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Source: *Journal of the Folklore Institute*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (1976), pp. 37-55

Published by: [Indiana University Press](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3813813>

Accessed: 22/06/2014 19:42

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“ROMANCES TRADICIONALES” AND SPANISH TRADITIONAL BALLADS: MENÉNDEZ PIDAL VS. VLADIMIR PROPP

Bruce A. Beatie

In Hispanic scholarship, the *romancero tradicional* represents not a problem but a source of glory and of pride for its themes support a strong sense of national-ethnic identity.¹ In terms both of number and variety of surviving texts, its sixteenth century *corpus* is one of the richest among early European ballad traditions, and the relatively worldwide diaspora of peninsular languages and culture has imbued the modern ballad tradition with a unique richness. Scholars from Wolf and Hofmann to the collective *Seminario Menéndez Pidal* have provided an enviable basis of scholarship.

Yet to the scholar who approaches the *romancero* from the broader perspectives of European ballad scholarship² or from structural or field-oriented folklore analysis, the *romancero* tradition presents a serious problem. Julio Rodríguez Púertolas wrote in 1972 of the *romancero* as the “historia de una frustración.”³ It is one purpose of this essay to suggest that the problem, and hence the frustration, resides not in the *romancero* tradition itself, but in prevalent scholarly attitudes toward it. In order to clarify this point, the essay sets up an artificial opposition between two scholars who, though they were contemporaries, seem never to have been aware of each other’s work.⁴

When Wolf and Hofmann first edited the sixteenth century *romancero* in 1856,⁵ it may have been more a Germanic sense of order than a feeling of post-Romantic nationalism that determined their ordering of the texts. To begin with the “national themes” of Rodrigo, Bernardo del Carpio, Fernan González, the Cid, and the *romances fronterizs* was, after all, to follow thematic chronology. There can be little doubt, however, that motives related

to nationalism influenced the early work of the three great Hispanic scholars who studied the *romancero*: Milá y Fontanals, Menéndez y Pelayo, and don Ramón Menéndez Pidal. Of the three, Menéndez Pidal seemed the least narrow in his perspective. His scholarly work over seventy years left no aspect of Medieval Spanish literature untouched. It shows a surprisingly non-Spanish awareness of literary and scholarly traditions outside of the Iberian peninsula (one thinks especially of his comments on the German *Nibelungenlied*) and, as Gerald Brenan understated it, his work “altered our way of looking at Spanish literature.”⁶

Menéndez Pidal’s concern with the concept of traditionality began with his study of primitive Spanish lyric in 1919 but in his 1927 monograph on the *romancero* he reached only a temporary conclusion.⁷ He continued to elaborate his ideas throughout his life, absorbing and transmuting the suggestions of other scholars into his own spreading system. But the essential complex that concerns me here—what Deyermond recently called “la teoría del neotradicionalismo”⁸—had taken on definitive form in the 1920s. Its basic doctrines postulate a continuous development of traditional narrative since the Visigothic epoch, reelaborated constantly by anonymous minstrels, or *juglares*. The epic, Menéndez Pidal argued, originated simultaneously with the events it narrated, and though initially faithful to historic events, it acquired fictional elements in the process of reelaboration. These narratives, once turned into prose, formed the basis of the several early Spanish chronicles, which in turn influenced later reelaborations of some of the epics. Disintegration of the longer epic narratives produced the *romancero* tradition, which then began to be influenced by the accounts in the chronicles.

Neotradicionalismo, to put it another way, postulates a complex interrelationship of cross-influences between oral and written traditions, between lay and clerical poets, between disparate genres, and even between different languages, since some of the chronicle material adduced is in Latin. Since the only surviving independent textual evidence consists of the chronicles, the *Poema del Cid*, two late epics, and the sixteenth-century *romancero* tradition, the theory depends to a dangerous degree on hypothetical reconstructions and approaches circularity in some of its reasoning. It ignores the fact that no oral tradition whose internal processes have been described actually corresponds to the development proposed by the theory.⁹ Yet Menéndez Pidal’s theory of *neotradicionalismo* dominates and determines even the most recent scholarship on the Medieval Spanish epic and the *romancero* in a way paralleled only by the influence of Andreas Heusler’s theories on the *Nibelungenlied*.¹⁰

