

Fifteenth-Century Hebrew Literature: Some Reflections on Textual Transmission for a Modern Edition

Arturo Prats UCM

One of the things that remains to be done in medieval Hebrew philology is the preparation of an edition of the literary corpus (both poetry and prose) from fifteenth-century Iberia, particularly the Kingdom of Aragon. These poets belonged to a literary movement that called itself “circle or group of poets”¹ that was organized in the city of Zaragoza around the figure of Shelomo de Piera² and his disciple, Don Vidal ben Labi³. Among the members of this group were many of the foremost Jewish intellectuals of the day, such as Ashtruk Rimokh⁴ (who converted to Christianity and took the name Françesc de Sant Jordi). One of the youngest members of the group, Shelomo Bonafed⁵, kept the literary legacy of its founders alive for many years after they converted to Christianity at the time of the Disputation of Tortosa⁶. This corpus of prose and poetry is one of the most

¹ About this movement, see: Ángel Sáenz-Badillos. “Creación poética de los judíos aragoneses” in Aragón Sefarad (ed. M. A. Moti Dolader et al. Zaragoza: Diputación de Zaragoza, 2004), 467–83 and Raymond P. Scheindlin, “Secular Hebrew Poetry in fifteenth century Spain,” in *Crisis and Creativity in the Sephardic World 1391-1648* (ed. B. R. Gampel. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 25-37; “The Hebrew Qasida in Christian Spain,” in *Qasida Poetry in Islamic Asia and Africa* (ed. S. Sperl and C. Shackle. Leiden: Brill, 1996), 128-135.

² For this poet, see: Judit Targarona Borrás, “El diwan de Shelomo ben Meshulam de Piera. Estado de la cuestión,” in *Jewish Studies at the turn of the 20th century: proceedings of the 6th EAJS Congress, Toledo, July 1998* (ed. J. Targarona Borrás and A. Sáenz-Badillos; Leiden: Brill, 1999) 541–51; “Correspondencia literaria entre Vidal Abenvenist y Salomón de Piera según el diwān de De Piera.” in *Actes del II Congrés per a l'Estudi dels Jueus en Territoris de Llengua Catalana*. (Barcelona: Institut Europeu de la Mediterrània, 2005), 289-308. Judit Targarona and Tirza Vardi, “Literary Correspondence between Vidal Abenvenist and Solomon de Piera,” REJ 167 (2008): 405-509; Judit Targarona and Raymond P. Scheindlin, “Literary Correspondence between Vidal Benvenist ben Lavi and Solomon ben Meshulam de Piera,” REJ 100 (2001): 61–79.

³ Also Vidal (Yosef) Abenvenist ben Labi (Gonzalo) de la Caballeria. For this poet see: Targarona and Scheindlin, “Literary Correspondence,”; and specially Targarona and Vardi, “Vidal Abenvenist,” 410-412 regarding his name identification.

⁴ For this poet, see: Jefim Schirmann, and Ezra Fleischer, *The History of Hebrew Poetry in Christian Spain and Southern France [in Hebrew] Vol II* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1997), 614-617; Frank Talmage, “The Françesc de Sant Jordi-Solomon Bonafed Letters,” in *Studies in Mediaeval Jewish History and Literature* (ed. I. Twersky; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979), 337–64.

⁵ For this poet see: Abraham Gross, “Ha-mešorer Šelomoh Bonafed u-me'ora'ot doro,” in *The Frank Talmage Memorial Volume* (ed. B. D. Walfished. Haifa: Haifa University, 1993), 35–61; Ana María Bejarano Escanilla, *Shelomo Bonafed, poeta y polemista hebreo (s. XIV-XV)*. Ph.D Dissertation un-published at Universidad de Barcelona. 1989; “Šelomoh ben Rē'uben Bonafed poeta y polemista.” *Anuari de Filologia*. Sección E 14 (1991):87–101; and specially Ángel Sáenz-Badillos, “Šelomoh Bonafed at the crossroad of Hebrew and Romance Cultures.” in *Encuentros y desencuentros. Spanish-Jewish Cultural interaction throughout history* (ed. A. Doron et al. Tel Aviv: University Publishing Projects, 2000), 343–79; “Šelomoh Bonafed, último gran poeta de Sefarad, y la poesía hebrea,” *eHumanista* 2 (2002):1–22; “Strophic Poems in the diwān of Šelomoh Bonafed,” *Tē'udah* 19 (2003): 21-46.

⁶ The Disputation of Tortosa (1412–13) was an event orchestrated by Pope Benedict XIII and Yehoshua ha-Lorqui (Pablo de Santa María) to convert Jews of the kingdom through debate, and supported by King Fernando. Don Vidal ben Labi de la Caballeria converted during the Disputation and Shelomo de Piera probably did the same at about that time.

extensive from the Middle Ages and yet did not receive the attention it deserves from scholars until well into the twentieth century.

Although there are editions of some texts by authors such as Shelomo Bonafed, Shelomo de Piera and Vidal ben Labi,⁷ the majority of texts remain unpublished. In the second half of the twentieth century, there was increased interest in this literary period thanks to the work of scholars such as Ángel Sáenz-Badillos and Judit Targarona,⁸ among others,⁹ or, more recently, work such as that of Ram ben Shalom¹⁰ on Yom Tov ben Ḥana (Abenhanya). Unfortunately, to date, the number of texts that remain in manuscript is still greater than those that can be read in published editions. To make them known in their entirety is, as I commented at the beginning of this article, one of the future challenges of medieval Hebrew literary studies.

In planning the edition of a medieval Hebrew literary work, the models that serve as a reference are principally the editions of the great authors of the Andalusí golden age (mainly the eleventh and twelfth centuries) that were published at the end of the nineteenth century and especially the beginning of the twentieth¹¹. The so-called critical editions that were produced in the field of Hebrew philology were based (and still today many continue to be based) on Lachmanian models that seek to recover an author's supposed original, thereafter corrupted through successive manuscript copies. Thanks to these editions, we are able today to read the work of authors such as Yehuda ha-Levi¹², to cite one of the most iconic poets of al-Andalus, but in

⁷ Most of these editions are in the form of articles (see footnotes 2-4) or incorporated into other studies (as in the case of Yitshak Baer's *History of Jews in Christian Spain*. Tel Aviv: 'Am Oved 1945, revised and expanded 1959).

