Hispanic Oral Literature:
Accomplishments and Perspectives

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Hispanic oral literature, together with the Portuguese which should not be separated from it, encompasses a great chronological as well as geographical span, since it is an integral part of the cultural heritage that has accompanied the Spanish and Portuguese people over the centuries wherever they have chanced to establish themselves. Scholarly interest has focused primarily upon two oral genres, the epic and the ballad, while the lyric and the folktale have been accorded less attention, and the proverb almost none at all.

The total amount of material published, particularly on the epic and ballad, is enormous. The last decade or so has produced a veritable explosion of critical interest in these traditional forms. After establishing the critical background, we have tried to include here studies that either make a significant contribution or are representative of a certain method or approach. This means that many fine studies are not mentioned solely because of limitations of space. It will be observed that not all of this work has been carried out by oralists. In the belief that good basic research is of value to all, no matter what a particular scholar's theoretical persuasion may be, a number of items have been cited that were destined to support other points of view.

Epic

Three surveys of scholarship on the Spanish epic were published in the mid-seventies, all different in emphasis but each valuable in its own way and worth consulting. Faulhaber (1976) reviews the history and the application of traditionalist studies to

the Spanish epic together with the opposing arguments of the individualists. It is an objective, well-reasoned assessment of the problems besetting critics of epic in both the Spanish and the French fields. Deyermond's 1977 digest, *"Mio Cid Scholarship, 1943-1973,"* is more comprehensive, yet succinct, and is organized on the basis of critical issues. Although the author is an individualist and feels free to express his own opinions, his evaluations are dependable and fair, making this survey the most useful of the three. Magnotta's volume entitled *Historia y bibliografía de la crítica sobre el "Poema de Mio Cid" (1750-1971)* is a considerably more extensive chronological survey of the field. For that reason it is more cursory and has a less secure grasp of the materials covered. Magnotta concentrates on the problems of date and authorship, origins and influences, together with relations to the chronicles and the ballads, while stylistic, aesthetic, and theoretical questions are given less space.

Spanish epic studies have been extraordinarily handicapped by a dearth of texts. There are but three extant epic texts: the *Cantar de Mio Cid,* also called the *Poema de Mio Cid;* the hundred-verse fragment of the *Roncesvalles;* and a corrupt late epic on the youth of the Cid, the *Mocedades de Rodrigo,* variously named the *Mocedades del Cid, Rodrigo y el rey Fernando,* and the *Crónica rimada.* In addition to the foregoing, a large section of the *Siete Infantes de Lara* (or *Salas)* has been reconstructed from chronicle texts, and the *Poema de Fernán González,* a clerical poem, is the reworking of a *cantor de gesta,* of which it bears many traces.

The existence of several additional epic texts has been hypothesized, with more convincing evidence in some cases than in others. Chronicle accounts that display poetization, a narrative that follows the tenets of the epic canon, and continued traditional life in the ballads offer the most secure basis for inclusion in the list of lost epics. Into this category fall the *Cantar de Sancho II* together with the *Partición de los reinos* of the *Cid* cycle (Reig 1947) and *Bernardo del Carpio,* the counter-Roland (Horrent 1951a:462-83). More doubtful among those most frequently mentioned are *Rodrigo, el último godo* (Menéndez Pidal 1925:54-88), the *Infante García* (Menéndez Pidal 1934:33-98), the *Condesa traidora* (Menéndez Pidal 1934:4-27), and the *Abad don Juan de Montemayor* (Menéndez Pidal 1934:103-233).

Menéndez Pidal's three-volume edition of the *Cantar de Mio*

Cid or *CMC* (4th ed. 1964) was the standard one for many years. It comprises a paleographic edition and a critical edition together, with an initial volume of studies plus another containing a glossary. Since his death several new critical editions have come out which adhere more closely to the manuscript text. The most noteworthy are those of Colin Smith (1972), Ian Michael (1975, 1978) and Garcí-Gómez (1978). Another recent two-volume work put out by the city of Burgos includes a new facsimile edition along with the critical edition, the former of which reveals how much the manuscript has deteriorated during the last several decades *(Poema* 1982, vol. 1).

Because the *CMC* is the only remaining epic text that comes close to being complete, theoretical studies concerning the Spanish epic have perforce been based upon it. There is hardly an aspect of the poem that does not present problems that still have not been satisfactorily resolved. The hypotheses that have been proffered reflect the particular theoretical orientation of each scholar. Here we have no intention of extending the traditionalist-individualist debate, which has provoked such vigorous interchanges in recent years; rather, without arguing the case, we shall set forth these issues based on the premise that the Spanish epic originated as a product of oral tradition.

The only extant manuscript of the *CMC,* which is of relatively small format and modest appearance, dates from the fourteenth century. It is impossible to determine whether at the beginning it was written down from dictation, although Adams (1976) brings out evidence to show that that could have been possible. The nature of the errors reveals that it was recopied more than once, at which times there may well have been editorial revisions. Nor is the text complete. Therefore the date the text was put into writing for the first time cannot be deduced either by internal or by external evidence. For the individualist these dates are one and the same, but not for the traditionalist, for whom the *Cid* was gradually elaborated in successive versions into a text more or less like the one we have today. Horrent has outlined plausibly the course of such a process (1973:310-11). The prolonged discussion surrounding the question of the date and the purpose for which the *CMC* was committed to writing has been well summarized by Lomax (1977). Menéndez Pidal settled on the year 1140 for a variety of reasons, among them that it was the date of a politically important royal espousal. Aside from the

story's inappropriateness in terms of conjugal felicity, there is much other evidence to advance the date to the end of the century, if not to 1207, the date found on the manuscript itself. Some present-day scholars argue that the *CMC* was composed (not just written down) around the turn of the century for propagandistic purposes: Lacarra (1980) that it was a vehicle for political slander in a feud between the Castro and the Lara families, and Fradejas Lebrero (1982) that it served as a model to persuade Christians to renew the Reconquest.