In 1928, however, one year after Menéndez Pidal’s classic work on the

romancero appeared, two developments occurred in other fields that should have had a profound influence on the analysis of Spanish traditional literature. Vladimir Propp published in Leningrad his *Morfologija skazki (Morphology of the Folktale)*; a work to which we shall shortly pay some attention. In Paris, Milman Parry was writing the dissertation on the epithets in Homer which led him, in the 1930s, to study the living tradition of orally-composed epics in Yugoslavia, and which resulted, principally through Parry's disciple Albert Lord, in the definitive statement of what has become known as the "oral-formulaic theory." The work of Parry and Lord on the style and internal dynamics of oral traditions,¹¹ and that of Propp on thematic patterns in folklore,¹² has had epochal significance in all areas of the study of traditional literature except the Hispanic. Among classicists, folklorists, Medieval French scholars, Germanists and Slavicists, the theories have inspired imitation and attack with equal enthusiasm. To my knowledge, however, Hispanic scholarship totally ignores Propp's work, and the curious reaction of Hispanic scholars to the oral-formulaic theory illustrates the prevailing omnipotence of Menéndez Pidal's *neotradicionalismo*. Let us look briefly at that reaction.¹³

In 1951 Ruth House Webber published an article on formulistic diction in the *romancero* which was based only on Parry's few published articles.¹⁴ In 1964 I attempted to take Webber's work a step forward by applying to the *romancero* the more definitive oral-formulaic theory elaborated in Lord's *Singer of Tales*.¹⁵ Since 1964, significant work in this line has been done by Alan Deyermond and his students at the University of London,¹⁶ and by the students of Edmund de Chasca at the University of Iowa. The 1968 Iowa dissertation by Ochrymowycz¹⁷ takes up, in depth, a question raised in my 1964 article concerning the oral-traditional formulicity of the *romances carolingios*. Deyermond and his students have not only studied traditional style but have also in 1972 discussed "Folk motifs in the Medieval Spanish epic," unfortunately using not Propp but the Thompson motif-index as a base.¹⁸

Yet these have remained isolated ventures. Robert Hathaway could still write in the summer of 1974 on "The art of epic epithets in the 'Cantar de mio Cid'" in almost total ignorance of the oral-formulaic theory,¹⁹ just as Edith Rogers could study thematic patterns in the *romancero* without betraying knowledge of the Thompson motif-index, much less of Propp.²⁰ Edmund de Chasca's 1967 revision of his earlier work on the *Cantar de Mio Cid*²¹ takes the most thorough accounting of the oral-formulaic theory yet to appear in Hispanic scholarship, but he manages—following Menéndez Pidal's final study of the *Chanson de Roland*—to transmute it into a subordinate

aspect of *neotradicionalismo*. In his 1970 essay on “Memoria e invención en el romancero de tradición oral,” Diego Catalán was able not only to ignore the question entirely but, in a curious oversight, to mention Webber’s study only in a footnote as one which “planteaba un conjunto de problemas que podrían haber servido de partida para nuevas investigaciones; pero nadie se preocupó de seguir ahondando en el tema.”²²

When Catalán and the *Seminario Menéndez Pidal* began publishing the *Romancero tradicional de las lenguas hispánicas* in 1957, their theoretical apparatus remained wholly within *neotradicionalismo*, and they began with the structure established a hundred years before by Wolf and Hofmann: publishing, in *Primavera*-order, *romances* of Rodrigo, Bernardo del Carpio, Fernán González, and the Infantes de Lara.²³ With the conclusion of those cycles in the second volume published in 1963, it was generally expected that the next volume would be the *romancero del Cid*, and scholars looked forward to having finally at hand the total documentary evidence to reach their own conclusions about the relative traditionality of that cycle which was so central to the whole history of Hispanic scholarship.

