

Framing the *serrana* Lyrics in the *Libro de buen amor*

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The *serranas* (SG950-SG1042) continue to challenge scholars of the *Libro de buen amor* (*Libro*) perhaps because they are unique within the context of the rest of the book.¹ Appearing just after the doña Endrina narrative, the sequence recounts in both *cuaderna vía* and lyric verse the Archpriest's encounters with four of his thirteen love interests in the Guadarrama mountains in early March. Unlike other parts of the *Libro*, which take place in cities and draw on Arab-Andalusí love traditions, the *serranas* are set in the wilderness, do not involve a go-between, and reproduce troubadour verse forms. The Archpriest also appears to have some success at wooing the mountain women, and unlike other parts of the *Libro*, the lyrics mentioned in the *cuaderna vía* narrative are extant. Moreover, the fact that the Archpriest tells “wildly differing accounts of the same events... four times in a row” further destabilizes an already fragmented narrating subject, which makes it difficult to equate the first-person narrator of the *serranas* with the first-person narrator of the rest of the book (De Looze 59). The sequence is also generally not seen to be related to the contrary mission of teaching both *caritas* and *cupiditas*, which is laid out in the prose prologue of the Salamanca manuscript and is carried further in a series of episodes that force readers to make active ethical-hermeneutical choices. In spite of the promises of the prologue, the *serrana* lyrics and other lyric poetry in the *Libro* have generally been seen as separate from issues of love and language.²

A parody of the *pastourelle*, the *serrana* lyrics are the most significant body of autodiegetic poetry in the *Libro*, a book that repeatedly boasts of its author's poetic ability.³ Indeed, poetry is integral to the didactic purpose of the *Libro* according to the prose prologue of the Salamanca manuscript. In addition to lessons in both divine and

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² Most notably, the relation of the *serranas* to the larger ethical-hermeneutic problems of the *Libro* has not been dealt with by critics such as Brown, Brownlee (1985) and Gerli (1982), who have portrayed the book as a Augustinian meditation on sin and free will. Indeed, Marina Brownlee's study “Genre as Meaning in the *Libro de buen amor*” does not analyze the *serranas* in detail and considers them a closed system, separate from the rest of the book except for the mutability of the narrator-protagonist, which she relates to the doña Endrina episode (1989).

³ Extant lyrics are limited to the *serranas*, *Cruz cruzada* (115-20) and Marian verses at the beginning (20-43) and end (1635-49) of the book, as well as the two passion poems that come just after the *serranas* (1049-66). The Archpriest claims to send lyrics to women on various occasions, including stanzas 80, 92, 170, 1319 and 1325.

carnal love, depending on the intention of the reader, the *Libro* also promises lessons in verse: “lección e muestra de metrificar e rrimar e de trobar” (110-11).⁴ The *serranas* are all the more important if the *Libro* originally contained two dozen or so more lyrics which have since been lost and were “the kernel out of which the narrative was created and, as the preserved examples show, they also explained, commented on, or subverted the concomitant episodes,” as Lawrence argues (46).⁵ By recounting each narrative twice, once in *cuaderna vía* and once in lyric verse, the *serranas* create a sort of auto-*razo* with the lyric compositions and their *cuaderna vía* frame (Dagenais, 1991, 255). The lyrics are a contextualized performance marked as different by meter, and the *cuaderna vía* verses provide a fictional life experience upon which the poems are based, thus giving the lyric a mimetic quality greater than if they were by themselves, which creates the illusion of poetic composition.⁶ In this sense the *serranas* are an exploration of the connection between the lyric and life in which the Archpriest takes on the roles of both poet-protagonist and moralizing commentator. This study explores the relationship between the *cuaderna vía* and lyric versions of the *serranas*. By juxtaposing *cuaderna vía* and lyric versions of each encounter and through the use of unresolved contraries, the *serranas* teach the *pastourelle* while at the same time subverting it and presenting it as a sinful and morally base poetic form, even as they allow readers to take pleasure in it.