The possibility of the recovery of epic poems prosified in late chronicles is of importance in regard to the three missing folios of the *CMC,* which have been partially restored based on the *Crónica de once (veinte) reyes* (see Dyer 1979-80 and Powell 1983). Since the chroniclers were intent upon amalgamating their sources stylistically, the legitimacy of reconstructed verses has been questioned. Nor is there agreement as to whether it is possible to distinguish different versions of an epic through the medium of chronicle prosifications as Menéndez Pidal believed (1951:lxvii). It was Diego Catalán who rejected the theory as far as the *Primera crónica general is* concerned by demonstrating that what appear to be increased discrepancies between the second part of the poetic text and the chronicle are in fact the product of a different period and style of prosification (1963:205-9, 214-15). A re-examination of this and allied questions is to be found in Deyermond's review (1984) of Powell's book. What is manifest is that the question of chronicle prosifications is far from resolved and that much work remains to be done.

Happily the era of the attempts to regularize the versification of the *CMC* with its two-hemistich line in assonating series is long past. However, Harvey's (1963) hypothesis, based on Lord, that the irregularities in verse length are the result of its being a dictated rather than a sung text has found some strong support. If his theory were true, it would mean that the *CMC* is a badly distorted text, which is not at all the case. Discussion still arises periodically concerning the principle underlying the irregular verse length. The theory of stress-timed verse had been proposed and demonstrated by Navarro Tomás (1956), among others, many years ago. Recently Adams reaffirmed the same principle (1972:118-19) as did Colin Smith (1983:113-28), but according to the latter, it was developed as an adaptation of the French epic line. Many scholars continue to accept the target-count theory of Menéndez

Pidal, according to which it can be shown that hemistichs tend to have seven syllables and verses fourteen, the frequency of deviations diminishing the further removed *they* are from the norm (1964, vol. I:83-101). What has not been realized is that any stress-timed verse would probably show a similar target-count pattern if one set about to count syllables.

Menéndez Pidal described and categorized the assonances used in the *CMC* as frequent, rare, and exceptional and indicated their relative frequency in the three *cantares* into which the *CMC* is divided (*ibid*.:113-23). Although he listed important assonating words, he did not speculate upon why certain assonances were preferred in certain parts of the poem or the possible relationship between assonance and subject matter. Questions of assonance determination, laws of assonance change, and assonance sequence were taken up many years ago by Staaff (1925) and Lahmann (1934) and more recently by Webber (1975), but the final word still has not been said on these matters. Within the assonating series, Menéndez Pidal rejected as erroneous not only single verses in a different assonance but pairs of verses as well, a phenomenon so frequent that it has now been accepted as part of the system by the *CMC's* recent editors.

Although Menéndez Pidal had set forth certain basic principles of *laisse* division (1964, vol. I:107-10), the topic as a whole did not excite much interest until the publication of Rychner's book on the French epic (1955) with its extensive treatment of the subject. In the introduction to his edition of the *CMC,* Michael studied *laisse* structure and succinctly summarized *laisse*-linking techniques (1978:27-33). The question of the narrative function of the *laisse* has only been briefly treated (Michael 1978:27-30, Webber 1973:26-27) except for Johnston (1984).

Other aspects of the verse-making of the *Cid* poet have also been the object of scholarly attention. Among them have been several attempts to analyze the acoustic properties of the poem (Smith 1976, Adams 1980, and Webber 1983). All are in agreement as to its exceptionally pleasing sound-system, the work of a poet who was a superb musician with words, even though Smith is not willing to concede that this artist was an oral poet. Since an oral poetic tradition is totally dependent upon sound, all of these directions should be pursued further.

No question concerning the *CMC* has elicited more scholarly

interest than its historicity, combined with that of its geographical precision. The Cid as a hero is unique in that his deeds were sung not long after the events themselves took place, in contrast to the several centuries that separate the activities of other historical heroes like Fernán González, Charlemagne, and Roland from the epics that were composed about them. For Menéndez Pidal the *CMC* was essentially a historical document preserving through oral transmission vestiges of the past otherwise long since forgotten. In his two-volume opus, *La España del Cid* (1929), he reconstructed the events of the critical years of the Cid's life, placing more faith, however, in the veracity of the chronicle accounts than do later scholars. Much fine historical research has appeared of late—for example, that of Chalon (1976), who has worked systematically to distinguish in the Castilian epic what is truly historical, what appears to be historical because it conforms to what is perceived as historical reality, and what is poetic invention. One of the most persistent historical researchers is Colin Smith, who has sought to prove thereby that the *CMC* was a learned product whose author, Per Abbat, had had access to historical, legal, and literary texts (1983:137-79). There is a certain irony in the fact that the argument of historicity can be made to serve quite different ends. Much the same can be said for geography, of which Michael's two studies (1976, 1977) are recent examples. Although the *CMC* displays a much greater degree of historical and geographical accuracy than the French epic, the *CMC* is replete with the names of historical people and identifiable places whose connection with the real-life hero cannot be established, and that is precisely what would have been brought about by oral transmission.

    For the scholars for whom the *CMC* is not a historical document, and that represents a sizable majority, the question remains as to what were the principles upon which the narrative was formed. For the traditionalists it is easy to discern the transformation of the figure of the Cid into the heroic archetype. Despite the incompleteness of the Cidian biography in the poem, there are tell-tale signs of a traditional narrative structure well embellished with folkloric detail. Dunn (1962) finds a mythic base to the story in two fundamental patterns, that of the exile and the triumphant return of the hero interwoven with that of the good king released from evil counselors, while Aubrun (1972) isolates three other myths that operate in a more intricate relationship. For Hart (1962) what informs the poem is the portrait of the Cid

as an exemplary Christian as part of an hierarchical order leading up to God.