It was no small surprise, therefore, when the third volume in 1969 was devoted to *romances de tema odiseico*, and when the fourth and fifth volumes in 1971-72 still were devoted to the same cycle.²⁴ Though the seminar’s approach to collecting and editing remains neotraditionalist in these last three volumes, their content marks a new direction in Spanish ballad studies. In this essay I propose to take several more steps in that new direction.

The new direction marked by these three volumes is *thematic*. The seminar has shifted its attention from national themes to an international thematic complex and from “traditional ballads” in the sense of *neotradicionalismo* to ballads whose traditionality is at least questionable. In my 1964 article I had pointed out that, on stylistic grounds, the opposite seemed to be true; the “romances carolingios” showed a higher and more typical degree of oral-traditional formulaicity than did the *romances* on national themes. Ochrymowycz’ 1968 dissertation underlined this suggestion, and more recently Stephen Gilman has tentatively agreed with my suggested conclusions.²⁵

This essay seeks first to argue the point I made in 1964, but on thematic rather than stylistic grounds, and then to suggest a new way of looking at the question of traditionality in *romances* on native themes. To do so I will contrast *neotradicionalismo* with the thematic approach to traditional narrative established by Vladimir Propp.²⁶ In order to provide a concrete and relatively complete example of the Proppian analytical method,

I will first apply it to the most well-known of the *romances de tema odiseico*, the mini-epic “Conde Dirlos”²⁷ which has been thoroughly studied by Entwistle.²⁸

Except for an *initial situation* (Dirlos is at home enjoying his newly-married state), the tale has no preparatory section. Charlemagne wishes to conquer the realms of the Moorish king Aliarde (*lack*), and sends letters asking Dirlos to undertake the task (*mediation*). Dirlos agrees reluctantly (*counteraction*), leaving his wife in the care of Beltrán, Gaiferos, Oliveros and Roldán, and telling her that if he does not return in seven years, she is to remarry. He and his men take a ship for the Near East (*departure*). Angry at being forced to leave his wife, he swears never to return nor to send word to France (Propp would call this a *motivation*, not a regular function). He attacks the sultan (*struggle*) and takes the city (*victory* but also *liquidation* in a way, though Charlemagne is not informed). Thereupon, for no apparent reason, he lets his beard and hair grow (*branding*), and remains overseas for fifteen years (Propp would call this a *connective* element).

One day he falls asleep and dreams that his wife is in the arms of another (a *motivation* again). He calls out his men and sets sail for France (*escape*),²⁹ swearing his knights to keep his identity secret. Upon his arrival, he is unrecognized because of his beard and hair (*disguise*). He learns that the *infante* Celinos has forged letters telling of his death, has taken possession of his lands, and is about to marry his wife (*fraud*). There follows a series of *recognitions*: Dirlos goes to see for himself, and is recognized by his cousin Beltrán, his wife Gaiferos, and eventually by everyone in the emperor’s presence. He is recognized, not because of his physical appearance but always because of his voice. Dirlos challenges Celinos; some of the men take his side and some take Celinos’ side (*exposure*), and the resulting division threatens the empire. Roldán therefore reconciles the two (an inverted *punishment*), Dirlos regains his lands and wife (*wedding*), and the poem concludes with Dirlos ceremonially cutting his beard and hair (*transfiguration*), and with a festive celebration.

This *romance* shows all but six of Propp’s twenty-two “tale” functions (i. e., excluding the nine functions in the Preparatory Section) and they are all in the same sequence, with only the *transfiguration* function a bit out of its normal place. The ones lacking all belong to the sphere of the donor or helper: *Testing*, *Reaction*, *Reward*, *Transference*, *Pursuit* and *Rescue*.³⁰ The thematic complex presented in “Conde Dirlos” is not only dominant in European folktale tradition as well as in the *Odyssey*, but also, as Gertrude R. Levy has shown,³¹ it is found in the ancient Babylonian *Epic of Gilgamesh* and the Sanskrit *Ramayana*. Its prevalence in longer Middle High German

narratives has been ably demonstrated by Paul H. Gottschalk³² and Ruth H.R. Firestone,³³ and the Proppian method, with some curious modifications, was applied to the *Chanson de Roland* and the *Poema del Cid* by Eugene Dorfman.³⁴ Alan Dundes even attempted, though without great success, to generalize the Proppian functions in application to American Indian tales.³⁵

