities in Medieval and Renaissance Drama.**
This peer-reviewed journal publishes essays on European theater and textual history on an annual basis. *ROMARD* is a publication of the Medieval and Renaissance Drama Society, and its editors are currently considering a change in title.

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**Oral Narrative and Poetry**
The examination of narrative prose and poetry in the context of performance is a newer trend in the field. Arabic *māqāmāt and frametale* narratives and the Christian *El libro de buen amor* are of particular interest because of their wide performative and textual disseminations.

**Primary Sources**
The Arabic *al-Maqāmāt al-Luzūmīyah* (al-Saraquṣṭī 2001) and widely disseminated *Kalīla wa-Dimna* (or *Callīla e Dimna*; see Blecua and Lacarra 1984) were translated into Hebrew and Castilian in the medieval period and derived from vibrant performance traditions. *El libro de buen amor* (Ruiz 2001) was written by a medieval Christian poet, Juan Ruiz (known as the “Archpriest of Hita”), and is a good manuscript for considering performative reading.

A Castilian translation of the *frametale* poem originally composed in Sanskrit and translated by Abddalla ibn al-Muquaffa into Arabic in 8th-century al-Andalus. The text contains narrative markers that frame occasions for performance of tales from popular tradition. Al-Muquaffa’s text was greatly influential on the peninsula, inspiring the production of new poems and translations into Castilian, Latin, and Hebrew.

*El libro de buen amor* (c. 1330 and 1343) has been read both as a didactic exposition on spiritual love and a celebration of sensuality. The manuscripts show signs of use as a memory aid, and internal phrase structures suggest oral delivery and performance. Although this edition incorporates only a few folio images from the S manuscript, it is superbly notated.

The Zaragozan author al-Saraqustī (d. 1143) was inspired by the *maqāmāt* of al-Hamadhānī of the Muslim east, which belongs to the genre of rhymed prose narrative. The *maqāma* is a textual record of the acts and words of Arabic and Andalusi street preachers, performers, and hustlers known as the Banū Sasān. This particular English translation is accompanied by a preliminary study of the text of about one hundred pages.
Secondary Sources

Although Dagenais 1994 and Wacks 2007 are not by theater historians, the authors discuss poetry and oral narrative in a performance context. Stern 1965 takes a similar approach to Vita Christi.


Dagenais argues that the entire physical manuscript of El libro de buen amor must be the basis of a study of how meaning was created by medieval readers. He points to the rhetorical nature of the text, which was open to interpretation by medieval readers through physical and ethical interaction with the manuscript.


An essay about the influence of the pastoral episode from Mendoza’s narrative poem Vita Christi on similar theatrical scenes.


The author discusses both performative aspects and performance context (oral tradition of itinerant performers) of the narrative prose. Also of concern to Wacks is the dissemination of literary and performance forms through translation and cross-cultural transmission.

Liturgy and Theater

Donovan 1958 is still an invaluable resource, despite the fact that some of the author’s conclusions have been challenged. Cuadrado 2001 is representative of a current trend of examining devotional objects in art history and performance study. Fradejas Lebrero 1996 looks at the Boy Bishop, Llompart 1978 examines diachronic changes in a vernacular play from Mallorca, and Werckmeister 2002 is just one of many studies of the Beatus of Silos.


Three moveable Mary statues of medieval shrines are examined from the perspective of an art historian. The lay community engaged with these sacred objects—and other dolls, puppets, and animated sculptures—as part of devotional performances.


In addition to surveying the innovative liturgical drama of Vich, Gerona, Mallorca, and Valencia, Donovan’s research retrieved ten tropes in western Spain, including a Visitatio Sepulchri in Compostela. Donovan concludes that due to the dominance of the Mozarabic rite in Castile and the lack of a dramatic tradition in the Cluniac reformation, the auto is not representative of an established tradition of biblical drama in Castile.


Fradejas provides evidence for Boy Bishop celebrations at various times during the late medieval period in Spain, giving particular attention to para-theatrical activities within the archbishopric of Fray Hernando de Talayera of Seville. Vivid descriptions are supported by citation of primary material.