Obvious traditional narrative devices can be cited: pairs of people who share a single role, predilection for the number three in both figures and structure, polarization of pro- and anti-Cid elements. Deyermond and Chaplin (1972) found some forty folk motifs in the poem but did not list them. Other scholars have dwelt upon the mythic significance of the incident of the escaped lion (Olson 1962, Bandera Gómez 1966) as well as the possible religious or folkloric base of the vicious attack upon the Cid's daughters by their husbands (Walsh 1970-71, Nepaulsingh 1983, Gifford 1977). A full-scale appraisal of folkloric motifs and similar devices is still lacking.

Whether or not there is a mythic underlay to the narrative structure of the *CMC,* it is a story of two parts that conforms remarkably well to the canon of the folk tale. For those who espouse the king-vassal structural pattern, the critical role is that of the king. In this case the first part has to do with the hero's losing, then regaining the king's favor, or to state it differently, the testing of the hero and secondly the testing of the king who was responsible for the marriages of the Cid's daughters (de Chasca 1955:41-44, Dunn 1970, Walker 1976). If one accepts the biographical pattern of the hero as the structural base, the first part is the exile followed, after vicissitudes, by the triumphal return of the hero, and the second is the hero's loss of honor, which is regained twofold with the downfall of the perpetrators of the villainy and the royal marriages of his daughters. Still a third theory, developed by Dorfman (1969) for a comparative study of the French and Spanish epic, finds a common structural base in four narremes: the family quarrel, the insult, the act of treachery, and the punishment. For the *CMC* this means that the whole biographical account through the daughters' wedding is degraded to the status of prologue, and that the story proper, whose central element is the act of treachery, does not begin until the poem is almost two-thirds over.

Whatever the deep structure is conceived to be, the actual telling of the story proceeds by small, measured, remarkably regular steps in linear progression. This adding-on technique, in which each narrative unit or minor theme is complete in itself and yet forms part of a larger thematic unit, both of which, small and large, are developed according to a number of oft-repeated

patterns, is a process that deserves a great deal more elucidation not only in the *CMC* but in other traditional epics as well. The study of the themes themselves has scarcely fared better, since the narrative content of the *CMC* has most often been discussed on the basis of selected episodes.

Interest in Spanish epic style was given a much-needed impetus thanks to the impact of the Parry-Lord investigations of Serbo-Croatian song. The publication of Waltman's concordance (1972) provided the necessary tool for statistical approaches. Waltman himself used his concordance for several studies that demonstrate that there are no significant formulaic, lexical, or grammatical differences between one part of the poem and another. Whereas there has been no complete study of the formulas of the *CMC,* there are many of more limited scope. An important article by Michael (1961) illustrates the difference in the use of epithets in the *CMC* and the *Libro de Alexandre.* Hamilton (1962) and Webber (1965), among others, studied the form and function of epithets but with differing conclusions. De Chasca devoted three chapters of his *El arte juglaresco en el "Cantar de Mio Cid"* (1972) to formulas, in which he treated selected groups of formulas together with certain parallelistic procedures. Deyermond's article (1973) is also selective, while Montgomery (1975) focuses on grammatical patterns of expression. Although the monograph by Smith and Morris (1967) on physical phrases is a lexical study, much of their material is formulaic.

Concerning formula counts, de Chasca (1972:337-82), on the basis of his own register of formulas in the *CMC,* calculated that 17 per cent of the hemistichs of the poem are formulas. Given the somewhat arbitrary and incomplete character of his formula list and the fact that he had counted as formulas only expressions that were repeated at least three times, it is not surprising that Duggan's later study (1974) should produce quite different results. Duggan, employing the same criteria that he had developed for his earlier study of the formulicity of the *Chanson de Roland* and nine other old French epics (1973), found that 31.7 per cent of the hemistichs of the *CMC* are formulaic, a figure that places it somewhat above the median of the *chansons de geste* tested, for which he had set the borderline between oral and written composition at 20 per cent (1973:23-30).

In addition to formulas and formula density, de Chasca touched upon various repetitive procedures, in particular parallelism

and enumeration (1972:196-206). Dámaso Alonso (1969) examined direct discourse, as did Hart (1972). A whole series of scholars carried out a prolonged interchange about tense usage in the *CMC*. It was begun by Sandmann (1953) and continued by Gilman (1961), Myers (1966), Montgomery (1967-68), and then Gilman again (1972a), who retracted his original thinking in the face of evidence pointing to oral composition. One of the most thought-provoking studies, which came out far ahead of its time and has not been duly appreciated, is that of Louise Allen, "A Structural Analysis of the Style of the *Cid*" (1959). In undertaking to describe its style, she employs the methods (and vocabulary) of structural linguistics and divides the presentation into three parts: discourse analysis, information analysis, and sound-figure analysis. Even though her aim was rigorous description and not application of the results to Cidian problems, the methodology itself opens up new perspectives on the poem's style that merit further consideration, like the contrast established between chronicle style and poetic style, and the topics of redundancy and resonance.

Closely allied and frequently intermingled with discussions of stylistic matters are aesthetic considerations. Paeans of well-deserved praise have been showered upon the *CMC* over the years by the most distinguished literary critics (see Magnotta 1974:ch. viii). Surely the most impressive and influential of these essays is Dámaso Alonso's "Estilo y creación en el *Poema del Cid*" (1941). Yet we still have not come to terms with the most fundamental problem of all: how should the aesthetics of oral poetry be defined? What are the criteria that can legitimately be applied to traditional verse in order to pass judgment upon it? Even a professed neo-traditionalist like de Chasca fell into the fallacy of demonstrating intentionality on the poet's part in his appreciative analyses of passages of the *CMC*. More often we are left with attractive but non-productive rhetoric. Ironically it is a question of aesthetics, the opposition to what appears to be the mechanistic nature of the oral poet's art, that has been most responsible for the critical stance of the individualists.

To complicate matters still further, there are other questions tied up with aesthetic evaluation that will require extensive investigation on a broader scale than that of the *CMC* by itself before satisfactory answers can be found. The first is the significance of literacy versus illiteracy in a medieval society that was basically illiterate. What sorts of knowledge could be and

were acquired orally as opposed to those that could only be acquired through book-learning? Progress is slowly beginning to be made in these directions as more information becomes available.

