

GONZALO RODRÍGUEZ DE ESCOBAR, Castilian translation of PERO MENINO, *Livro de falcoaria* [*Book of Falconry*]

In Spanish, manuscript on paper

Spain (Castile), c. 1490-1510

iv (paper) + 10 + xxxii (paper) folios on paper (watermark similar to Briquet no. 11136, Main: Perpignan, 1497 and no. 11165, Main: Perpignan, 1505), modern foliation in dark ink, lower outer rectos, 1, 1bis, 2-9, lacking quires at both ends (collation i<sup>10</sup>), no ruling visible (justification 176-182 x 134-135 mm.), written in brown ink in a gothic cursive hand with some hybrida characteristics on twenty-seven to thirty long lines, guide letters for initials, two- to three-line spaces left for initials, two diagrams within the text (ff. 1v and 9v), later pen trials in the margins, text stained and smudged at the top of f. 9v, with some loss of legibility, paper slightly corroded under drawing on f. 9v, otherwise in good condition. Bound in modern dark brown blind-stamped leather, with a smooth spine bearing a green leather label, gilt-stamped, "LIBRO / DE / LA CAZA / DE / LAS AVES," marbled endpapers, slipcase covered in light brown cloth. Dimensions 208 x 154-156 mm.

Exceeding rare manuscript witnesses to a groundbreaking and influential Portuguese falconry treatise, written for Fernando I of Portugal, this manuscript contains the bulk of the only surviving copy of an early Castilian translation. The manuscript, once bound with Madrid, Biblioteca Real, MS II-1370, is without an export license and offered for sale here only in Spain. Two diagrams accompany recipes for treating the ailments and wounds of the birds of prey with which the fashionable aristocracy went hunting during the late Middle Ages.

## PROVENANCE

1. Evidence of script and watermarks indicates that this book was produced in Spain, in the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century, c. 1490-1510. Originally bound with other falconry treatises (see no. 2, below), this volume, practical and relatively unadorned, was very likely made for the use of a falconer.
2. Once bound with Madrid, Biblioteca Real, ms. II-1370 as part of a more complete copy of Gonzalo Rodríguez de Escobar's Castilian translation of the *Livro de falcoaria*, the two codices had been split and bound separately by 1877, when the first cataloguer of the manuscript, José Gutiérrez de la Vega, reported that the two codices, both housed in the Biblioteca Real at the time, ought to be rejoined (1877, p. clxxi). Following its portion of the Rodríguez de Escobar text, the Madrid manuscript contains additional recipes and material on falconry, including Rodríguez de Escobar's copy of Pero López de Ayala's *Libro de la caza de las aves* (see Text, below).

Annotations and foliation in black ink were likely added by Gutiérrez de la Vega; his initials follow an identification at the top of f. 1: "aquí comienza este fragmento de 10 fojas que continúan al i[nicio] del codice 'Caça de aues' (J. G.)."

3. This fragment went missing from the Biblioteca Real between 1923 and 1929, when it was identified among the inventory of a Madrid bookseller, Pedro Vindel Álvarez, having been stolen and sold, apparently, by an employee of the library (Lapa, 1931, p. viii and Tilander, 1936, p. 236).

4. Offered for sale in June 1996 by Fernando Durán (p. 54 in the catalogue); purchased in the 1996 sale by Bilbao antiquary Pedro Ugalde.

## TEXT

ff. 1-9v, beginning imperfectly, “// bornjes[?] et bahares et alfaneques et asy como son desvariados plumajes asy son vnos mas naturales de este dolor escrito en este capitulo ... Et asy lo mantiene fasta que sea bien sano”; f. 1bis, *Capitulo xiiij, de los pjes finchados de lo [sic] falcones*, incipit, “[A]contece a los falcones que les finchan los pjes por desuvariados rrazones ... a comer fecha por esta gujsa que dicho he en el capitulo que fabla de la pjerna quebrada del falcon et guarda//.”

The *Livro de falcoaria* [*Book of Falconry*] of Pero Menino, written in the middle of the fourteenth century, appears here in the Castilian translation of Gonzalo Rodríguez de Escobar, written in the first half of the fifteenth century. This volume's text commences near the beginning of chapter twelve and concludes near the end of chapter twenty-two. Another fragment of the text, preserved in Madrid, Biblioteca Real, ms. II-1370, picks up precisely where this one ends and was part of the same original volume (see Provenance, above). Rodríguez de Escobar's translation survives only in these two fragments; the beginning of the translation is now lost. There is one critical edition of the original Portuguese *Livro* (Lapa, 1931) and, more recently, one of Rodríguez de Escobar's Castilian translation (Fradejas Rueda, 2010), based on the present manuscript and the Madrid manuscript.

Pero Menino was a Portuguese nobleman and falconer to King Fernando I of Portugal (reigned 1367-1383), at whose command he wrote his *Book of Falconry*. Falconry was a subject of shared interest among the Portuguese and Castilian aristocracy of the late Middle Ages, and it was not long before Menino's treatise was translated from the Portuguese. The Castilian statesman, historian, and poet Pero López de Ayala (1332-1407) was the first to make *Falconry* available to a Castilian audience. While a prisoner in Portugal (c. 1385-1388) he wrote his *Libro de la caza de las aves* (*Book on Hunting with Birds of Prey*), in which he translated and adapted Menino's material within a longer text, presenting all the available and correct knowledge on falconry. Not long after, in the first half of the fifteenth century, Gonzalo Rodríguez de Escobar produced a second, more faithful, translation of Menino's text, that of present manuscript, at the request of his lord, Pero Martínez de Guzmán.

In his *Book of Falconry*, Menino was breaking new ground. Like all falconry treatises produced up until the thirteenth century, *Falconry* is essentially a recipe book, offering treatments for the diseases and wounds of the birds of prey used in hunting. But the recipes in *Falconry* were new, completely unattested in previous treatises on the subject. This was a deliberate choice on Menino's part. Writing of earlier treatises, he dismissed their recipes as dubious, even worthless or harmful. Whether on the strength of this dismissal or the alternatives he was able to offer, his own remedies were widely taken up, as his treatise became the basic source for treating the ailments of birds of prey in the Iberian Peninsula.

Menino's treatise presents remedies clearly and consistently, perhaps another reason his treatise became so influential. Following an introduction in which he explained the purpose of his work, the book consists of twenty-four chapters, each of which first presents symptoms of ailments and then follows with their treatments.

## LITERATURE

Alvar, Carlos. *Traducciones y traductores: Materiales para una historia de la traducción en Castilla durante la Edad Media*, Madrid, 2010. [see specifically ch. 5.1, "Tratados de caza," pp. 156-159]

Fradejas Rueda, José Manuel. "La versión castellana del *Livro de falcoaria* de Pero Menino de Gonzalo Rodríguez de Escobar," *Incipit* 30 (2010), pp. 49-109.

Gutiérrez de la Vega, José. *Bibliografía venatoria española*, vol. 1, Madrid, 1877.

Lapa, Rodrigues, ed. *Livro de Falcoaria de Pero Menino*, Coimbra, 1931.

Tilander, Gunnar. "Acerca del *Libro de falcoaria* de Pero Menino," *Revista de Filología Española* 22 (1936), pp. 255-274.

## ONLINE RESOURCES

López de Ayala, Pedro. *Libro de la caza de las aves*, Biblioteca Virtual Miguel de Cervantes  
[http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/servlet/SirveObras/01482307212363781870035/p0000001.htm#I\\_2\\_](http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/servlet/SirveObras/01482307212363781870035/p0000001.htm#I_2_)

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