That the *romance* of Conde Dirlos is, in one sense at least, traditional, is clear. But it is an anomaly among *romances*: in a tradition where the average length is some 50 octosyllabic verses, its 1,366 verses make it, as noted, a miniature epic. What about the average *romance*? Let us look first at the *romances de tema odiseico*.

Apart from the *Dirlos*, there are only five *romances* separately identified in the three last volumes of the *Romancero tradicional*:

La partida del esposo³⁶
 La vuelta del navegante³⁷
 El conde Antores³⁸
 La condesita (or: El conde Sol)³⁹
 Gerineldo⁴⁰

The first, “La partida del esposo,” is very close thematically to the opening of *Dirlos*, but is not otherwise represented in the sixteenth century; among Sephardic Jews in Greece, Yugoslavia, the Near East and Morocco, however, seventy-eight modern versions have been collected. It concentrates on the two functions of *mediation* and *counteraction*: letters demand that the hero leave to fight, and in parting he tells his wife to marry someone like himself if he does not return in seven years; in some versions this is followed by the *disguise-recognition* themes central to another *romance*, “La vuelta del hijo maldecido.” In either case, the emotional focus is on the sorrow of the forsaken lady. The sixteenth century *romance de Blanca-Niña*, which has some phrasal similarities to “La partida,”⁴¹ is thematically different: a lover, not a husband, has missed the lady for seven years, and the husband, returning from hunting, catches them *in flagrante delicto*. This inversion of the *fraud-exposure* functions is closer to “Gerineldo,” to which we shall return.

Like “La partida,” “La vuelta del navegante” is represented only in modern Sephardic traditions, but is much more widespread than the former: fifty-nine versions in the Canaries, Bosnia, Cataluña, Galicia, Portugal and Brazil. Its *initial situation* is the long absence of the husband, usually seven years; returning unrecognized (*disguise*) he finds his wife about to remarry

(*fraud*); upon *recognition* by his wife, their marriage is resumed (*wedding*); in some versions, the frustrated second bridegroom is sent away (*punishment*). The emotional focus is most concisely expressed in what forms the last octosyllabic pair of many Galician and Portuguese versions: “;que los amores primeros no se pueden olvidar!”⁴² This most widespread of all European ballad types has been studied thoroughly by Erich Seemann.⁴³

“El conde Antores,” for which the Seminar has found twenty-four versions, in this case peninsular as well as Sephardic, contains essentially the same thematic complex as “La partida” and “La vuelta” combined, though the departure is tightly compressed into a few initial lines, and the main focus is an elaborate *recognition* function, in which the returning Conde asks a variable series of parallelistic questions:⁴⁴

Dime, dime pastorcito,
dime y no me has de negar,
si llegaremos bastante
donde las bodas están.

In many versions, however, the ending is different: seeing that his wife has *already* married another, the Conde returns sadly into exile. It is interesting that, in the Leonese version quoted above, which Menéndez Pidal collected in 1909, the returning hero is called “el Conde Dirlos.”

Out of this whole thematic complex, however, the *romance* whose tradition has spread the farthest (indeed, what may be textually the most well-documented ballad in the whole European tradition) is “La condesita,” called in the *Primavera* “El conde Sol.” Three hundred and thirteen variants of the simple *romance* fill the fourth volume of the *Romancero tradicional*, while 256 variants in which it is “contaminated” with “Gerineldo” nearly fill the fifth. This latter volume also contains 47 “literary” versions of “La condesita” which Sr. Catalán considers related to the oral tradition. Whereas “La partida” and “La vuelta” survive principally in Sephardic traditions, “La condesita” is essentially peninsular: of the 616 variants published, only 30 are Sephardic, and only two are Hispano-American.