Aside from Menéndez Pidal's classic study of Spanish minstrels, *Poesía juglaresca* (1957), little has been written recently about the singer except for a stimulating article by Aguirre (1968) in which he scrutinizes, in terms of what Lord discovered in Yugoslavia, the profession of the epic *juglar* and the character of his product.

Among a host of equally perplexing problems that have preoccupied the critics is the relationship between the Castilian and the French epic (see Magnotta 1974:90-106). The theory of the dependency of the *CMC* upon the latter has pervaded the work of many scholars. Among the recent adherents to this point of view is Herslund, who, in an interesting but sometimes controversial study (1974), sought to prove that the Spanish *juglares* were trained by the French whose techniques they mastered, and that for all intents and purposes the *CMC* is a *chanson de geste*. For Colin Smith, the most extreme of the current generation of individualists, the learned author of the *CMC* was well acquainted with a number of *chansons de geste* which he imitated specifically in various instances and whose metrical system, formulas, style, and even lexicon he took over (1983:186-202, 114-24).

Still another dilemma for scholars who treat the *cantares de gesta,* and one that falls strictly within the province of the oralists, is the question of memorization versus improvisation in the transmission of these songs. Lord demonstrated beyond any doubt the role of improvisation on the part of the *guslar*. Whether this was also true of the Spanish or indeed of any of the medieval European epic traditions is impossible to determine. Menéndez Pidal declared late in his career after he had come to know the Parry-Lord investigations, whose conclusions otherwise coincided strikingly with his own, that improvisation was not a feature of the oral poetry of western Europe, where there was greater textual stability (1965-66:195-207). Gilman expressed similar doubts as to whether the kind of oral composition represented by the *CMC* was the same as that found by Parry and Lord in Yugoslavia (1972a:10-11). The question arises again with the *romances* (see Beatie 1964), with the same dichotomy of opinion among the oralists. Whether oral transmission may differ in character from one tradition to another is one more issue that can only be

resolved on the basis of research undertaken throughout the whole realm of oral poetry.

The *Roncesvalles* fragment is an extraordinarily valuable document in that it confirms that there was indeed a Spanish epic tradition. Its hundred verses can be made to reveal a great amount of information about the epic from which it became separated as well as about Romance epic relations. It was initially published by Menéndez Pidal (1917) in both a paleographic and a critical edition together with a study of the language, versification, and legend, followed by a hypothetical reconstruction of the whole poem. Some years later Horrent (1951b), with the thoroughness characteristic of all his work, re-edited the *Roncesvalles* and added a two hundred fifty page study that encompasses every conceivable aspect of the poetic text, its narrative content, and its relationship with the French tradition. Formulaic and thematic studies, which might have seemed impracticable given the brevity of the piece, proved to be possible using other epic texts and the ballads as a frame of reference (Webber 1966, 1981). The results indicate that the formulas are very similar to those of the *CMC* in both form and density, while thematic correspondences are to be found in many other traditional narrative poems.

The *Mocedades de Rodrigo (MR),* published by Menéndez Pidal in *Reliquias de la poesía épica española* (1951), is a degenerate epic found in a late fourteenth-century manuscript which is both corrupt and incomplete. Deyermond included a much-needed paleographic edition in his *Epic Poetry and the Clergy: Studies on the "Mocedades de Rodrigo"* (1969). This admirable study of the text, its background, and the many problems to which it gives rise reveals how thoroughly it has been permeated by learned additions and emendations. Of particular interest to the traditionalist is what the earlier *cantar de gesta* on the Cid's youth may have been like, a topic upon which Armistead (1963) is the undisputed authority. Armistead documents at least six different traditional versions of the story, which include earlier prosifications of the lost *gesta,* the late epic text, summaries incorporated by a fifteenth- and early sixteenth-century author in their work, and various versions that emerge in the ballads (1978a:324-27).

The account of the prodigious deeds of the rebellious hero of the *MR* is very much in accord with the heroic canon, in the course of which a number of folklore motifs manifest themselves

(Deyermond 1969:177-82). The degree of non-traditional intervention can be roughly measured by a formula count. Geary (1980) calculated that formulas represent only 14 per cent of the poem in contrast to the 31 per cent tallied for the *CMC,* but its shorter length (1164 verses) makes the figure less valid for comparative purposes. There is unmistakable evidence, however, that the *MR* once had a language system possessing the features that are characteristic of oral traditional poetry and that it was broken down by later reworkings (Webber 1980b).

The *Poema de Fernán González* is the recasting of an earlier *cantar de gesta* about a historical hero in the form of a *cuaderna vía* poem, and it is in this guise that it has been most often studied. Avalle-Arce in an important essay (1972) sought to determine how the *Cantar de Fernán González* differed from the *Poema*. Its biographical pattern is a mixture of the canon of the hero and of the saint's life and abounds with folklore motifs and legendary material (see the articles of Keller). It has been re-edited several times, among them by Menéndez Pidal in the *Reliquias* (1951), where it is accompanied by versions extracted from several chronicles. The problem in this case is to determine whether it is the *Poema* or the lost *gesta* that has been prosified. Despite not being in epic meter, by Geary's count of formulas, its almost three thousand verses are 17 per cent formulaic.

The *Siete Infantes de Lara* (or *Salas)* survives only through Menéndez Pidal's reconstruction from chronicle prosifications, which produced some five hundred and fifty verses (1951:181-239). It is a brutal story of a family quarrel that leads to treachery and death followed in due time by an equally bloody vengeance, all of which fits into the epic canon in relation to heroes and their missions within a bipartite structure.

Ballad

Whereas the field of the Spanish epic is limited to a very few texts that appear to have originated in Castile from perhaps as early as the mid-twelfth to the late fourteenth centuries, that of the Hispanic ballad *(romance)* is of almost limitless extension. From its first manifestations in the fourteenth century, it has existed in oral tradition up to the present day, although ballad-singing at the present moment unfortunately is slowly dying

away. *Romances* can and have been collected wherever the Spaniards and Portuguese have settled, including the Sephardic Jews, who were expelled at the end of the fifteenth century and have spread even more widely. The resulting number of texts available for study of the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century ballad *(romances viejo)* is relatively limited, but for the *romances modernos* it is almost incalculably large.