Examines the development of the Deposition ceremony from its vernacular origins in the 14th century through the change to Latin at the end of the 17th century.


The essay discusses the style of the illuminated miniatures for the Beatus of Silos, notably one of musicians (now MS. London, B.L., Add.11695), arguing that the transition from Mozarabic to Romanesque style that it exemplifies was also reflected in major changes at the monastery of Santo Domingo de Silos.

**Autos Sacramentales**

Only a handful Castilian Corpus Christi and Passion plays written before 1500 have survived, and some only in fragmentary form, although recent archival research suggests a richer tradition. Both Stern 1996 and Surtz 1979 (cited under General Overviews) suggest that the corpus of Golden Age religious plays constitutes legitimate evidence for the study of medieval performance, though a sustained analysis of this kind has yet to be made. Religious drama flourished in Catalonia and Valencia beginning in the 10th century, and a number of Nativity, Sybil, and Easter plays are extant.

**Primary Sources**

The 12th-century *Auto de los Reyes Magos* and 15th-century *Representación del nacimiento de Nuestro Señor* (Manrique 1990) are two of the best-known Castilian *autos sacramentales*.


This play fragment from the Epiphany cycle has the distinction of being the one of the first extant vernacular religious plays in Europe (with the Anglo-Norman *Adam*), and has received a good deal of scholarly attention. Among the critical issues surrounding the play are linguistic features, authorship, and its place within 12th-century performance and political culture.


This verse play was written during the period of the rise of the printing press and performance of religious *autos*. In a series of tableaux, Joseph doubts Mary’s virginity and she prays for Joseph’s fortitude. Other characters include an angel, shepherds, saints, and children bearing gifts (among them the instruments of the Passion).

**Secondary Sources**

The research presented in Torroja Menéndez and Rivas Paíl 1977 is part of the reason perceptions about the absence of a theatrical tradition in Castile have changed. Surtz 1983 extends this conversation with his study of Franciscanism in Castilian theater. Using different tools of analysis, Lapesa 1983 and Pick 2004 maintain distinct opinions regarding the authorship of the *Auto de los Reyes Magos*. Romeu i Figueras 1962, Romano 1969, and Surtz 2002 examine Catalonian religious plays and performance conditions.


Lapesa reviews arguments for various possible nationalities of the author of the *Auto de los Reyes Magos*, concluding that the author was a French cleric from Gascony.

Pick, a historian, examines polemic and religious debate in early-13th-century Toledo, and connects these practices with Christian theater. She draws a link between Archbishop Rodrigo’s *Dialogus* and the *Auto de los Reyes Magos* fragment, arguing that the religious play was emblematic of a broader program of Christian expansion and self-definition against Muslim and Jewish identities.


Romano discusses the participation of Jews in Passion plays in Villarreal in 1379, 1380, 1413, and 1418.


A survey of extant Catalan Passion plays from the 13th through the 18th centuries.


The essay draws connections between the dogmatism of three Castilian plays and Franciscan practice and devotional literature.


Surtz discusses audience reception of the *Misteri del Rey Herodes* performed at Corpus Christi in Valencia. He argues that the reception of the piece can be understood by looking at the play’s structure: a series of antagonist “others” (women, Herod, and the Jews and their New Christian descendants) contrasted with a series of positive figures (the Virgin Mary, the Three Kings, and Gentiles).


Based on their investigation of 15th-century account books of the cathedral of Toledo, the authors describe pageant routes and expenditures for Corpus Christi plays. These include machines, candle wax, pageant wagons, paper, paint, and payments to artisans and minstrels for the production of *juegos*. The book also contains the fragmentary text of Alonso del Campo’s Passion play.