“La condesita” is closely related thematically to “La partida” and “La vuelta,” especially in using the elaborated *recognition* sequence; but it has one significant change which totally alters both its functional structure and its effect. Let me summarize the story before I analyze its functional structure:

The *conde* (in some versions also called Dirlos) must go to war, leaving his young wife; in desperation she asks to accompany

him, but he refuses and tells her to marry again if he does not return in seven years.

Seven years pass, and she is under pressure to marry again. Dressing herself as a pilgrim, *la condesita* goes in search of him. She wanders for a long time, eventually arriving at a castle where, through the questioning series, she learns it belongs to her husband, who is about to remarry. In her pilgrim's disguise she penetrates to her husband, asks alms, and is recognized by a ring, a skirt, or both. After reacting to the shock, the *conde* dismisses his new sweetheart and returns to *la condesita*.

Since *la condesita* here plays the role of hero, the sequence of functions now becomes:

Absentation	
Interdiction	
Lack	
Mediation	
Counteraction	= Violation
Departure	
Transference	
Task	
Solution	
Disguise	
(Fraud)	with overtones of Testing
Recognition	
Liquidation	= Wedding

Comparing “La condesita” with the other *romances de tema odiseico* clearly demonstrates Propp’s assertion (pp. 19-20) that the same surface action can serve entirely different functions when the narrative structure changes. Although “La condesita” is closely related to “El Conde Dirlos,” to “La vuelta,” and to “El Conde Antores,” even sharing many verbal parallels, its structure is significantly different. It may not be too venturesome to suggest that the different structure is related to the vast difference in traditional distribution.

There remains “Gerineldo” to consider. Like the “Blanca–Niña” of the sixteenth century, it does not belong to the *tema odiseico*. In the early broadsides, its story is as follows:

While the king is asleep, Gerineldo is invited to sleep with the princess (*task-solution*); the king awakes, discovers them

sleeping, and places his sword between them (*pursuit*); with her help they flee (*rescue*) and are married in another country (*wedding*).

“Gerineldo” is clearly related to the class of traditional narratives which German scholars have called *Brautraubgeschichten* (bride-theft tales),⁴⁵ in which the difficult *task* lies in abducting the sought-for bride from the protection of a hostile father-figure who may often function as villain. In the present context, it substitutes for the “La partida” themes as the opening of “Condesita” ballads, by varying its own ending; upon discovery, Gerineldo flees alone, telling his lover to marry another if he does not return in seven years, a change which leads naturally into the set of themes of “La condesita.”

This analysis of the *romances de tema odiseico* demonstrates that these ballads present no problem to the European ballad scholar; they belong directly within one of the central European narrative traditions. Their only problematical aspect in the past was that, until the last three volumes of the *Romancero tradicional*, they had no place within neotraditionalist theories.⁴⁶

But what of the *romances* on native themes? Do they still represent a special problem for the European folklorist? The difficulty of answering that question is illustrated graphically by some statistical comparisons. Volumes III-V of the *Romancero tradicional* contain only six *romances*, but a total of 739 variants from both the sixteenth-century and modern traditions, or about 123 variants per *romance*. The first two volumes, however, contain 185 separately-identified *romances*, but a total of only 306 variants, or about 1.7 variants per *romance*. That fact by itself would seem to suggest the nontraditionality of the *romancero histórico*, a suggestion surely abhorrent to Hispanists, and in any case as over-hasty a judgment as was the dismissal of the *romances juglarescos* on the part of the neotraditionalists. Yet how does one approach the question of traditionality in these ballads?

What was done above with the *romances de tema odiseico* suggests one approach: a careful functional analysis in Proppian terms. Such a study, however, would go well beyond what can be managed in a single essay. But in order to reach some tentative conclusions more quickly, one may try a somewhat eclectic method combining a Proppian approach with another. I propose to demonstrate this method upon the cycles of Rodrigo and of Bernardo del Carpio.