The *pastourelle* was an established and even theorized poetic form by 1330, the year of the first version of the *Libro*. In the *pastourelle*, a knight speaks with a shepherdess, the outcome of which can be anything from consensual sex, to rape, to a witty rebuff.⁷ A thoroughly courtly form, much of its attraction stems from its ability to make fun of both courtly and rustic people as it places its characters in an erotically charged situation with few social restrictions, and with the ever-present possibility of sex or violence. Andreas Capellanus condemns relations between nobles and rustics in *De amoris* around 1190 because rustics are not capable of refined love and he asserts that should a knight find a peasant woman attractive, the most expedient action is to rape her to avoid the entanglement of love with such a person (222). The following chapter condemns the exchange of money for sex (223). Raimon Vidal describes the *pastourelle* in his *Razos de Trobar* around 1210, as does the anonymous author of the

⁴ All citations are from Gybbon-Monypenny’s edition.

⁵ Francisco Rico speculates that the *Libro* may have originally been a sort of extended *razo* for Galician-Portuguese poetry. See Morros for an examination of the Galician-Portuguese lyric in the *Libro*.

⁶ Pseudo-autobiographies interspersed with lyrics have precedents in European and Arabic literature. Gybbon-Monypenny’s study on autobiography in the *Libro de buen amor*, demonstrates that the lyric is inherently autobiographical and that works of lyric poetry framed by prose are common in the European tradition. Castro (386-417) Lida de Malkiel (1941, 1959) and, more recently, Wacks (157-93) point to the *Libro*’s formal similarities to the Arabic and Hebrew *maqamat* and Hamilton traces the influence of Andalusí courtly literature on the *Libro*.

⁷ For the origins of the *serranilla*, see Marino, particularly chapter two, (17-41). She concludes that it is “el resultado del encuentro de lo popular y lo culto, influido en gran parte por la lírica provenzal” (41).

De doctrina de compondre dictats in the mid thirteenth century (Marshall, 129). By the 14th century the *pastourelle* was being parodied and reshaped in France, as Smith has shown. Indeed, for a parody to be effective, the work being parodied must already be very familiar to the audience. It was certainly well known in Iberia, given the strong presence of Provençal troubadours in Castilian courts from the first half of the twelfth century until beyond the reign of Alfonso X. Indeed, the lyric of the fourth *serrana* appears to be an adaptation of a mid-thirteenth-century text, as Marino documents (44-46).⁸

The first two *serranas*, which recount the Archpriest's encounters with Chata and later Gadea in the Guadarrama mountains, subvert the *pastourelle* by inverting the lyric's usual power dynamic. They place the lost, hungry and weak Archpriest with powerful aggressive and sexually voracious mountain women who dominate him physically. Vasvari calls them an anti-*pastourelle* for this reason (2005, 375). They also put the Archpriest in a space not familiar to him but all too familiar to readers of lyric poetry. Indeed, they are funny because the Archpriest does not know the rules of the form while the women appear to, and the audience certainly would have (Filios 150-51). Chata and Gadea demand courtly compliments and promises of gifts in exchange for sex even though the Archpriest is motivated by cold and hunger rather than lust. In the first encounter, he loses his mule and is caught in bad weather, an inversion of the usual setting of a love lyric, which typically takes place during spring and in a pretty place: "de nieve e de granizo non ove do me asconder" (SG951c). The loss of his mount strips him of his courtly or aristocratic status. Chata demands a toll from him and when he makes a vague promise of gifts, she urges him to be more specific since she will only take what she wants from him anyway: "consejo te que te abengas antes de que te despoje" (SG956d). When he promises her a pin and a brooch, she takes possession of him by throwing him over her shoulder and carrying him to her hut. In the second encounter his experience with Gadea, whom he encounters on his return from Segovia, is similar. Having learned from his experience with Chata, he offers gifts from the outset. However, her response is violent: "'Semajas me', diz, 'sandío, que así te conbidas; / non te llegues a mí, ante te lo comidas; / si non, yo te faré que mi cayada midas'" (SG976 a-c). He makes the mistake of testing her and she hits him in the ear. Having overpowered him, she takes him to her hut, calculating that her lover, Ferruzo, will be gone. He asks for food before sleeping with her and she becomes angry after his poor performance: "Assañó se contra mí; rrescelé e fui covarde" (SG984d). Unable to satisfy her, he convinces her to let him go and arrives at the village of Ferreros before dark.