The *Festa D’elx*

The Mystery of Elche (*Festa d’Elx*) is unique in that it is a contemporary celebration of the death, ascension, and coronation of Mary that has been performed continuously since the medieval period, perhaps as far back as the late 14th century. Medievalists depend on early modern texts, such as Massip i Bonet and Gómez 1986 and Castaño i García 1990, for evidence of earlier practices. Quirante Santacruz 1986 conducts a comparative analysis of a few of these manuscripts. King and Salvador-Rabaza 1986 uses the contemporary repertoire to suggest medieval history, while Massip i Bonet 1985 and Massip i Bonet 2005 link the physical sets of the festival to medieval times. King 1996 situates the festival in contemporary and historical sociopolitical contexts. Kovács 2002 compares the role of Jews in a number of medieval European Assumption representations.


Castaño i García’s work among the archives of the basilica of Santa Maria of Elche has revealed important information about scenographic conditions, musical works, representations, and organization of the Mystery.

King gives the reader a good overview of the history of the Elche Misteri, describing the roles the performances played in the construction of ideology and local and national identity in the 20th century. The article describes in detail the progression of rituals, processions, and celebrations of the three-day event.


King and Salvador-Rabaza provide a detailed account of the thematic, scenic, musical, and spatial aspects of the festival in 1985, relating the modern festival with historical evidence from the 14th century forward.


Kovàcs examines the role of Jews in the apocryphal story of the Assumption, showing how the themes were paralleled in Passion representations in the late medieval period. Of particular interest, the article draws comparisons between Assumption performances in Germany, England, and Catalonia (including Elche). Available online.


This essay on the scaffolding and walkways of the Festa d’Elx analyzes documents of origin, the evolution of structures, and basic characteristics. Massip i Bonet concludes that these parts of the scenery have medieval roots.


Massip i Bonet conducts a careful analysis of medieval and modern stage machinery of the ascension.


This critical edition examines elements of the text that help explain authorship, manuscript preservation, musical notation, and literary and performance tradition. The editors have provided information on manuscript variations and explanatory notes on sources for historical performances of the Festa d’Elx.


A study of the preservation of Festa d’Elx traditions in various textual editions. The essay discusses the possibility of thematic relationships among literary texts, describing two separate genealogies from a number of 17th- and 18th-century texts.

Holy Week and Corpus Christi Procession

Holy Week processions were especially popular in Spain from the late 13th century through the early modern period. Very 1962 dates the first Spanish Corpus Christi at 1280, in Toledo (perhaps the first in Europe). Outside of the Festa d’Elx, contemporary religious festivals in Spain are primarily a product of artistic and structural developments made during the Baroque period; therefore little scholarship on medieval continuities in modern processions and ceremonies exists. Durán y Sanpere 1943 and Very 1962 are central texts in Corpus Christi scholarship, as are Agromayor 1987, Llompart 1966, and Llompart 1969. González Barrionuevo 1992 provides the most comprehensive historical monograph on the
Seises of Seville. Scholarship on Holy Week procession has been equally robust: Flynn 1994 offers an examination of body as text in flagellant processions, Portilla and Gomez Lara 1996 document early modern changes to the festival, Swift 2011 examines penitential affect, and Webster 1998 is an iconographic and social history.

This monograph examines the liturgy of Holy Week, Stations of the Cross, Calvary topography, and the ways in which sermons were integrated into processions.

This wonderfully illustrated volume provides a rich history of the Barcelona Corpus from the 14th century. Durán y Sanpere incorporates various types of evidence to reconstruct the history, including texts, paintings, and physical objects.

Flynn argues that late medieval penitential processions were opportunities for the demonstration of empathy and religious commitment by the lay community. Flynn also examines the ritual functions and emotional and somatic effects of self-mortification and shedding of blood.

This book contains detailed descriptions (and numerous citations to archival materials) of the development of Los Seises from the mozos de coro of the late medieval Corpus Christi through the early modern period, when the dance moved indoors.

Describes dramatic activity in Barcelona and Mallorca Corpus processions.

Provides documents on the prohibition of fireworks, games, masks, and participation by Jews.

Portillo and Gomez Lara write about the structure of Spanish Holy Week celebrations in the late medieval, early Renaissance period, prior to the radical transformation of the festivals in the Baroque period.