⁸ See footnotes 1-4.

⁹ We should also note the edition prepared by Matti Huss, Don Vidal Benvenist's *Melitsat 'Efer we-Dinah*, Studies and Critical Edition (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2003).

¹⁰ Ram Ben-Shalom, "*ha-Ḥatsran ke-shevet yehuda*": *ha-iggerot we-shirei ha-shebah le-ḥatsranim shel Yom Tov ben Ḥana, sofer kehilat Montalban she-bi-Sfarad*." in *OT LETOVA. Essays in Honor of Professor Tova Rossen* (ed. E. Yassif et al; *Journal for Hebrew and Israeli Literature and Culture Studies, El Prezente* 6 (2012), 196-224.

¹¹ See Tova Rosen and Eli Yassif, "The Study of Hebrew Literature of the Middle Ages: Major Trends and Goals," in *The Oxford Handbook of Jewish Studies* (ed. M. Goodman et al; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 241-294 see particularly 248ss. and Ángel Sáenz-Badillos, "El estudio de la poesía y la prosa hispanohebraica en los últimos cincuenta años," *MEAH* 50 (2001): 133-161.

¹² Rosen and Yassif, "Hebrew Literature," 251.

them the actual text in its physical medium, the manuscript codex, has been disregarded in favor of an “ideal” text, and they do not allow readers to see the specific context of these works and do not take into account their complex transmission process.¹³

During the twentieth century great progress was made in the edition of medieval works in the field of Romance philology. The growing interest in the popular lyric and above all in the epic prompted new questions about the methods for producing editions of texts. Until that point, classical philology proposed an “archeological” method of searching for an original for the works of Aristotle or Plato or even the text of the Bible, but could one search for the original of works like *El poema del Mio Cid* or *La Chanson de Roland*? How useful was it to try to find a supposed original of a poem that circulated, and even originated, in infinite variants, that “lived in the variant¹⁴”? These questions, which were voiced by authors such as Bernard Cerquiglini¹⁵, gave rise to a new approach to textual edition that no longer sought out the original but rather attempted to situate the text (the poem or the literary work) in general in its real context, focusing on the object of the manuscript, not so much as a mere physical medium for an “abstract” ideal text but as the format in which the work lived and which constituted it. Along the same lines, attention was paid to the transmission of the text and to its place within the manuscript as a whole artifact, and the search for an author’s “original” work divorced from its co-text came to be questioned. This approach to editions taken by “New Philology” has also been challenged by scholars such as John Degenais,¹⁶ who think that critical editions are not conducive to an understanding of medieval

¹³ For a consideration of the problems surrounding critical editions of medieval philosophical works in Hebrew and Arabic, see: Colette Sirat, “Les éditions critiques: un mythe?” in *Les problèmes posés par l’édition critique des textes anciens et médiévaux*. (ed. J. Hamesse; Louvain: Institut d’Études Médiévales, 1992), 159-171.

¹⁴ Ramon Menéndez Pidal said in reference to the epic genre that it “exists only in variants.” Cf. Bernard Cerquiglini, *In Praise of the Variant. A Critical History of Philology* (trans. B. Wing. Baltimor: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 38.

¹⁵ Cerquiglini, *In Praise of the Variant*.

¹⁶ John Degenais, *The Ethics of Reading in Manuscript Culture: Glossing the Libro de Buen Amor* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 3-29.

“scriptum” culture and that the only way to experience reading and literature as they were experienced in the Middle Ages is to study the manuscript artifact itself (the codex) directly.

In spite of these developments in the field of Romance literature, scholars of Hebrew literature continued to seek to produce an edition of the author’s recension original. In my current project, I attempt to take into account all of the aforementioned questions in order to find a way to edit these texts that does respect the manuscript culture to which they belong and reflects the complexity of their transmission.

In this article, I explore the stages of transmission that Hebrew literature produced in the fifteenth century went through as it was passed down to us today. This exploration will give the reader an idea of the problems involved in preparing a critical edition of this corpus and will allow us to reflect on some methodological issues.

As these texts circulated, they went through different stages or phases of transmission, during which their contents and form were altered, until at last they arrived at the form that they take today and that we can actually read. The first phase corresponds to the original format in which they emerged, as they were first composed, in the majority of cases as letters but also as notes, attachments to letters, booklets, etc. None of these original formats have survived.

The second phase, which I have called the “author’s recension,” consisted of the texts being copied from their original format into manuscripts by the author himself, who transformed and incorporated one or more selections of his writings in booklets. In the third phase, the texts were copied from these recensions or from the copies of compilers who were not the author, or even from an original, into other manuscripts wherein other works were

incorporated within a new co-text, making up new miscellanies or literary collections of poems and letters that constitute the manuscript corpus that has come down to us, although in a fragmentary form. The fourth and last phase corresponds to the copies and editions of some of these letters and poems in the modern or contemporary period.

As for the first phase, the original texts were created in the form of letters or as booklets appended to letters or even written on loose sheets of paper.¹⁷ It was not until after they had passed from hand to hand in this precarious format or had lain for a long time in chests when the authors themselves or other copyists compiled these texts and rewrote them to create new cultural artifacts. These original “loose sheets of paper” have not survived, but occasionally we can reconstruct the original format thanks to the fact that the sections were preserved (to a greater or lesser degree) in the versions copied in the authors’ recensions or in latter manuscript copies. This is the case with the signatures (*hatimot*) and other writing that was on the outer fold of a letter (*al ha-ketab*). In the letters that have been reconstructed from this period we find two basic types of literary structures, poem-letters and letters in prose. The letters in prose contain no poetry within their structure, although they might attach poems to the missive by copying them at the end of the letter itself. The poem-letters, on the other hand, include not only sections in prose, generally rhymed, but also poems; these are the most common form of literary correspondence among late-fourteenth-century and fifteenth-century authors. Judith Targarona and Raymond P. Scheindlin have described these literary

¹⁷ On the topic of the original text formats of the Romance *cancionero* poems, see the studies by Ana M. Gómez-Bravo, “A humana senhora que lhe disse”: Sobre la práctica social de la autoría y la noción de texto en el Cancionero General de Resende y la lírica cancioneril ibérica,” *La Corónica* 32.1 (2003): 43-64; “Memorias y Archivos. Modelos de Producción textual y antologías poéticas del siglo XV,” *Cancionero General* 2 (2004): 53-87.

structures on the basis of the correspondence between Shelomo de Piera and Don Vidal ben Labi¹⁸.