In attempting to assess the present state of work on balladry in the Hispanic world, I owe a great debt to Samuel Armistead for having recently published two separate surveys, each with a different focus, on current *romancero* scholarship. "Current Trends in *Romancero* Research" (1984) fulfills the promise of its title, while the second, "Estudios sobre el Romancero en los Estados Unidos" (1983) goes from the nineteenth century to the present with emphasis on the work of scholars living in this country. Both are highly recommended for a more detailed overview of the field.

As in the case of the epic, during the first half of this century, Menéndez Pidal's vigorously expressed views dominated the thinking about the *romancero*. To him we owe the fragmentation theory by which ballad genesis was conceived as the product of the disintegration of the epic, the representation of the ballad as poetry that lives in variants, the nature of variants and their independent lives, and the existence of creative as well as static periods in the history of the *romance,* to name but a few. Several of his epoch-making studies have been put together in one volume, *Estudios sobre el romancero* (1973), and his two-volume work titled *El romancero hispánico (1953)* represents the culmination of a lifetime of work in the field. During this period scholars occupied themselves with the most basic problems: searching for and dating printed ballad texts, historical matters, questions of origins, versification, and ballad classification, as well as studies of individual ballads. It was, in short, the *romancero viejo* upon which scholarly attention was centered. Ballad-collecting from living practioners of the art, which had come about as an offshoot of the Romantic movement, was sporadic in the nineteenth century but became more widespread throughout the Hispanic world in the early decades of this century.

At the time of Menéndez Pidal's death, a new era had begun to open up in Hispanic ballad studies. His grandson, Diego Catalán, had embarked upon a long-range, ambitious program to publish all available *romance* texts starting with those stored in the

Archivo Menéndez Pidal, to step up ballad-collecting efforts before their disappearance, to make catalogs and prepare bibliographical tools for the use of all scholars, and to put all of this material into machine-readable form in such a way as to make possible a great variety of linguistic, stylistic, thematic, and structural studies of a comprehensive nature. The Cátedra Seminario Menéndez Pidal (CSMP), with a permanent staff headed by Diego Catalán, assumed the organization and direction of these vast projects.

Among its multifarious activities, the CSMP has sponsored three international colloquia, each of which has been a stimulus to *romancero* studies. The first, held in Madrid in 1971, provided Catalán with the opportunity to review what the CSMP had already accomplished and to announce his new program. The *actas* of this colloquium were published under the title of *El romancero en la tradición oral moderna* (1972). The second meeting took place in 1977 at the University of California, Davis with a much expanded program. These *actas* came to three volumes under the general heading of *El romancero hoy* (1979). In 1982 the third colloquium was again held in Madrid with an even more extensive program; its *actas* are in press.

The first edition of the ongoing bibliographical project of the CSMP, the *Bibliografía del romancero oral (BRO),* came out in 1980. Its more than 1600 items comprise both texts and studies of the *romancero* from the end of the eighteenth century to the year 1980. Organized by author, with individuals' listings in chronological order, it gives complete bibliographical data, categorizes the work in question according to the geographic or linguistic area to which it relates, and indicates where the publication is to be found. The several indices that follow facilitate access to this information. There is an adjunct projected to this volume, the *Bibliografía descriptiva del romancero oral*, which will describe the specific content of the works listed. In the meantime Armistead's "A Critical Bibliography of the Hispanic Ballad in Oral Tradition (1971-1979)," published in 1979, continues to be indispensable for its brief analyses of individual works, together with the inclusion of a number of items not found in the *BRO,* based on slightly different criteria.

Even though the *BRO* has absorbed all that is pertinent from previous bibliographical sources, it has not necessarily deprived them of their utility since each has its own specific focus and purpose. Of great value are the bibliographies attached to the

Judeo-Spanish ballad collections of Armistead and Silverman, or those of the *El Romancero hoy* volumes, Simmons' *A Bibliography of the "Romance" and Related Forms in Spanish America* (1983), and Nascimento's *Bibliografía do folclore brasileiro* (1971).

Since ballad texts have been culled from widespread sources, complete, dependable catalogs are a prime necessity for the *romancero* scholar interested in either the *romances viejos* or the *modernos*. The *Diccionario de pliegos sueltos poéticos (siglo XVI)* of Rodríguez-Moñino (1970) solved the problem of locating ballads contained in early broadsides. Similarly his four-volume *Manual bibliográfico de cancioneros y romanceros* (1973), completed by Askins, does the same for early printed collections.

The first catalog published under the auspices of the CSMP was Armistead's *El romancero judeo-español en el archivo Menéndez Pidal* (1978b). It is a listing of all of the Judeo-Spanish ballads Menéndez Pidal had assembled over the years, with full bibliographical detail and musical transcriptions edited by Katz. The ballads are organized according to thematic categories. After a summary of the ballad story, the versions are listed chronologically and identified by assonance, first and last verses, place of origin, informant, collector, date collected, printed versions. In addition to a series of indices, among which is a motif index, the third volume contains an anthology of rare ballads from the collection.

The great *Catálogo general descriptivo del Romancero panhispánico (CGR),* which is the project to which the CSMP has given priority since 1977, is the ultimate tool for the researcher in Hispanic balladry. To date, the first three volumes have appeared. The catalog proper is a listing of all of the known ballads in any one of the Hispanic languages thematically classified and described in the following way: identifying code, title(s) by which it is known, geographical spread, common incipits from both old and modern versions, and narrative content with regional variants. This is followed by a bibliography of all published versions of each ballad. This information is transcribed in machine-readable form and stored in an electronic data bank as the permanent base of the *CGR*.