The “other approach” was suggested by Barre Toelken in an effort to arrive at an “oral canon of the Child ballads.”⁴⁷ Toelken argued that, though we may know nothing about the provenience of a particular ballad-text,

there are criteria by which we can approach defining its degree of traditionality. One is formulaic style, a criterion I choose to ignore here for reasons of space. Another is the number and nature of known variants: a ballad known only in a printed broadside, he argues, is less definitely traditional than one collected from a singer in Appalachia; a ballad known in several variants is more traditional than one with only one known text; a ballad with at least one field-collected variant is more traditional than one whose variants all derive from printed sources; and finally, a ballad whose variants extend over some considerable period of time is more traditional than one whose variants are all close in date. Menéndez Pidal would have argued that Toelken is confusing traditionality and popularity: categories he was at pains to distinguish and to define. Folklorists, however, have found that popularity and traditionality are *not* exclusive categories, but rather points along a spectrum; popularity which lasts over time inevitably becomes traditionality.

My approach to the cycles of Rodrigo and Bernardo, therefore, will have three phases. First, following the initial step of Propp's approach, I will analyze the thematic content of the cycle as a whole, rather than of each separate *romance*. Using Toelken's criteria, I will then establish the degree of traditionality of each theme. And finally, I will compare the themes identified as traditional with Propp's sequence of functions.

First, the cycle of Rodrigo, *el último godo*. In the *Romancero tradicional* the cycle contains 43 separate romances, in a total of 149 variants, 38 of them from modern oral tradition. I have identified 34 themes.⁴⁸ In biographical order, they are:

1. Rodrigo's self-coronation⁴⁹
2. The quest of the Duquesa de Loreyna
3. His violation of the House of Hercules leads to a prophecy of Spain's downfall
4. Rodrigo sees La Cava bathing
5. In a monologue he expresses his love
6. Philosophy: the power of Venus
7. Rodrigo woos La Cava
8. She rejects his suit
9. He takes her by force
10. La Cava laments and accuses Rodrigo
11. A friend advises her to write to her father
12. She writes to don Julian
13. Reading the letter, he (laments and) swears revenge
14. Julian sends (goes) to the Moorish king

15. He advises Rodrigo to disband his army
16. The Moors invade
17. Rodrigo dreams of treachery
18. He goes to battle
19. The battle lost, Rodrigo flees
20. Rodrigo curses La Cava
21. The infamies committed by Julian, Orpas and the Moors are described
22. Seeing the infamies, La Cava laments
23. Told of the defeat by Rodrigo, the queen reports a prophetic vision
24. Lament addressed to Rodrigo
25. In a high place Rodrigo laments his loss
32^a. He falls dead by his horse⁵⁰
26. He is directed and fed by a shepherd
27. He prays to God
28. He confesses his sins to a hermit
29. The hermit proposes a penance
30. Rodrigo suffers in a cave with a serpent
31. The hermit prays for Rodrigo's death
32. He dies⁵⁰
33. Discussion: the relative guilt of Rodrigo and La Cava
34. A look at post-Rodrigan history

Applying to these themes Toelken's criteria for traditionality, one derives an index number⁵¹ for each theme: here the range is from 1 (low) to 137 (very high). Most traditional is the theme of Rodrigo's escape from the last battle, followed by the complex involving his reaching the hermit, his confession, penance and death (indices between 83 and 98); these correspond in part to Propp's functions of *pursuit*, *rescue*, *recognition*, *exposure*, *punishment*, and *transfiguration*, but their value is different. A limitation of Propp's analysis is that he restricted it to the type of folk narrative he called "fairy tale" (Aarne's *Types* nos. 300-749); their nature is clearer when we see that they belong to the narrative mode Northrop Frye called *romance*: narratives of the successful quest.⁵² Propp did not consider tragic narratives. I suspect, judging from this analysis of the Rodrigo cycle as well as from other observations, that the *functional* difference between a romantic and a tragic narrative occurs only in the second half, and that it is not a matter of different function, but of *transvalued* functions: the "reward" is death, not a wedding; the "recognition" becomes self-perception, the "exposure" becomes confession, and the "punishment" becomes penance: in short, in a tragic narrative

the roles of hero, false hero, and villain become melded. If this perception is valid (and it would take much further study to demonstrate it), then traditional narrative can make a valuable and new contribution to our insight into the generic nature of tragedy.