The original letters were addressed to specific contemporaries of the author with whom he carried on a correspondence or wished to, although the letters were probably read publicly¹⁹ in various contexts (synagogues, places of study, the homes of prominent people, meetings among friends, etc.) and were even written with the intention of circulating them in the communities to which they were sent, as in the case of Shelomo Bonafed's letters connected to the satire depicting the *Zaragoza aljama*²⁰. In addition to letters addressed to specific people there is a particular genre of letters that is amply represented in this literary corpus, the so-called letters of recommendation or introduction, in Hebrew, *'iggerot orḥiyyot*. These literary epistles are highly wrought and were written to be presented by their carrier in communities other than his own or to different people or communal institutions with the purpose of vouching for the intentions of the carrier and thus helping him obtain what he was seeking, normally assistance in collecting for dowries for marriageable daughters²¹ or in finding them husbands, or simply to introduce the carrier in a new community that he was visiting for some reason. These letters were normally written by a well-known figure or the rabbi of the community of origin and signed by another respected individual from that community or a nearby one, with the possible addition of the names of further people.

In the second phase of transmission, these texts were compiled and written out, frequently by the author himself (as in the case of Shelomo

¹⁸ Targarona and Scheindlin, "Literary Correspondence," 70–71.

¹⁹ Eleazar Gutwirth, "Hebrew Letters, Hispanic Mail: Communication Among Fourteenth-Century Aragon Jewry," in *Communication in the Jewish Diaspora. The Pre-Modern World*. (ed. S. Menache. Leiden: Brill, 1996), 257–82.

²⁰ Also known as Bonafed's dispute or polemic with the leaders of the Zaragoza aljama, thanks to J. Schirmann's edition: Jefim Schirmann, "*Ha-pulmus šel Šelomoh Bonafed be-nikbedei Saragosa*," *Kobez 'al-yad* 4 (1946):8–64.

²¹ E. Gutwirth cites Y. Baer in his article on Rodrigo Cota (Eleazar Gutwirth, "On the Background to Cota's Epitalamio burlesco," *Romanische Forschungen*, 97 (1985): 1-14, note 20. He makes reference to a text about the founding of a charitable brotherhood in Zaragoza to raise money for dowries for poor and orphaned girls.

Bonafed and Shelomo de Piera), first in the form of collections of poems or “booklets” intended to be addressed to a particular person or to circulate among a group of people, and second in the form of *cancioneros* (manuscripts that include collections of Romance poetry and prose by different authors and that constitute the fifteenth century’s lyrical format *par excellence*). These recensions also included letters and poems by other authors with whom the first author corresponded, forming what scholars in the field call “cycles”—that is, groups of letters and poems that were exchanged between two or more authors or groups of texts on a common theme that were addressed to the same recipient. In this way, the original letters were transformed into new texts by the authors themselves, sometimes changing the original meaning of the letters.

We find a good example of this in two of the letters in rhymed prose that belong to the cycle of letters exchanged by Shelomo Bonafed and Senior ben Meir. Both letters—one by Bonafed and the other by Senior ben Meir—have been preserved in MS Mich. 155,²² which contains a version that is very close to the recension that Bonafed made of his work; another version of the same two letters is preserved in MS Sasson 590,²³ which presents a different recension that, as we will see, is closer to the original letters.

In the heading of the cycle contained in MS Mich. 155, Bonafed explains the circumstances surrounding his writing of the poems that he includes and the prose texts that he wants to present to Senior ben Meir:

“And when I saw, a long time ago, that the poets Don Vidal Benvenist, blessed be his memory, and Don Vidal ben Labi, brought their poems before the sage R. Senior, I felt a writer’s

²² Hereafter referred to as Mich. 155. This manuscript is held in the Bodleian Library in Oxford and is described in: Neubauer, Adolphe., and Cowley, A. E. *Catalogue of the Hebrew Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library and in the College Libraries of Oxford*. Vol 2. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1886-1906), n° 1984 p. 670-678. With addenda in Beit-Arie, Malachi et al., *Catalogue of the Hebrew Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library: Supplement of Addenda and Corrigenda to Vol. I (A. Neubauer’s Catalogue)* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 359.

²³ Hereafter referred to as Sasson 590. This manuscript is held at the Bodleian Library in Oxford (Ox. Hebre. 184) and is described in: David S. Sasson, *’Ohel David: Descriptive Catalogue of the Hebrew and Samaritan Manuscripts in the Sassoon Library*, London (2 vol.) (London: Oxford University Press, H. Milford, 1932), 461-470.

jealousy and I followed their footsteps with letters full of amorous words and pleasing poems and I imagined that maybe God blessed them because of the described theme, since they had been inspired by a spirit of grace to compose poems about him (Senior) and to exaggerate the beauty of his affairs and his compositions when this sage worthy of being clothed in the tunic of their praise appeared before them. For this reason, in spite of having grown old and being now gray in the art of composing verses, I came to this good hill, I sharpened my kidneys and my thoughts and I based these verses on the columns of their praise and I sent them to the aforementioned R. Senior in order to discover if my literary offering pleased him..." (Mich. 155 fols. 47v and 48r).