⁸ See Deyermond 1970, 62-64. William IX, the so-called first troubadour, participated in military campaigns in Castile and Leon in the 1120s, and Marcabru, author of the first extant *pastourelle*, was in the court of Alfonso VII of Castile in the 1130s (Barton 141). For studies on provençal troubadours in Castile, see: Alvar and Mila y Fontanals. Deyermond posits that one of the purposes of the *Libro* may have been to develop Castilian verse (1980, 114) See Gerli (2001) and Pérez López for studies on the *Libro*'s influence in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

In spite of the almost slap-stick parody of the *pastourelle*, the first two *serrana* lyrics are presented as a true telling of the fictional lived experience of the *Libro*. Both *cuaderna vía* accounts end with promises of songs about what has just been recounted and the lyrics that follow correspond to them in their essential details. The Archpriest encounters aggressive shepherdesses in mountain passes in cold weather. The names of people and places are the same, as are their actions. The Archpriest seeks food and shelter and the women force him to promise gifts before initiating sex. As lyrics, both present more dialogue between characters.⁹ The *cuaderna vía* version of the first *serrana* ends *in medias res* with the Archpriest over Chata's shoulder, which saves him the trouble of walking uphill, and readers are left to assume what then happens to him. The lyric is more explicit. The Archpriest agrees to sleep with Chata and even comes away from the experience thinking he made a good deal: “Por la muñeca me priso, / ove de fazer quanto quiso; / creo que fiz buen barato” (SG971e-g). In contrast, the second encounter ends badly for Gadea. In the *cuaderna vía* version she becomes angry at the Archpriest for his poor performance in bed. The lyric version of the second encounter ends with the *serrana* regretting her dalliance with the Archpriest: “¡Roín, gaho, envernizo! / ¡Commo fiz loca demanda / en dexar por ti el vaquerizo” (SG992d-f)! This echoes the Archpriest's own regret of his *loca demanda* for having left home at the beginning of his journey through the mountains: “fui a provar la sierra e fiz loca demanda: / luego perdí la mula, non fallava vianda; / quien más de pan de trigo busca sin seso anda” (SG950b-d). The Archpriest wanders away from home and quickly regrets having left the safety of his familiar surroundings. Gadea leaves her herd and forgets her lover to sleep with the same traveler, something she also regrets. Courtly and rustic worlds make for an unhappy mix that alternates between comic, violent and sad in turns, and exposes the courtly fantasy of the *pastourelle*. The first two *serrana* lyrics are presented as true accounts of the Archpriest's fictional life experience since they relate the same events as their *cuaderna vía* frame. However, they render false the idea that docile and attractive shepherdesses are wandering the countryside waiting to be swept off their feet by knights. It is the Archpriest who is knocked over.

Unlike the (fictionally) autobiographical first two *serranas*, the third and fourth are exemplary, as listeners are explicitly directed to understand them as such. The Archpriest steps slightly out of the autobiographical frame to offer commentary and moral advice in spite of his own blame-worthy conduct. The *cuaderna vía* frame contains almost none of the details related in the lyric. Instead, it casts its corresponding lyric as a didactic text and provides explicit instructions to listeners as to how it is to be understood, acting more as an *accessus* than as a separate account of

⁹ All *serrana* lyrics in the *Libro* contain more dialogue than their *cuaderna vía* versions, though the difference is most striking in the third and fourth, which contain no dialogue at all in the *cuaderna vía* verses. The proportions of dialogue in the *cuaderna vía* and lyric versions of each *serrana* are as follows: *serrana* 1, 44.4% and 52.7%; *serrana* 2, 33.33% and 60.4%; *serrana* 3, 0% and 90.4%; *serrana* 4, 0% and 74%.

the adventure. Like the first two *serranas*, the third and fourth employ similar imagery in often opposing ways. They are centered on negotiations for gifts and the vocabulary for marriage, specifically the verb *cassar*, which signifies differently in each encounter. Menga Llorente, the third *serrana*, appears to actually want to marry, although the Archpriest clearly does not, as the *cuaderna vía* verses establish. On the other hand, Alda de la Tablada, the fourth *serrana*, uses *cassar* as a euphemism for sex paid for with gifts. Despite the seemingly different intentions, both women desire similar shiny or brightly colored jewelry and clothing, in order to enhance their physical appearance and social status. As with language in general in the *Libro*, words and gifts are imperfect signs, signifying differently in different contexts.