Swift uses affect theory and medieval penitential practices to reveal the performative functions of public displays of self-mortification and sorrow in Holy Week processions in Spain.

Very’s book demonstrates the dichotomous relationship between the liturgical and folkloric elements of the Corpus Christi procession. The book provides colorful examples of grotesque figures (tarascas and gigantones), scenic representations, and dances, alongside biblical representations and narratives.


In addition to examining religious processional statuary, Webster provides significant research on late medieval penitential brotherhoods and Holy Week processions.

### Popular and Municipal Festivals

The single most valuable source for popular entertainment in medieval Spain is Carriazo 1940, and Harris 2000 and Ruiz 1994 rely on this document in their scholarship. Harris covers a broader array of subjects, including royal entries and entertainments performed by Amerindians brought to Europe by Spanish conquistadors. Potter 1996 considers connections between theater and the Auto da Fé, and Surtz 1996 discusses the use of masks in processions. The essays in Amorós and Díez Borque 1999 cover a variety of popular entertainments.


Work covering the medieval period, including essays on juglares, dance forms, the Dance of Death, and the material aspects of spectacle.

Carriazo, Juan de Matas. *Hechos del Condestable Don Miguel Lucas de Iranzo (Crónica del siglo XV)*. Madrid: Espasa Calpe, 1940.

*Hechos* describe the public life of Don Miguel Lucas de Iranzo, a 15th-century constable of Jaen. The official history includes detailed descriptions of wedding and birth ceremonies, feasts, funerals, mock battles, and tournaments along the Andalusian frontier.


A folkloric, transhistorical study of the provenance of archetypal festivals and dances of conquest (moros y cristianos, games of canes, the matachines dance, royal entries, flower wars). Harris argues that these festivals contained “hidden transcripts” that offered counterpoints to the public transcript of domination.


By pointing to particularly dramatic elements of the Auto da Fé (Act of Faith), Potter suggests connections between the disciplinary procession and aspects of medieval theatricality.


Ruiz discusses the ways in which the jousts, games of canes, tableau vivants, and other festivities in Jaen functioned as orchestrated manifestations of power and representations of authority and community.

Surtz observes that most of the information we have about the practice of wearing masks comes from hostile sources, but that the preponderance of evidence is cause for further study.

**Trobadores, Juglares, and the Galician-Portuguese Lyric**

The composition, performance, and writing down of Galician-Portuguese sacred and secular songs took place throughout the 13th century and the first half of the 14th century. Forms included the cantigas d’amor (male-voiced love songs), cantigas d’amigo (female-voiced love songs), and the cantigas d’estampa (satirical songs).

**Primary Sources**

The Cannoneiro da Ajuda (Michaëlis de Vasconcellos 1904) is an example of a songbook containing secular music. The Cantigas de Santa Maria is a repertory of 420 Marian devotional songs from the 13th-century court of Alfonso X, King of Castile and León. Four contemporary manuscripts of the Cantigas survive, one of which, the richly illuminated Códice Rico, resides in the Escorial Library (Alfonso X, King of Castile and León 1979). The To (Toledo) manuscript is believed to have been the earliest edition of the four (Alfonso X, King of Castile and León 2007). Kulp-Hill 2000, an English translation, is carefully annotated and accompanied by an informative introduction. Mettmann 1986–1989 is the definitive edition of the Galician-Portuguese lyrics.


The T MS (Códice Rico) is the most richly illustrated of the four surviving MSS, and the facsimile provides the reader with a full color reproduction. The second volume is dedicated to codicological information, historical context, and critical studies.

**Alfonso X, King of Castile and León. Cantigas de Santa Maria, Códice de Toledo (To), Biblioteca Nacional de Madrid (Ms. 10069). Madrid: Biblioteca Nacional de España (Biblioteca Digital Hispánica), 2007.**

This is a high-definition electronic color facsimile of the To Codex of the Cantigas. Although the To Codex is not illuminated, the text is rubricated and marginalia on a number of the folios suggest that the manuscript was used in performance. The images in the database are indexed.