As we can see, this is a literary cycle in which Bonafed seeks to compete with other poets by sending his "offering" in the form of verses to R. Senior. Bonafed incorporates these poems into his recension and also includes another prose letter which he begins thus:

"And when I heard it said that this sage desired to see how much talent I had for artistic prose, where rhyming is not necessary nor weighing thought in the balance, after having seen some of my metered poems, the breath of his desire blew in me and lifted me to my words' feet to run like a deer through the mountains of his high praise. I presented myself to him and began to say ..." (Mich. 155 fol. 49v)

In addition to this letter, Bonafed also includes the response from Senior ben Meir. These two letters are the ones that have also survived in another version in MS Sasson 590. There is a significant difference between the two versions. In the version preserved in MS Sasson 590, there is no similar opening, since here it is not a literary "offering" but something less poetic. The literary structure of the letters, written in florid rhymed prose, is identical in both versions, but MS Sasson 590 includes a section from each of them that is not in MS Mich. 155 and that changes the meaning. In the first letter, addressed by Bonafed to Senior, the main subject of the section in question is a legal consultation regarding the status of the 'Aguna,²⁴ and in the second letter, R. Senior ben Meir apologizes for not being able to

²⁴ In Hebrew, "tied" or "anchored." See: Ruth 1:13. According to halakhah, it is the marital status of a married woman who for whatever reason is separated from her husband but is not divorced nor a widow. See: Menachem Elon, "Agunah," EJ 2nd ed., vol. 1: 510-520.

provide an appropriate response to the question posed to him, since he does not have access to his books, which have been destroyed (probably during the confiscations of books that occurred following the Disputation of Tortosa²⁵) and is not confident that he can settle the issue without them:

“That is why I have not been able to assume the responsibility of pronouncing on *halakha*, especially after my sky toppled down to my ground and I lost, at the time of the destruction (*sha'at ha-shemad*), three books (*telata sedarim*)²⁶ with Rashi's and Nachmanides's commentaries, and I was left with only some study books (*limudiyut*) that were saved from the fire.” (Sasson 590. 222–23)

From one recension to the next, the meaning of the texts changes. Whereas in the recension in MS Mich. 155 we are dealing with literary texts, in the version in MS Sasson 590 we have two letters in which a message is sent requesting information, which the recipient is unable to provide and therefore sends his regrets. The letters in MS Sasson 590 preserve a text that is closer to the first phase, and Bonafed used these same texts in the second phase (removing the entire section about the request for assistance in resolving a legal question and leaving only the sections that seemed to him to have greater “aesthetic” value) to incorporate them into a literary cycle intended to show “how much talent [he] had for artistic prose,” as he says in the opening he wrote to introduce the cycle in MS Mich. 155.

As in this case, in the case of other poets like Shelomo de Piera, the headings of the letters and poems are essentially what makes them literary pieces, by becoming an integral part of each unit of poetry or prose and contextualizing each work and each cycle in the literary miscellany. These headings in Hebrew²⁷, written in first person and frequently composed in a

²⁵ See Eleazar Gutwirth and Miguel Ángel Motis Dolader, “Twenty-Six Jewish Libraries from Fifteenth-Century Spain,” *The Library: The Transactions of the Bibliographical Society* 18 (1996): 27-53.

²⁶ He seems to be referring to copies of “orders” of the Talmud.

²⁷ We should point out the difference between these poetry compilations and the *diwanim* of the classical Andalusí poets. The headings of the poems in the latter were composed in Arabic and the structure of the diwan resembles that of the Arabic diwan. See: Uriel Simon, *Four Approaches to the Book of Psalms. From Saadiah Gaon to Abraham ibn Ezra* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1991), 220-224.

highly elaborated rhymed prose, explain the circumstances surrounding the composition of each poem, letter, or cycle. Occasionally they are so long that later copyists interpreted them as stand-alone texts—something that also happened with the sections in prose in the poem-letters—and copied them separately. Up to now no fifteenth-century autograph manuscripts by any of these major poets has been discovered, but the study of Bonafed's work indicates that there were copies that were very close to these "author's booklets" or recensions, as in the case of Mich. 155, in which almost all the heading are in the first person and the date of the copy is around the second half of the fifteenth century.

A very good example of these author's recensions booklets is the satirical cycle against the *Zaragoza aljama* mentioned before²⁸. These texts seem to have been fashioned as a small stand-alone work, one of those "booklets" as the author himself calls them. It circulated in the form of letters to some of his contemporaries, which Bonafed sent with the intention of disseminating it more widely, entertaining his correspondents, and ridiculing the targets of his derision, mainly the community's rabbi, Yosef Yešua. These texts are an excellent example of how their author transformed them from their original epistolary form into an entity in their own right, and they also exemplify how the epistolary nature of letters influences the plurality of later versions, since the author himself sent this work to different people and each time included a different version of the texts, as we can observe in the letter "When the stars of your sayings sang in unison (*be-ran yaḥad koḵbe 'amareka*)", addressed to Noah Chinillo²⁹, in which Bonafed states in reference to the satire that he had written ridiculing the leaders of the *aljama*:

²⁸ See note 20

²⁹ For information about this physician-poet and his family, see: Alisa Mehuyas Ginio, "La familia Ginio (Chinillo, Chiniello, Tchenio, Tchnyo, Ginio): De Aragón a Salónica y Jerusalén," *MEAH* 41/2 (1992): 137-149; and Edwin Seroussi, "Catorce canciones en Romance como modelos de poemas hebreos del siglo XV," *Sefarad* 65 (2005): 385-411.

“...after all, there is no way to deal with the scoundrels other than to lambast them in writing³⁰ and to pray for them. That is why I made an addition to the letter I have addressed to Ya‘akob Albalag and I also wrote to his venerable father, Don Shelomo, in Romance and rhymed prose. This letter in Romance³¹ is mixed with the sacred tongue, which is worthy of my heart. The truth is that the booklet that I am sending to Your Excellency (in reference to Noah Chinillo), I arranged for our fine brother Rabi Abraham Saragosi, My God keep him, since he came by here with Rabi ..., May God keep him; and they told me that he was at your palace celebrating the feast of the Passover and therefore, my lord, do me the kindness of giving him my greetings and this booklet after Your Grace has read it and had a good laugh. The metered poems [that it contains] are excellent. It also includes the letter to Don Shelomo Albalag and retains its flavor,³² as well as new things in the letter to Ya‘akob Albalag, as you will see at the end of the letter.” (Sasson 590 fol 189-190)

In addition to the “mobile” nature of these texts³³, this letter also makes known the existence of a group of texts that are absent from the author’s recensions and the later copies in *cancioneros* and miscellanies produced after the fifteenth century. These were texts composed in “Romance,” probably Catalan, which either Bonafed himself or later copyists decided not to preserve. This same phenomenon is seen with regard to the production of other Hebrew poets of the same period, such as Shelomo de Piera.³⁴

On the basis of these compilations or recensions, various copyists in different periods copied this literature into manuscripts miscellanies, which constitutes the third phase in the transmission of these texts. The various manuscripts containing the works of fifteenth-century authors like Bonafed or Shelomo de Piera are the work of copyists who reorganized the earlier phases of the text, dismantling its structures and reshaping them by copying

³⁰ Literally “narrate,” from the Hebrew root *s/f/r*.