The third *serrana* is explicitly cast as a warning to women who might be tricked by false suitors. Without the *cuaderna vía* stanzas that precede it, the lyric could be interpreted as a relatively unproblematic rustic marriage song, as Tate notes (222). In four *cuaderna vía* stanzas the Archpriest describes a mountain girl, whom he encounters at El Cornejo cutting wood on a Monday morning. Describing her as *lerda*, he recounts how he deceives and seduces her. Her bad judgment is an example of behavior to be blamed and avoided:

Por oír de mal rrecabdo, dexós de su lavor;
Coidós que me traía rrodando en derredor;
Olvidó se la fabla del buen consejador

Que dize a su amigo, queriéndol conssejar:
“Non dexes lo ganado por lo que as de ganar;
si dexas lo que tienes por mintroso coidar,
non avrás lo que quieres, poder te has engañar.” (SG994b-995d)

Forgetting good advice and risking what she already has, Menga falls victim to both his deceiving words and her own vanity, and is seduced by a false man who convinces her to leave her work. The lesson of her negative example is reinforced by the easily remembered advice of the good friend.

All the details of the encounter are recounted in the lyric. In nine seven-verse stanzas written in octosyllabic verses, the Archpriest happens upon a shepherdess in the same place on the first day of the week.¹⁰ She asks him what he wants and why he wanders. When he answers that he is looking for a wife she responds positively, and begins the negotiations herself:

Dixe: “Ando por esta sierra,
do querría cassar de grado.”
Ella dixo: “Non lo yerra

¹⁰ According to Pérez López, this indicates the mozarabic cultural milieu of the *Libro*, since the mozarabic liturgical week begins on Monday (244).

el que aquí es cassado;
busca e fallarás rrecabdo.” (SG998 c-g)

Although their initial exchange appears to be earnest, his reply to her question about what he knows about mountain life includes a long list of his abilities, some of which would be expected of a *serrano*, such as chopping wood, felling trees, hunting, fighting and defending against wolves. Some would likely have produced snickers from listeners for their sexual double meaning, like churning butter and making cream, as Lida de Malkiel (1961, 41) and Haywood (117) have shown. Menga is the only one who does not understand the joke and, clearly interested, she replies with a demand for gifts:

Diz “Da me un prendedero
que sea de bermejo paño,
e da me un bel pandero,
e seis anillos de estaño,
un çimarrón disantero,
garnacho para entre el año,
e non fables en engaño.

“dam çarcillos de hevilla,
de latón bien rreluziente;
e da me toca amarilla,
bien listada en la fruenta,
çapatas fasta rrodilla,
e dirá toda la gente:
‘¡Bien casó Menga Lloriente!’” (SG1003-1004)

Her list of gifts ends with a reference to her increased stature among her own community as a result of her new marriage and wardrobe. The fact that she believes the gifts she has requested will increase her social status and that she involves her family indicates that for her the negotiations are for legitimate marriage. *Cassar* is not necessarily used as a euphemism for illicit sex, although it is not entirely clear if he sleeps with her before leaving and plans to abandon her. This question would have been implied by the performers and would have been a topic of discussion for listeners. However, the ever-bookish *Libro* resolves much of this ambiguity interpreting the lyric as an example of negative conduct for women looking for a suitor (Lida de Malkiel 1961, 43). The *cuaderna vía* frame leaves little doubt that she has been stupid to believe a false suitor. This is further reinforced by the encounter with Alda that follows.

The fourth *serrana*, Alda de Tablada, also presents significant differences between *cuaderna vía* frame and lyric. While Menga Llorente is a negative example of a