The final goal is not only to provide the scholar with complete information concerning extant texts and where they are to be found, but to put all of those texts properly categorized within the researcher's reach. For this purpose there has been created the

Archivo Internacional Electrónico del Romancero (AIER), which will consist of the complete transcription in machine-readable form of all known Hispanic ballad texts, codified for linguistic, poetic, and narrative elements and classified as indicated above. Ultimately this will lead to the publication of the entire corpus of ballads by a magnetic tape photo-composition system. (See *El Romancero hoy* 1979c:335-63 for further details and a demonstration of the cataloging system.)

As far as the *romances viejos* are concerned, the publication of archival materials has been slow but constant. Facsimile editions of miscellaneous groups of *pliegos sueltos* were later supplemented in the series of Joyas Bibliográficas by handsome facsimiles of *pliegos* residing in important libraries. These in turn are being followed by critical editions. Editions of the rare sixteenth-century *romanceros* have also gradually been put out, sometimes in facsimile, other times in critical editions. Rodríguez-Moñino initiated many of these projects, which are now being continued by Askins (e.g., 1981). Di Stefano has promised a much-needed edition of all of the sixteenth-century *romances*.

Another one of the continuing CSMP projects has been the editing and publication of the volumes of the series *Romancero tradicional de las lenguas hispánicas,* which are compilations, starting from the Menéndez Pidal archives, of all of the known versions, old and modern, of individual ballads or of thematically related groups of ballads. The first two volumes present ballads on epic themes, while the succeeding ones, for a total of twelve to date, all have to do with ballads on folklore themes. Of particular interest are the three volumes (vi, vii, viii) titled *Gerineldo, el paje y la infanta,* which contain five hundred and fifty-one versions of *Gerineldo* alone followed by two hundred and sixty-eight more in which it is combined with *La condesita*. The possibilities for linguistic, stylistic, and thematic studies with this wealth of textual material can readily be appreciated.

Ballad collecting of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century produced some very uneven collections, the quality and usefulness depending upon the skill of the collectors and the editorial criteria applied upon their publication. The best of them are invaluable documents today. The emphasis on field collecting in recent years is due in large measure to the concentrated efforts of Catalán and of the eminent scholars associated with the CSMP.

Among the present-day scholar/collectors, the accom-

plishments of Armistead and Silverman on the Judeo-Spanish tradition stand out. Not only have they collected with success in far-flung corners, but their work, which makes use of both field and archival materials, is always presented in such a form as to be of maximum usefulness to the scholar. The distinguished musicologist Israel Katz joins the team whenever music is involved. An example is *The Judeo-Spanish Ballad Chapbooks of Yacob Abraham Yoná* (Armistead and Silverman 1971), with transcriptions, translations, full bibliography, and extensive commentary concerning motifs, narrative structure, contamination and fusion, formulas, and lexicon, all enriched with pan-European analogs. Another valuable collection using similar materials is that of Bénichou, *Romancero judeo-español de Marruecos* (1968b).

Recent fieldwork throughout the Hispano-Portuguese domain has been so extensive that only a summary account of it can be given here. The model for much of this work was Catalán's two-volume collection from the Canary Islands, *La flor de la marañuela* (1969a). His efforts have been continued by Trapero, the first volume of whose collection, *Romancero de Gran Canaria,* appeared in 1982. Work continues throughout the Peninsula. Recent publications include *Romances de Castilla y León* of Joaquín and Luis Díaz (1982) and *Los corridos o romances andaluces* of José Bias Vega (1982). In Spanish America recent work has been done in Colombia, Chile, Venezuela, and Costa Rica. Paredes continues to work actively in Mexico and on the frontier. Work carried out many years ago by Espinosa (1946-47, 1953) in New Mexico has been supplemented by Robb's *Hispanic Folk Music in New Mexico* (1980). Armistead has had considerable success ballad-hunting in Louisiana (1978c). Additions to the Sephardic collection have come from such places as Romania, Yugoslavia, Israel, Rhodes, Tangier, Argentina, Uruguay, Colombia, Venezuela, Canada, New York, Pennsylvania, California, and Washington.

The Portuguese ballad tradition has proved to be especially copious and rich. The great ballad collection of the Portuguese folklorist, Leite de Vasconcellos, *Romanceiro português,* came out between 1958 and 1960. There appears to have been little active collecting recently in Portugal itself except in Tras-os-Montes. On the other hand, one of the most extraordinarily successful examples of fieldwork is that of Joanne Purcell, who between 1969 and 1970 in the Azores and Madeira recorded some 1400 ballad versions

representing seventy traditional ballad themes. The first volume of her collection will soon be coming out under the title of *Romanceiro Portugués das Ilhas Atlánticas*. Another equally indefatigable investigator has been da Costa Fontes. He has now either published or has in press collections of Portuguese ballads from Canada, New England, California, São Jorge, and Tras-os-Montes in northern Portugal (see, e.g., 1979 and 1980). Ballad collecting in Brazil has been less rewarding, where the most extensive collection to date is that of da Silva Lima (1977). The rich store of Galician ballad texts in the Archivo Menéndez Pidal remains unpublished.

Catalonia also has a long ballad tradition, of which the *Romancerillo catalán* of Milá y Fontanals (1882) was the first edited collection. A recent important contribution many years in the making is Bohigas' *Cançoner popular català* (1983). Since there has been considerable recent fieldwork in that region, some interesting results should be forthcoming.

A few years ago Catalán reviewed the contents of the Archivo Menéndez Pidal to assess its riches and its gaps and underscored the need for systematic exploration in the Peninsula to supply what was lacking (1972b). This is precisely what the CSMP has been trying to do in organizing training seminars every summer to go on ballad-collecting expeditions in promising regions of Spain. The fifty days of fieldwork of the *encuesta* of the summer of 1977 produced recordings of three thousand ballad versions, many with music. The two volumes of *Voces nuevas del romancero castellano-leonés* are the result, which contain versions of one hundred and fifty-four different *romances*. The value of these *encuestas* as well as those carried out through individual initiative is obvious. There are still *romances* to be found, even though every year it becomes more difficult and the harvest more sparse.