³¹ Unfortunately, this letter has not been located.

³² Jer 48:11.

³³ On this aspect of the “mobility” of the text and of the different “original” versions of a single poem, see: Arturo Prats, “A Hebrew poetry contest in early-fifteenth-century Zaragoza,” *JMIS* 6 (2014): 214-236.

³⁴ Letters written in Romance are mentioned on numerous occasions, one of which is found in the opening of the letter addressed by Shelomo de Piera to Moshe Abbas: “I wrote a letter to Moshe Abbas in a foreign language (*lo ‘az*).” (MS Mich. 155 fol. 223v ff.)

just the verse or just the prose in a letter, or only fragments of poems, or by changing and manipulating the opening or other sections of a letter.

The manuscript copies of the works of these poets range chronologically, geographically, and culturally from the kingdom of Aragon in the second half of the fifteenth century to nineteenth-century Baghdad, passing through Italy, Egypt, Constantinople, in short, all the places where those exiled in the Sephardic diaspora settled and where the Hispano-Hebrew cultural heritage was refashioned in new contexts. Just as the new cultural contexts in which these copies were conceived and produced changed, the contents of the copies and the criteria for including or eliminating literary materials changed.

In the second half of the fifteenth century, literary miscellanies were produced that included the author's recensions and other literary materials, but these codices have not survived intact up to the present. Currently we only have factitious codices, from the fifteenth century and later, which gather together diverse literary material and preserve fragments of these miscellaneous codices, on the basis of which we can reconstruct the fifteenth-century Hebrew *cancioneros*.

In some cases, they are actually quires that have been split, such as those preserved in Cincinnati,³⁵ or composite codices,³⁶ in which several independent units are bound together. In some cases these are related to each other by virtue of being literary works from the same period and the same circle, as in the case of MS Mich. 155, whereas other composite codices contain very different kinds of material that were bound together during the modern period and thus constitute what is called an allogenic codex. The field of codicology is of enormous help in understanding the

³⁵ This manuscript is found broken up into different fragments (MS 500, 316, 314 y 315) in the Klau Library of Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati University. All of these fragments belonged to the same codicological unit.

³⁶ The terminology I use comes from: Johan Peter Gumbert, "Codicological Units: Towards a Terminology for the Stratigraphy of the No-Homogeneous Codex," in *Segno e testo 2 = Il codice miscellaneo. Tipologie e funzioni. Atti del convegno internazionale, Cassino 14-17 maggio 2003* (ed. E. Crisci and O. Pecere; Cassino: Università degli studi Cassino, 2004) 29.

transmission of these literary texts in the fifteenth century and is an essential discipline for shedding light on the format of *cancioneros* from this period as well as on their composition. Unfortunately, a study of this kind has not been carried out on literary manuscripts from the fifteenth century, although the usefulness of such studies has been shown for understanding the transmission of other kinds of works.³⁷

An analysis of the contents of these miscellaneous manuscripts that we have called Hebrew *cancioneros* reveals that they are collections of various authors' works, sometimes respecting the author's recension that we described in the previous phase and that included in turn the work of other authors with whom the first author exchanged letters. A preliminary comparison with similar Romance *cancioneros* from the same period, particularly the Catalan *cancionero* preserved at the University of Zaragoza,³⁸ reveals many similarities as regards content and structure, but it would be premature to draw any conclusions at this point. Again preliminarily, it seems that these fifteenth-century Hebrew *cancioneros* have similarities and differences with both the Arabic tradition, in which the early transmission of the works of classical Hebrew Andalusí poets is embedded,³⁹ and the tradition of Romance *cancioneros*, which was just developing at this time in the Iberian Peninsula.

Some poems by authors of *cancioneros* have also been transmitted in another format that is different from the literary miscellany. This provides a further example of how the meaning of a text changes when its transmission format changes. This is the case of some of Bonafed's liturgical poems that were transmitted—in addition to in his literary *cancionero* (Mich. 155)—in

³⁷ Javier del Barco, "The Production and Transmission of Hebrew Miscellanies on Greek Geometry: A case Study of MS Madrid, BNE 5474," *COMSt* 5 (2013): 25-29

³⁸ Mariano Baselga y Ramirez, *El cancionero catalán de la Universidad de Zaragoza* (Zaragoza: Cacilio Gasca, Librero, 1896)

³⁹ See Simon, *Four Approaches*, 220-224.

the *Mahzor* format of the period, MS Mich. 290, which is a fifteenth-century monomeric manuscript copied on parchment and used for liturgical purposes. It contains some poems by this author and by other contemporary authors⁴⁰ that had already been adopted for liturgical use. This phase in the transmission of the texts in fifteenth-century *cancioneros* will be the focus of my critical edition, for which I intend to reconstruct their contents on the basis of fragments from extant miscellanies, supplemented by texts that have been preserved in later compilations. After the fifteenth century, compilations of poems and prose texts by fifteenth-century poets were put together in the Sephardic diaspora, beginning in the sixteenth century Italy, the Ottoman Empire, and up to eighteenth century Amsterdam. Most of these manuscripts attempt to abridge the poetic production of the fifteenth century as part of the “Sephardic literary legacy” that these communities construct as their common literary heritage. They typically include poems by classical Andalusí authors together with the miscellaneous work of these fifteenth-century authors, as well as authors contemporary with the copyist, forming atemporal, communal Sephardic *cancioneros* that connect the diasporic present in Amsterdam, Baghdad, Istanbul, or Italy with a mythical past in al-Andalus. These collections of poems include—as in the case of MS Schoken 37,⁴¹ compiled in Baghdad (16th century)⁴²; MS Sasson 590, compiled perhaps in Italy (17th century)⁴³ or the *Segulat Melakhim*

⁴⁰ Seroussi, “Catorce canciones,” 385-411.