There is only one other thematic complex in the Rodrigo cycle that Toelken's criteria suggest as traditional, though much less so than the ones just discussed (indices from 16 to 22): the episodes of the rape of La Cava. This might seem, in Proppian terms, to be the bride-theft complex we saw in "Gerineldo." When looked at functionally in terms of the Rodrigo cycle, it is quickly obvious that this forms the *preparatory section* in a narrative wherein La Cava is a victim-heroine: her father *absent*, Rodrigo sees La Cava (*reconnaissance*), woos her (*treachery*), and rapes her (*villainy*). She writes to her father (*mediation*), he swears revenge (*counteraction*) and *departs*. The tradition clearly cannot decide whether Rodrigo is a villain or hero, and as a result motivations in the rest of the tale are ambiguous.

The index (42) of one other theme shows traditionality: Rodrigo's mountain-top lament for the loss of Spain. This is not a Proppian function in itself, though it may be a logical part of a tragically-oriented traditional narrative. It is certainly one of the aspects of the *romancero* which led the neotraditionalists to describe its tradition as "épico-lírico."⁵³

The cycle of Bernardo del Carpio shows overall less evidence of traditionality. The *Romancero tradicional* prints 55 separate *romances* in this cycle, in a total of 138 variants, only 18 of them from modern oral tradition. My analysis shows 31 themes:⁵⁴

1. The conception of Bernardo
2. The imprisonment of his parents
3. Alfonso raises Bernardo in ignorance of his parentage
4. Bernardo defeats Lepolemo
5. Bernardo avenges the death of Estela
6. Alfonso and Bernardo defeat the Moors
7. Bernardo defeats Urgel of France
 - 31a. He is exiled upon Charlemagne's order
8. Alfonso offers his kingdom to Charlemagne
9. Bernardo (and others) express anger in a set speech
10. Bernardo forces Alfonso to revoke offer
11. Charlemagne threatens to take León by force
12. Bernardo prepares for battle
13. He meets the Moor Muza (Bravonel)
14. Departure for (approach to) Roncesvalles
15. The battle: Bernardo is victorious
16. In a speech he scorns the fleeing French

17. In prison, his father (mother) laments
18. A girl (girls) tells Bernardo of his parentage
19. Bernardo (the queen) asks Alfonso to free his father
20. The king promises to do so
21. The king denies the request
22. Bernardo reacts loyally (rebelliously)
23. He is absent (exiled) from court
24. He fights against León
25. Alfonso frees Bernardo's father
26. a. but father is dead (killed, blinded)
b. Bernardo's father marries his mother
27. Bernardo meets his dead father
28. He laments before his mother's cell
29. At funeral, he laments his father's death
30. Bernardo accuses Alfonso of treachery
31. Bernardo is exiled and sets out to seek revenge.

According to the criteria of traditionality used before,⁵⁵ the most traditional theme is Bernardo's request that the king free his father (index: 86). Only slightly less traditional (indices 62-72) is the complex of themes represented most coherently in "Con cartas y mensajeros" and "Por las riberas de Arlanza": Bernardo's absence from the court, his accusation of the king, his exile and intended revenge. The only other clearly traditional themes (indices 40-51) are those surrounding the imprisonment of his parents: his conception, the imprisonment of his parents, his learning of his parentage, and the king's final liberation of his father.

When we compare these themes with Propp's sequence of functions, we realize that the whole cycle corresponds to an incomplete tale. The imprisonment of Bernardo's parents forms the initial villainy; the long series of battles constitutes the testing of the hero, and Bernardo's attempts to free his father are the task and its solution; but the liquidation of the initial lack is negative since his father is dead. The cycle closes with a pursuit function, and one expects but does not find a second "move"⁵⁶ centered around the struggle-victory functions in which the hero Bernardo defeats the villain Alfonso. That the tradition left the tale where it did is a further indication of its relatively low degree of traditionality.