gullible woman, Alda, the fourth *serrana*, is cast as an example for men who might frequent prostitutes by the allegorical description of Alda in the *cuaderna vía* verses that precede the lyric, which is otherwise conventional. The narrator makes this clear to his implied male listeners: “los que quieren casar se aquí non sean sordos” (SG1014d). The warning that follows is an allegorical description of the *serrana*, whom he portrays in nine stanzas in manuscript G and fourteen in S, using grotesque terms that equate her with several animals and with sin in general: her head is large, hair short and black, eyes sunken, ears big, neck hairy, nose and mouth large (S1010-1020 and G1010-1015). These animal references are a reflection of her moral character and not a realistic physical description (Haywood 72-73). Indeed, there is almost no way this passage can be understood literally. The *serrana* is bestial in moral terms. She is a figure of sin and animal desires far from the civilizing influence of town and church. She is even equated with the apocalypse: “En el Apolipsi, Sant Joan Evangelista / non vido tal figura nin de tan mala vista” (SG1011ab).¹¹ The term *figura* can mean not only an image or representation, but also what it symbolizes, allegory.¹² The physical description is not a real likeness of a wretched, misshapen animal presented as a pastiche, but rather a symbol of sin and the negative attributes of the animals mentioned. Taken literally, this description is unrealistic and grotesque, but as an allegorical representation of her moral character, it is a “símbolo alegórico del vicio, el demonio, y el pecado”, as Cano Ballesta notes (7).

The lyric provides the details of the encounter and an idealized description of Alda, who is portrayed in positive terms: “fallé una *serrana* / hermosa, loçana / e bien colorada” (SG1024 c-e). He addresses her in a courtly manner: “Omillo me, bella (SG1025b),” and even uses *vos* rather than *tú* when asking for the ambiguous term *possada*:

Yol dixé: “Frío tengo,
e por eso vengo
a vós, fermosura;
quered por mesura
oy dar me posada.” (SG1026)

She rebuffs him, but he insists, complaining that he is cold, and she informs him that to enter her hut, he will have to either (euphemistically) marry or pay her: “Pariente,

¹¹ This equine imagery connotes the four horsemen of the apocalypse and the whore of Babylon, as Giles notes (174). Hidalgo maintains that the equine imagery throughout four *serranas* shows the satanic nature of the women.

¹² See Auerbach’s article, “Figura”. According to the Oxford Latin Dictionary *figura* is “A form of speech departing from the straightforward and obvious, figure of speech [...] an oblique mode of expression, insinuation, innuendo.” (Glare) The Tentative Dictionary of Medieval Spanish lists “símbolo” as well as “ejemplo, cuento, fábula” as definitions (341).

mi choça / el que en ella posa / con migo desposa / o me da soldada (SG1027 b-e)".¹³ He agrees to pay, though he does not actually give her money and, as she takes him by the hand, her response echoes her portrait in the preceding *cuaderna vía* verses: "Trota con migo" (SG1029). Given her description in the *cuaderna vía* verses, this line takes on a particularly sinister meaning. As they trot to her hut, they take on the morally base qualities of beasts. She allows him to rest and warm up, and feeds him the worst meal of any of the four encounters: dark bread, bad wine, salted meat and cheese, and after he has eaten, she informs him that she's available to those who give her gifts:

Quien dones me diere
 Quales yo pediere,
 Avrá bien de cena,
 E lechiga buena,
 Que nol coste nada. (SG1033)

When he asks her to name a more exact price, she responds with a list which is very similar to what Menga Llorente demanded:

"Pues, dam una çinta
 bermeja, bien tinta,
 e buena camisa
 fecha a mi guisa,
 con su collarada.

"E dam buenas sartas
 de estaño, e fartas
 e da me halía
 de buena valía,
 pelleja delgada

"E dam buena toca
 listada de cota,
 e da me çapatás
 de cuello bien altas,
 de pieça labrada.

"Con aquestas joyas
 —quiero que lo oyas—
 serás bien venido;
 serás mi marido,

¹³ According to Cano Ballesta, 'soldada' is the pay given to mercenaries, and other editors render the verse "*e dam grand soldada*", basing their readings on the Salamanca manuscript (4).

e yo tu velada.” (SG1035-1038)

Echoing the exhortation to listeners wishing to marry in the preceding *cuaderna vía* verses to not be deaf, Alda tells the Archpriest to hear her as she reaches the end of his list of gifts and describes their result. Unlike Menga Llorente, she makes no mention of any increase in social status among her community from her “marriage” and, imagines the two of them alone in their hut. Their union will not involve family or community. Moreover, she does not believe his promise to bring gifts on his return:

Serrana señora,
tanto algo agora
non trax, por ventura,
mas faré fiadura
para la tornada. (SG1039)

She quickly changes her tone and at the same time his description of her turns from pretty to ugly, *heda*. This happens not when she demands gifts in exchange for sex, but when she refuses to extend credit to the Archpriest, a willing though penniless client and partner in the blameworthy conduct condemned in the allegorical description of her:

Dixo me la heda:
“Do non ay moneda
non ay merchandía,
nin ay tan buen día,
nin cara pagada.”