⁴¹ Hereafter, Schoken 37. This codex is very well known since it was used as the basis for an early-twentieth-century edition of the secular poetry of Moshe ibn Ezra and Shelomo ibn Gabirol. See: Moshe ibn Ezra, *Moshe ibn Ezra: Shirei ha-hol* (ed. H. Brody; Berlin: Schocken, 1935), 17-19 and Shelomo ibn Gabirol, *Solomon ibn Gabirol. Secular Poems* (ed. H. Brody et al.; Jerusalem: The Schocken Institute for Jewish Research of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1974), 7, n. 1. The manuscript had an eventful career from the time it was copied in the seventeenth century in Baghdad, up to when it came into the hands of the bibliophile Schoken. The Schocken institute has a copy in bound paper in various volumes, which was the one that I was able to consult. On the vicissitudes of this manuscript, see: David Yelin, “*gilgulei ketav-yad*,” *Moznayim* 11 (1931): 11-12.

⁴² Yelin, “*gilgulei*,” (1931): 11.

⁴³ In his catalogue, David Sasson identifies the copyist of this manuscript as the same one who copied MS n° 595 in the catalogue (Sasson, *Ohel David*, 398), and the latter manuscript was involved with an edition that was published in Venice, so it is possible that we are dealing with a copyist in Italy, though we do not know that for certain.

manuscript, compiled in Amsterdam (18th century)⁴⁴—poets ranging from Shelomo Ibn Gabirol (11th century) to authors contemporary with when the miscellanies were compiled. These manuscripts were probably copied from original manuscripts from the fifteenth century or even earlier, as the copyists of some of them mention. They thus constitute genuine Hebrew *cancioneros*, through which different communities constructed their Hebrew cultural legacy.

After the invention of the printing press, it is necessary to keep in mind not only manuscript culture but also the circulation of printed texts and copies made from those printed texts. This affected certain fifteenth-century works that were extracted from their context in *cancioneros* in order to be incorporated into other kinds of works. Such is the case of the letters exchanged between Francesc de Sant Jordi and Shelomo Bonafed, edited and published by Frank Talmage,⁴⁵ whose distribution and copying took on a different aspect when they were incorporated into a manual on religious polemics compiled by Isaac Akrish,⁴⁶ *Iggeret Ogeret* (published in Constantinople in 1575–77), which brought together disparate works by different medieval authors. In this new co-text, Bonafed’s and Francesc’s letters were transformed into another, very different kind of literature from what they were as part of the recension preserved in MS Mich. 155. When they were extracted from their manuscript context, the poem from one of them that appeared in Bonafed’s recension (Mich. 155) was eliminated, and the context of “fifteenth-century literary *cancionero*” was removed in order for the letters to be used polemically to criticize Christian dogma in the new context of Constantinople’s Sephardi community.

⁴⁴ This manuscript is held at the ‘Ets ha-Hayyim Library (Livreria Montezinos) in Amsterdam and is described in: L. Fuks-Mansfeld and R.G. Fuks-Mansfeld, *Hebrew and Judaic Manuscripts in Amsterdam Public Collections. Catalogue of the Manuscripts of Ets Him / Livreria Montezinos Sephardic Community of Amsterdam*. (2 vols.) (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975), 240-241.

⁴⁵ Talmage, “The Francesc,”

⁴⁶ Isaac Akrish (b. 1530), the son of an expelled Spanish Jew who lived in Naples and Thessaloniki, travelled throughout the Mediterranean seeking to save manuscripts. As a result of this search, he published various printed books in which he compiled the works that he had collected. One of these books was *Iggeret ogeret* (printed between 1575 and 1577): ‘Akrish, Isaac.’ *Iggeret Ogeret*, Constantinople, 1577. Hebrew Books: <http://www.hebrewbooks.org/home.aspx>.

Finally, beginning with the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* movement, these miscellaneous manuscripts and printed works gave way to editions published in academic books or journals, which attempted to reclaim the poetic works of medieval Hebrew authors that were languishing in the silence of manuscripts.⁴⁷ Interest in publishing these texts has been taking hold since the beginning of the twentieth century and up to the present, in the academic world of the humanities, where some critical editions have been published that now serve as the basis for studies of all kinds.

Traditionally, the aim of editing texts has been to reconstruct, using the Lachmanian method, the second phase of transmission, the author's recension, and thus has been limited to the work of a single author. This is the case for texts such as Bonafed's polemic with the *Zaragoza aljama*,⁴⁸ in which the editor "reconstructs" an original from the different versions that are extant in other manuscripts. This is also the goal of the editions of texts by Shelomo de Piera⁴⁹ and Vidal Benvenist.⁵⁰

In this article, I propose the method I have been using for future editions of these texts. Firstly, I believe that the aim of publishing these texts should be to reconstruct the miscellaneous *cancioneros* from the fifteenth-century (the third phase of transmission) and not the author's recension (second phase). In order to do so, we should first identify the materials from the period that have survived in fragmentary form, such as MS Mich. 155, for example, and publish their texts in full, following the order of the manuscript, as well as including other codicological features,

⁴⁷ An example would be the editions of part of Bonafed's works prepared by Aharon Kaminka y Yosef Patai: (Armand) Aharon Kaminka, "Meshorerei sefarad ha-'aharonim. Maḥberet ri'shona: Ha-diwan le-R. Shelomo Bonafed," *Mi-mizrah u-ma'arav* 2 (1895):107–27; "Shirim u-melitsot le-ha-rabi Shelomo ben ha-rab Re'uben Bonafed," *Ha-tsofe le-ḥokhmat Yisra'el* 10 (1926):288–95; "Shirim u-melitsot le-ha-rabi Shelomo ben ha-rab Re'uben Bonafed," *Ha-tsofe le-ḥokhmat Yisra'el* 12 (1928):33–42. and Yosef Patai, "Shirei heshek shel Shelomo Bonafed," *Ha-tsofe le-ḥokhmat Yisra'el* 10 (1926):220–3; "Shirei ḥol shel Shelomo Bonafed." in *Mi-tsefunei ha-shira: Hartsa'ot ba-Universita ha-'Ivrit bi-rusalayim* (Jerusalem: Ruben Mas, 1939).