Many large-scale studies of the *romancero* will be possible once the massive effort to put all available ballad texts into machine-readable form is completed, but that is still a long way in the future. In the meantime there is no dearth of ballad studies. In fact, they are so numerous and so varied that it is not easy to present a synthetic overview. The studies in the *actas* of the three international symposia already mentioned probably offer the most valid cross-section of work being carried out on the *romancero*.

Studies of individual ballads have always been and continue to be an important part of *romancero* criticism. The work of

Armistead and Silverman contains many admirable studies of this sort, as does that of Bénichou. Diego Catalán himself has published two volumes of essays in which single or related ballads are analyzed and their history traced (1969b, 1970). Others who have carried out commendable work in the same mode include de Chasca, Avalle-Arce, Alvar, and da Costa Fontes.

One of the more innovative areas of research is that of ballad geography, by which is meant ballad diffusion. An essay by Menéndez Pidal (1920) on the geographic spread of *Gerineldo* and *El conde Sol,* both separate and combined, formed the starting point of an expanded study by Catalán and Galmés more than thirty years later (1954). They concluded that propagation proceeds not only by variants but also by versions, which in turn lead to regional types, and that certain types have greater expansive force than others. More recently Suzanne Petersen has succeeded in generating maps by computer that illuminate this process in greater detail (1979).

The process of creation and transmission has been the subject of several stimulating studies. Bénichou (1968a) attempted to move away from a backward-looking historical perspective to a new focus on the creative potential of the oral poetic process. Di Stefano (1967) goes further in considering each version an autonomous structure that reflects the environment from which it emerged. Catalán (1972a) refuted this concept and argued that the *romance* is an open system which keeps adapting itself to the human environment. Closely tied up with the foregoing is the question of memory and invention, on which Catalán based a long study (1970-71). His conclusion is that there is a continual struggle between inherited material and creative initiative that leads to some kind of a compromise.

With the hope of being able to analyze the poetic process in concrete terms, Braulio do Nascimento (1964) undertook to measure mathematically both verbal and thematic variation in the ballad. He tallied semantemes in forty-seven versions of a single Brazilian ballad and demonstrated that while the vocabulary in common represented less than one per cent of the total, the proportion of verbal, substantival, and adjectival semantemes remained virtually the same. In the case of thematic variation, he compared thematic segments from ballad to ballad and charted variation in terms of increase or decrease in the number of thematic segments and by both ordering and substitution of their constituent elements. He

was able to establish the semantic areas within which variation tended to fall and to show in this way that it was not arbitrary, but rather obeyed a kind of internal discipline that set its own limits (1966).

Braulio's work influenced Catalán, who incorporated several of its features into the computerized program of the Archivo Internacional Electrónico del Romancero (AIER) for the development of a poetics of the *romancero*. In a pilot project of his own (1972a), Catalán compared sixteenth-century and modern versions of a single ballad. His results indicated that the old and modern versions coincide in forty per cent of their thematic elements but in only a little over twenty per cent of their verses. At the same time forty-two per cent of their verses are related on a verbal level, which led him to conclude that singers retain in their memories both the thematic and the verbal structure of a song, thus confirming Menéndez Pidal's theory that textual memorization is an essential part of oral transmission. Taking a different tack, Petersen (1972) examined structural differences between the *romances viejos* and *modernos* and discovered that the proportion of dialogue is significantly higher in the modern ballads, and among them that the greatest percentage of verses in direct discourse is to be found in the Portuguese ballads.

In relation to narratological questions, Catalán has continued to move toward a form of semiotic analysis (1975), which has been carried forward by Mariscal de Rhett (1982). Another new direction to emerge is that of the sociological approach, which is bringing back a concern for the context from which the ballad emerges (e.g., Benmayor 1979 and Cantarella 1982).

At the same time, some of the older approaches to ballad study have been somewhat neglected, among them matters of style and language. A very sensitive essay by Gilman (1972b) represented a kind of landmark in *romancero* studies. Comparisons of epic and ballad language were undertaken by both Lapesa (1967) and Webber (1980a), while the study of formulas, initiated by the latter (1951) and taken up by Beatie (1964), has also entered into the work of González (1981) and Ochrymowycz (1975). Miletich (1975) has studied repetition in a number of forms, tense use has been investigated by Szertics (1967) and Sandmann (1953), but purely linguistic studies are missing.

Even though ballad is song, poetics have taken precedence over music, although a hopeful sign is that new ballad collections

are including more musical transcriptions than ever before. The comparative approach has also been overlooked in the majority of ballad studies, since few researchers choose to view the *romance* within the framework of the pan-European ballad, notable exceptions being the work of Armistead and Silverman and that of Rogers (1980). Miletich (1975) has compared Spanish and Serbo-Croatian balladry and Rechnitz (1979) Spanish and Romanian.

One final problem that arises, one which is fundamental to ballad classification on an international scale, is the establishing of text types. The lack of a uniform system is at present a major obstacle to pan-European ballad studies. The first step is the setting up within a given ballad tradition of a standard set of ballad titles that are indicative of thematic content, a task which still has not been accomplished for Spanish and Portuguese balladry (see Armistead 1976:188).

Lyric

It is common knowledge that all peoples have a narrative song tradition and a lyric song tradition, and in many instances one blends into the other. In the Hispanic tradition we speak of the category of lyric ballads, and the Mexican *corrido,* derived from the *romance,* is sometimes classified under *romance,* other times under lyric. In recent years a great deal more attention has been paid to the *romance* than to the lyric, perhaps because of the recent impetus given to *romancero* studies.