Annotated English translation, with introduction and bibliography.


The definitive edition of the Cantigas, with a careful analysis of the correspondences between, and variations of, the four surviving manuscripts.

**Michaëlis de Vasconcellos, Carolina. Cannoneiro da Ajuda: Edição crítica e commentada por Carolina Michaëlis de Vasconcellos. 2 vols. Halle an der Saale, Germany: Max Niemeyer, 1904.**

Although already a century old, Michaëlis de Vasconcellos’s edition is considered authoritative, and her commentary is still referenced in Cancioneiro scholarship.

**Secondary Sources**

The bibliography on Galician-Portuguese song is huge. Therefore, the scope of this particular list has been limited to works that engage with the songs in terms of theater and performance. Menéndez Pidal 1983 is a foundational monograph. Ferreira 2004 and the articles in Criado de Val...
1986 discuss Arabic influence on 13th-century cantigas. Filios 2005 and Burningham 2007 provide distinctly performative readings of trobador and juglar culture. Nodar Manso 1990 reconstructs theatrical scenarios from nine extant cantigas, and Snow 1990 contextualizes the Cantigas de Santa Maria within the court of Alfonso X.


The book describes medieval and early modern oral traditions through the culture of juglares, trovadores, and other itinerant players. In order to overcome the barriers presented by a lack of traditional forms of evidence, Burningham conducts an analysis of nonliterary forms presented in various milieu, as well as literary and dramatic texts that contain traces of improvisatory, popular practices from the medieval period.


Articles in this collection include a discussion of medieval romance and fables in the context of the itinerant performance tradition in Iberia, and an analysis of the connections between juglar culture and Arab and Persian literary traditions.


This historical and musicological essay persuasively argues for a link between two performance forms within the troubadour culture of Spain: Arabic poetry and the Galician-Portuguese lyric.


Filios employs gender and performance theory in her analysis of Iberian lyrical poetry and song. Included in her discussion of women’s identity in performances of comic-obscene and comic-erotic texts are distinctions between 13th-century court entertainers (trobadores, segreis jograis, and soldadeiras) and the literary and performative meanings of the Libro de Buen Amor, Carvajal’s Serranillas, marketplace oration, and various song forms.


First published 1924. The objective of this foundational book is to recuperate lost oral practices and demonstrate the importance of anonymous juglares in creating, disseminating, and preserving Peninsular poetic traditions. Menéndez Pidal draws upon his knowledge of modern romancero performance, reviews ancient and medieval performance traditions, and conducts careful readings of the poetic corpus.


Nodar Manso reconstructs nine poetic dramas from extant cantigas, based upon unity of theme, characters, and genre; seven are comic-satirical texts, two are love dramas. Since Nodar Manso’s primary thesis is that Galician-Portuguese lyrics are theatrical texts, he proposes reconstructions of dramatic sequences that were repeated on a number of occasions by the same performers.


The essay carefully distinguishes between the performative role of the troubadour in the 13th-century Castilian court, literary tropes of love, and Alfonso’s personal intervention into the narrative of the song collection.
Fifteenth-and Sixteenth-Century Cancioneros, Coplas, Villancicos, and Eglogas

The production of cancioneros anthologies in the 15th and 16th centuries reflected an increase in literacy and, with the invention of the printing press, a dramatic increase in available texts. Villancicos and coplas were popular lyrical poetic compositions, often in dialogue form. First published in 1496, Juan del Encina’s églogas are short pastoral dramas.

Primary Sources

Cancioneros like de Cota 1961 were written for the Castilian nobility and performed within the appropriate courtly milieu. Cancionero de Baena (Alfonso de Baena and Lang 1971) is an early compilation volume. A number of scholars have noted the influence of Coplas de Mingo Revulgo (and other coplas; see del Pulgar 1958) on the dramaturgy of Juan del Encina and other early Golden Age playwrights. Juan del Encina’s églogas are short, profane dialogues between comic characters and figures from antiquity, and his villancicos are court compositions set to music (del Encina 1983).