⁴⁸ See note 20

⁴⁹ Bernstein, "Diwan"

⁵⁰ Targarona and Vardi, "Vidal Benvenist," 424

like the notes and marginalia, textual divisions, etcetera. In addition to these materials, there are the texts that are dispersed among other manuscripts that are not properly fifteenth-century *cancioneros* but that were copied from them. We should attempt to find the link with the extant materials and incorporate them, making a note of their provenance, in the appropriate sections of the original *cancioneros*, in order to thus reconstruct their contents. There are many cases in which sections in prose or sections of poetry that are incomplete or split from their *cancionero* co-text are collected into later literary compilations (this is true of the *Segulat Melakhim*). These materials also have to be taken into account when preparing an edition, since they fill in the lacunae left by the deterioration of the original codicological units in which fifteenth-century Hebrew *cancioneros* were transmitted.

Initially, in order to make this project practicable, it should be undertaken in phases and divided according to “author’s *cancioneros*,” such as that of Shelomo Bonafed. This does not mean discarding texts by other authors that are part of these *cancioneros*, nor losing sight of the final goal, which should always be to reconstruct the corpus of the Hebrew *cancionero* in its entirety. In this way, I believe we can finally have access to the whole literary corpus from the fifteenth century in a format that is suited to its contents and that remains as faithful as possible to the medieval artifact through which it has been transmitted.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

ʿAkrish, Isaac. *ʿIggeret ʿOggeret*, Constantinople, 1577. Hebrew Books: <http://www.hebrewbooks.org/home.aspx>

Baselga y Ramirez, Mariano. *El cancionero catalán de la Universidad de Zaragoza*. Zaragoza: Cacilio Gasca, Librero, 1896.

Beit-Arie, Malachi et al., *Catalogue of the Hebrew Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library: Supplement of Addenda and Corrigenda to Vol. I (A. Neubauer's Catalogue)* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994.

Bejarano Escanilla, Ana María. “Šēlomoh ben Rēʿuben Bonafed poeta y polemista.” *Anuari de Filologia. Sección E* 14 (1991):87–101.

Shelomo Bonafed, poeta y polemista hebreo (s. XIV-XV). PH.D Dissertation un-published at Universidad de Barcelona. 1989

Bernstein, Simon. *The Diwan. Salomo b. Meshullam Dapiera* (Hebrew). New York: Alim Publication. 1942.

Ben-Shalom, Ram, “*ha-Ḥatsran ke-shevet yehuda*”: *ha-iggerot we-shirei ha-shebaḥ le-ḥatsranim shel Yom Tov ben Ḥana, sofer kehilat Montalban she-bi-Sfarad*.” Pages 196-224 in *OT LETOVA. Essays in Honor of Professor Tova Rossen*. Edited by E. Yassif et al. Israel: Journal for Hebrew and Israeli Literature and Culture Studies, *El Prezente* 6 (2012)

Cerquiglini, Bernard. *In Praise of the Variant. A Critical History of Philology*. Translated by B. Wing. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999.

Degenais, John. *The Ethics of Reading in Manuscript Culture: Glossing the Libro de Buen Amor*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994.

del Barco, Javier. "The Production and Transmission of Hebrew Miscellanies on Greek Geometry: A case Study of MS Madrid, BNE 5474." *Comparative Oriental Manuscript Studies Newsletter* 5 (2013): 25-29.

Elon, Menachem. "Agunah." Pages 510-520 in 2nd edition vol. 1 of *Encyclopaedia Judaica*. Edited by F. Skolnik and M. Berenbaum. 22 vols. USA: Thomson Gale, 2007.

Fuks-Mansfeld, L. and Fuks-Mansfeld, R.G. *Hebrew and Judaic Manuscripts in Amsterdam Public Collections. Catalogue of the Manuscripts of Ets Him / Livraria Montezinos Sephardic Community of Amsterdam*. (2 vols.) Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1975.

Gómez-Bravo, Ana M. "A huma senhora que lhe disse": Sobre la práctica social de la autoría y la noción de texto en el Cancionero General de Resende y la lírica cancioneril ibérica." *La Corónica* 32.1 (2003): 43-64.

"Memorias y Archivos. Modelos de Producción textual y antologías poéticas del siglo XV" *Cancionero General* 2 (2004): 53-87.

Gross, Abraham. "*Ha-meshorer Shelomoh Bonafed u-me'ora'ot doro.*" Pages 35-61 in *The Frank Talmage Memorial Volume*. Edited by B. D. Walfished. Haifa: Haifa University, 1993.

Gumbert, Johan Peter. "Codicological Units: Towards a Terminology for the Stratigraphy of the No-Homogeneous Codex." Pages 17-42 in *Segno e testo 2 = Il codoce miscellaneo. Tipologie e funzioni. Atti del convegno internazionale, Cassino 14-17 maggio 2003*. Edited by E. Crisci and O. Pecere. Casino: Università degli studi Cassino, 2004.

Gutwirth, Eleazar. "Hebrew Letters, Hispanic Mail: Communication Among Fourteenth-Century Aragon Jewry." Pages 257–82 in *Communication in the Jewish Diaspora. The Pre-Modern World*. Edited by S. Menache. Leiden: Brill, 1996.

"On the Background to Cota's Epitalamio burlesco." *Romanische Forschungen*, 97 (1985): 1-14

Gutwirth, Eleazar and Motis Dolader, Miguel Ángel. "Twenty-Six Jewish Libraries from Fifteenth-Century Spain." *The Library: The Transactions of the Bibliographical Society* 18 (1996): 27-53.

Huss, M. *Don Vidal Benvenist's Melitsat 'Efer we-Dinah, Studies and Critical Edition*. Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2003.

Kaminka, (Armand) Aharon. "Meshorerei sefarad ha-'aharonim. Maḥberet ri'shona: Ha-diwan le-R. Shelomo Bonafed." *Mi-mizrah u-ma'arav* 2 (1895):107–27.