The Iberian Peninsula has played a vital role in the history of the lyric in that from there have come the earliest extant lyric forms in a Romance tongue, forms which offer persuasive evidence of the existence of a popular lyric tradition common to all of Romania in the early Middle Ages. The Romance *kharja* used by Hispano-Arabic poets as the final verses of the *muwaššaḥa* attests to a Hispanic lyric tradition which can be dated as early as the first half of the eleventh century, and perhaps even a century earlier if the testimony of the Arabic literary historians is to be believed. Of great interest for the student of oral poetry is the work of García Gómez (1975), who studied these little songs in relation to the refrains of the popular *villancico*. The similarities between the *kharja* and the *cantiga de amigo* of the medieval

Galician-Portuguese lyric—in content (both are women's love laments) as well as in form—and in turn with the *villancico*, are probably not the result of direct influence, but rather of a common lyric tradition (in this regard see Monroe 1975).

Like the *kharja* and the *cantiga de amigo,* the texts came to be written down only when the genre captured the interest of professional poets. The earliest *villancico* texts appear in the fifteenth century about the same time as the *romances.* Foremost among the studies on the *villancico* are those of Sánchez Romeralo (1969), who as a distinguished member of the CSMP team has also made many fine contributions to *romance* studies. In *El villancico* he determined the stylistic features of the lyric and compared them with the help of a computer to those of the *romance.* Just as the *romance* was preserved and cultivated among the exiled Spanish Jews, so also was the lyric, as can be seen in Alvar (1966) and the lyric songs listed in Armistead's *Romancero judeo-español* (1978b). As for other critical studies of the lyric, highly recommended are Le Gentil's two volumes on the Spanish and Portuguese lyric (1949-53), as well as the studies of Frenk Alatorre (1968-69, 1978) and of Asensio (1970).

With the upsurge in interest in oral traditional poetry, many sizable collections of the popular lyric have been assembled from various parts of the Hispanic world (for example, those of Alin 1968 and Magis 1969). But these are only bits and pieces in terms of what remains to be collected. It would take a massive effort comparable to the one organized by Diego Catalán for the *romance* to make inroads in the field. Mexico has fared better where, under the direction of Margit Frenk Alatorre, the *Cancionero folklórico de México* has been coming out volume by volume.

Folk Tale

Many assiduous collectors who set out to find *romances* have ended up recording lyric songs and folk tales as well. The fate of the folk tale in recent times has not been very much different from that of the lyric, despite the fact that there is considerable testimony as to the vitality of the story-telling tradition. Studies of the Hispanic folk tale have often been carried out for nationalistic (or regionalistic) reasons or have been identified exclusively with folklore research and thus have not found a place

within the framework of Spanish oral literature studies.

Spanish medieval literature is particularly rich in collections of stories of varied and remote origin culled from both oral and written sources. The first European author to turn such a collection into a literary masterpiece was Don Juan Manuel in his *El conde Lucanor* (or *Libro de Patronio,* 1969). Throughout Spanish literature story collections appear in one guise or another among the works of the most important authors of prose fiction. It was not until the Romantic period that the folk tale was sought out and valued for its own sake.

The classic folk tale collection is that of Espinosa, *Cuentos populares españoles* (1946-47). Collections are quite numerous, but, like those of *romances,* they are uneven in value. Some have been put out as children's literature. Among the field collectors is da Costa Fontes, who, after completing a series of *romance* collections, is now working on the Portuguese folk tales he has recorded. Recently Slater published *Stories on a String: The Brazilian "Literatura de Corde"* (1982), the product of a collecting expedition. Judith Seeger (1982) also found in Brazil a richer fund of stories than of ballads. In short, this is a fertile field that has barely begun to be explored. The folk tale, as we also know, is an excellent vehicle for the study of narratology. It is even possible that a comparative study of ballad and folk tale narrative might help to illuminate the structure of one or the other.

Proverb

Although proverbs *(refranes)* are a minor genre, they form an important segment of Hispanic oral tradition. Every Spaniard prides himself on his use of *refranes,* and in some it has been developed into a fine art. There have been numerous supplements over the centuries to the famous seventeenth-century *Vocabulario de refranes y frases proverbiales* of Correas (1924). The production of *refraneros* has been a favorite exercise for many men of letters. There is a fundamental difficulty, however, in proverb-hunting. It takes a special sensibility to distinguish between a genuinely popular proverb and what sounds as if it should be one, which means that proverb collections have to be used with great care. At the same time, the proverb offers a special opportunity, because of its brevity, to study certain syntactic structures, ellipsis in

particular, together with variation under strictly controlled conditions.

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It should be manifest from all of the foregoing that studies in Hispanic oral literature have tended to be self-contained and to go their own way. The recent emphasis on text-collecting will continue to bring forth new materials. Equally worthy of praise are innovative forms of research, particularly those carried out with the aid of the computer. All too infrequently have scholars taken the comparative approach and sought in other oral literatures confirmation or refutation of conclusions reached on the basis of the Hispanic scene. Yet there is in the Hispanic world, perhaps more than anywhere else, an awareness of and pride in oral traditional forms, which bodes well for maintaining these traditions in the future and for continuing organized scholarly investigation concerning them.

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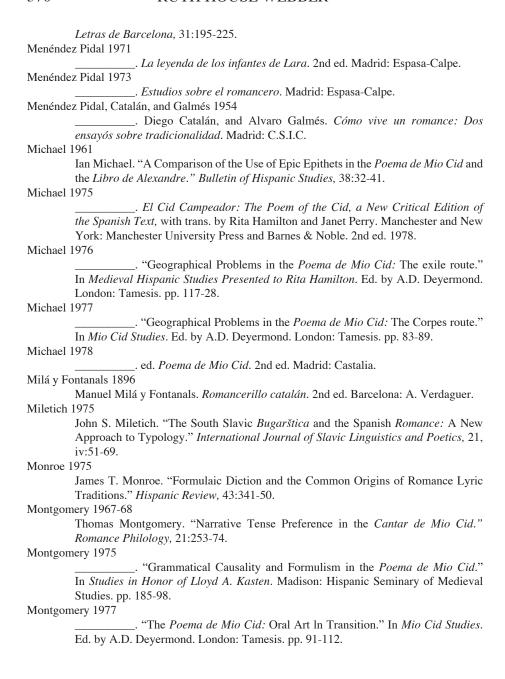   Tamesis. pp. 73-81.
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