“Non ay mercadero
bueno sin dinero;
e yo non me pago
del que nom da algo,
nin le do la posada.

“Nunca de omenaje
pagan ostalaje;
por dineros faze
omne quanto plaze,
cosa es provada.” (SG1040-1042)

She makes it clear that he will need to pay up front or leave. Her emphatic, three-stanza response ends the section and serves as the last word for her and for the

pastourelle in general. Furtive encounters between courtly men and rustic women in the wilderness are motivated first and foremost by money.

The promise of gifts for sex in all four *serranas* contrasts the first and third women in the *Libro*, the *dueña cuerda* and the *dueña encarrada*, whom the Archpriest unsuccessfully attempts to woo with poetry. Both are presented as wise, cultured and above being seduced by money: “es de buen costumbres, sossegada e queda; / non se podría vencer por pintada moneda” (SG79cd). Chata and Gadea both conquer the Archpriest physically and sexually, and their demands for gifts follow the conventions of the *pastourelle*, even if the Archpriest does not. The songs of Menga and Alda present their readers with a problem with no easy resolution. Alda is the practical application of the lesson derived from Menga Llorente's bad example. Both women, isolated in the mountains and leading hard lives of physical labor, want the luxuries and pretty clothes of the court. For both, relations with men are a means to material gain and increased social status, and both encounters employ similar imagery and the word *cassar*. While the outward signs of the two encounters are similar, their meanings and the intentions of the actors are different. Honest but naïve and slightly greedy women are likely to be duped, but in this case at least, the astute woman is a prostitute. Gifts can be a sign of blinding greed and foolishness in an otherwise innocent but gullible woman or of calculating meretriciousness. Similarly *cassar* and other vocabulary associated with marriage can be meant either sincerely or as a euphemism for prostitution in otherwise very similar contexts. With both Menga and Alda, the Archpriest plays the role of both villain and moralist, seducing Menga through trickery and willingly paying Alda's price for sex if only she would allow him to pay later. He both warns of sin and shows how to do it.

The lessons presented by the *serranas*, both in love and in poetry, are cautionary, even as they explore the possibilities of the lyric. Would-be lovers are warned of the potential violence of encounters between courtly and rustic people in the first two *serranas*, which leave the Archpriest beaten and the second *serrana* unsatisfied and regretful. They expose the *pastourelle* as a courtly fantasy even as they present the lyrics as truthful on a meta-fictional level. *Serranas* three and four show the corrupting power of greed in love, first with Menga Llorente, who is a negative example for women and then with Alda, a negative example for men who might pay for sex. While the four lyrics present examples to be imitated, especially in the first two which make the conventions of the genre explicit by parodying it, ultimately, the *pastourelle* is portrayed as a fallen literary form that plays on people's sinful nature by titillating with the possibility of illicit sex outside the civilizing confines of the court and city. It is neither a verisimilar account of a romantic conquest in the country, nor a fictional example of good conduct. The only ethical reading, explicitly stated in *serranas* three and four, is as a negative example.

As is true for other sections of the *Libro*, the ethical and moral choices in the *serranas* are woven into linguistic and hermeneutical problems. Understanding how to act properly in the world and how to read properly are the same problem, and

misreading may lead to misdeed or vice versa. While *exempla* like the Greeks and Romans or the King and the Astrologers toward the beginning of the book play with the misinterpretation of hand gestures or the stars, the *serranas*, like the doña Endrina episode or the battle between *Cuaresma* and *Carnal* (SG1067-1127), highlight the importance of genre. This is particularly true of the *serranas*, which are a lesson in applied poetry. The Archpriest leaves his home and enters into a well-established poetic genre and lives the consequences. The journey carries him not only through mountains, but through several possible interpretations for both men and women that guide ethical conduct and poetic composition. These lessons are informed by the *pastourelle*, which is itself reshaped by the parody of them. The *serranas* are a stern warning against the questionable pleasures of the lyric, but this does not preclude enjoying them as entertaining stories and poems. In this sense, they are intimately related to the more overtly contrarian and didactic sections of the rest of the *Libro*.

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