A 15th-century compilation of fifty-six poems, the earliest of its kind in Castile and greatly influential. Also published 1926.


This particular song suggests theatrical representation due to its dialogue structure. In her introduction, Aragone uses this dialogue poem to draw conclusions about debate culture and theatrical performance.


Juan del Encina’s églogas include rudimentary plots, well-defined characters, and in later plays, themes from antiquity. His villancicos could be sung with or without instrumental accompaniment.


Written in a rustic, pastoral style, Coplas de Mingo Revulgo was an enormously popular political satire composed during the reign of Enrique IV. An image from the manuscript is available at Spanish Arts.

Secondary Sources

For del Río 2007, the cancionero is of interest because of its influence on later dramatic forms in Iberia, like the villancico. Similarly, Kassier 1976 makes connections between lyric poetry and Fernando de Rojas’s Celestina. Sirera 1992 parses the difficult lines between theatricality and theater in song performance, and Poza Diéguez 2004 considers methodology and genre in Castilian theater.


The essay explains the thematic, structural, and musical elements of cancioneros that influenced, or carried over into, early Spanish drama. The texts of a number of villancicos are given English translations.

Kassier describes how certain aspects of lyric poetry in 15th-century cancioneros were integrated into Fernando de Rojas’ *Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea* (Celestina).


Poza Diéguez makes an important contribution to the discussion about the conflict between textuality and performance in medieval drama from Castile by examining 15th-century *coplas*, a form of poetic satire in dialogue form. Since performance crossed a number of generic boundaries in the Castilian medieval period, Poza Diéguez encourages future interdisciplinary scholarship.


Acknowledging the expansion of the definition of medieval theater in the past few decades, Sirera endorses the interpretation of dialogue form in medieval cancioneros as theatrical use of language and structure, rather than a form of theater itself.

**Material Culture**

The recent “material turn” in medieval studies has offered new methodologies for examining performance, as well as expanding the archive to include religious images and objects of worship, architecture, and manuscripts. This disciplinary turn is most active in French and German studies, and is beginning to emerge in Iberian studies. Katz 2012 is a comprehensive study of Iberian articulating in Mary sculptures. Martínez Martínez 2003–2004 discusses medieval Iberian articulating crucifixes. Swift 2014 analyzes the theatrical reception of a mechanical Virgin Mary statue.


This well-illustrated article, written by an art historian, discusses various aesthetic categories of Iberian Vierge ouvrante sculptures, paying particular attention to the devotional uses of these moveable objects.


Martínez Martínez discusses a number of wooden articulating Christ figures in the context of ritual use in communities around Burgos.


Examining a mechanized Virgin Mary statue, Swift provides an analysis of articulating statues in the social and devotional contexts of 13th-century Seville.

**Court Ceremony, Entremeses, Entertainments, and Ritual**

Ceremonies like the ones described in García de Santa María 1982 visibly confirmed social law through symbolic action. Costa Gomes 2003 details many of the public and private court rituals of late medieval Portugal, and Whyte 1977 analyzes the Dance of Death (Infantes 1982) within court society. See also Carriazo 1940 and Ruiz 1994, cited under Popular and Municipal Festivals.
This is a social history of the medieval Portuguese court. Costa Gomes investigates the spatial-temporal aspects of the court complex, detailing the many rituals and ceremonies that helped fabricate royalty.

Written by the *converso* García de Santa María, the chronicle describes the 1414 coronation of Fernando de Antequera, with pageant wagons, military exercises, and allegorical devices and narratives (political allegories, vices and virtues, and a Dance of Death).

Written in seventy-nine octaves in 1470, the *Danza general de la muerte* was part of courtly performance culture. References to the dance from other sources identify masked figures and the use of stage machinery.

This carefully researched book describes the *Dança* of the Escorial manuscript and various subsequent texts and performative permutations. As part of her analysis, Whyte details the connections between the dance and social status (including Muslims and Jews), and the influence on later *autos* performed in Segovia, Badajoz, Toledo, and elsewhere.

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