"Shirim u-melitsot le-ha-rabi Shelomo ben ha-rab Re'uben Bonafed." *Hatsofe le- ḥokhmat Yisra'el* 10 (1926):288–95.

"Shirim u-melitsot le-ha-rabi Shelomo ben ha-rab Re'uben Bonafed." *Hatsofe le- ḥokhmat Yisra'el* 12 (1928):33–42.

Mehuyas Ginio, Alisa. "La familia Ginio (Chinillo, Chiniello, Tchenio, Tchnyo, Ginio): De Aragón a Salónica y Jerusalén." *Miscelanea de estudios árabes y hebreos* 41/2 (1992): 137-149.

Moshe ibn Ezra, *Moshe ibn Ezra: Shirei ha-ḥol*. Edited by Ḥayyim Brody. Berlin: Schocken, 1935.

Neubauer, Adolphe., and Cowley, A. E. *Catalogue of the Hebrew Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library and in the College Libraries of Oxford*. 2 vols. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1886-1906.

Patai, Yosef. “*Shirei ḥeshek shel Shelomo Bonafed.*” *Ha-tsofe le-ḥokhmat Yisra’el* 10 (1926):220–3.

“*Shirei ḥol shel Shelomo Bonafed.*” In *Mi-tsefunei ha-shira: Hartsa’ot ba-Universita ha-‘Ivrit bi-rusalayim*. Jerusalem: Ruben Mas, 1939.

Prats, Arturo. “A Hebrew poetry contest in early-fifteenth-century Zaragoza.” *Journal of Medieval Iberian Studies* 6 (2014): 214-236

Rosen, Tova and Yassif, Eli. “The Study of Hebrew Literature of the Middle Ages: Major Trends and Goals” Pages 241-294 in *The Oxford Handbook of Jewish Studies*. Edited by M. Goodman et al. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.

Sáenz-Badillos, Ángel. “Šelomoh Bonafed at the crossroad of Hebrew and Romance Cultures.” Pages 343–79 in *Encuentros y desencuentros. Spanish-Jewish Cultural interaction throughout history*. Edited by A. Doron, C. Carrete Parrondo and A. Sáenz-Badillos. Tel Aviv: University Publishing Projects, 2000.

“El estudio de la poesía y la prosa hispanohebrea en los últimos cincuenta años.” *Miscelanea de estudios árabes y hebreos. Sección de hebreo* 50 (2001): 133-161.

“Šelomoh Bonafed, último gran poeta de Sefarad, y la poesía hebrea”.
eHumanista 2 (2002):1–22.

“Strophic Poems in the dīwān of Šelomoh Bonafed.” *Studies in Hebrew Literature from the Middle Ages and Renaissance. Homage to Yonah David*, Tel Aviv, *Tē‘udah* 19 (2003): 21-46

“Creación poética de los judíos aragoneses” Pages 467–83 in *Aragón Sefarad*. Edited by M. A. Moti Dolader et al. Zaragoza: Diputación de Zaragoza, 2004.

Sasson, S. David. *’Ohel David: Descriptive Catalogue of the Hebrew and Samaritan Manuscripts in the Sassoon Library, London (2 vol.)* London: Oxford University Press, H. Milford, 1932.

Scheindlin, Raymond P. “Secular Hebrew Poetry in fifteenth century Spain.” Pages 25-37 in *Crisis and Creativity in the Sephardic World 1391-1648*. Edited by B. R. Gampel. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997.

“The Hebrew Qasida in Christian Spain.” Pages 128-135 in *Qasida Poetry in Islamic Asia and Africa*. Edited by S. Sperl and C. Shackle. Leiden: Brill, 1996.

Schirmann, Jefim. “*Ha-pulmus šel Šelomoh Bonafed be-nikbedei Saragosa.*” *Kobez ‘al-yad* 4 (1946):8–64.

Schirmann, Jefim and Ezra Fleischer. *The History of Hebrew Poetry in Christian Spain and Southern France [in Hebrew] Vol II*. Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1997.

Seroussi, Edwin. "Catorce canciones en Romance como modelos de poemas hebreos del siglo XV." *Sefarad* 65 (2005): 385-411.

Shelomo ibn Gabirol, *Solomon ibn Gabirol. Secular Poems*. Edited by H. Brody and J. Schirrmann with the participation of J. Ben-David. Jerusalem: The Schocken Institute for Jewish Research of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1974.

Sirat, Colette. "Les éditions critiques: un mythe?" Pages 159-171 in *Les problèmes posés par l'édition critique des textes anciens et médiévaux*. Edited by J. Hamesse. Louvain: Institut d'Études Médiévales, 1992.

Talmage, Frank. "The Francesc de Sant Jordi-Solomon Bonafed Letters." Pages 337-64 in *Studies in Mediaeval Jewish History and Literature*. Edited by I. Twersky. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979.

Targarona Borrás, Judit. "El diwan de Shelomo ben Meshulam de Piera. Estado de la cuestión." Pages 541-51 in *Jewish Studies at the turn of the 20th century: proceedings of the 6th EAJIS Congress, Toledo, July 1998*. Edited by J. Targarona Borrás and A. Sáenz-Badillos. Leiden: Brill, 1999.

"Correspondencia literaria entre Vidal Abenvenist y Salomón de Piera según el dīwān de De Piera." Pages 289-308 in *Actes del II Congrès per a l'Estudi dels Jueus en Territoris de Llengua Catalana*. Barcelona: Institut Europeu de la Mediterrània, 2005.

Targarona Borrás, Judit and Vardi, Tirza. "Literary Correspondence between Vidal Abenvenist and Solomon de Piera." *Revue des études Juives* 167 (3.4) (2008): 405-509.

Targarona Borrás, Judit and Scheindlin, Raymond P. “Literary Correspondence between Vidal Benvenist ben Lavi and Solomon ben Meshulam de Piera.” *Revue des Études Juives* 100 (2001): 61–79.

Simon, Uriel. *Four Approaches to the Book of Psalms. From Saadiah Gaon to Abraham ibn Ezra*. New York: State University of New York Press, 1991.

Yelin, David. “gilgulei ketav-yad” *Moznayyim* 11 (1931): 11-12.