Still more interesting is the nature of the one *romance* in the cycle which has an extensive modern tradition: "Mañanita era, mañana," which is restricted to the Moroccan Sephardic Jews.⁵⁷ Here the relationship to Bernardo has been lost completely, though the conception and imprisonment themes appear much as they do elsewhere. This is followed by Ximena lamenting to her baby that his father is imprisoned; the queen overhears, asks

for the full story, and promises to help; she goes to the king and pleads for the count's release; upon the king's agreement follows transfiguration and wedding. It has become a traditional narrative entirely within Propp's sequence of functions, of the type with victim-heroes and a highly active donor-figure. More than anything else within the body of *romances* we have considered, "Mañanita era, mañana" illustrates the *process* of tradition: the way in which events pass into oral tradition and are slowly transformed by being brought more and more into harmony with the thematic patterns already existing in the tradition.

The *romances de tema odiseico* are not, therefore, "survivals," in some ill-defined way, of the *Odyssey* itself. To consider them as such is a neo-traditionalist view which ignores, or at least misinterprets, the nature of traditional narrative and the interrelationships between ballad, tale, epic, and myth as folklorists have begun to recognize them. "Dirlos" and the *Odyssey* just like the Bernardo-cycle and "Mañanita," are materials which entered into oral tradition and were thereby transformed according to a pattern much older than any of them.

In conclusion let us return to the problem with which we began. Although I have analyzed here only a few of the innumerable *romances* surviving in a five-century-long tradition, I believe that the evidence presented does suggest strongly that the apparent "uniqueness" of the *romancero* lies more in the way it has been interpreted by Hispanic scholars, especially by Menéndez Pidal, than in its own nature. The *romancero* seems to lie fully within not only the broader tradition of European balladry, but also well within the still more general area of Western traditional narrative as described by Propp and structural folklorists.

Such an argument does not in any way underrate the achievements of Menéndez Pidal and the neotraditionalist school. Their work has made the *romancero* the most thoroughly studied and the most richly-documented of European ballad traditions, and it should be obvious that without the culmination of their work in the *Romancero tradicional* being published by the Seminario Menéndez Pidal, my own analysis would have been impossible. But the limitations inherent in their theoretical armature have hindered the integration of the *romancero* into the broader context of European traditional narrative, and it is these limitations that this essay has sought to overcome.

Nor do I deny thereby that a core of uniqueness remains peculiar to the *romancero*. Any linguistic or national tradition has its own special characteristics, but they can be recognized and evaluated adequately only when the areas of commonality have been made clear. "Value judgements," said

Northrop Frye, "are founded upon the study of literature; the study of literature can never be founded on value judgments."^{5 8} To study what the *romancero* has in common with Western traditional narrative is the task of the next generation of Hispanists; out of that study will emerge a truer evaluation of the *romancero*'s particularity.

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NOTES

¹ This paper was presented in October, 1974 at the University of Southern California, the University of California at Berkeley, and the San Francisco State University. I am indebted to their Spanish faculties for inviting me and to the audiences for much pointed and helpful discussion. In abbreviated form it was presented at the meeting of the American Folklore Society in Portland, Oregon on October 31, 1974. I owe special thanks to Charles G. Faulhaber, Berkeley, and Ruth House Webber, University of Chicago, for allowing me to see unpublished manuscripts before the final revision of this paper.

² William J. Entwistle, *European Balladry* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951), pp. 152-192.

³ "El romancero, historia de una frustración," *Philological Quarterly* 51 (January 1972): 85-104. "Sí. El romancero es una historia de una frustración. La del ser humano en un momento de crisis religiosa, política y social, histórica. La del hombre moderno." (104)

⁴ At least publicly: Joanne Purcell, of the University of Southern California, reported to me that, among unpublished papers of Menéndez Pidal now in the *Seminario*, there is evidence that he did know Propp's work.

⁵ F. J. Wolf and C. Hofmann, *Primavera y flor de romances . . .*, 2 vols. (Berlin: Asher, 1856).

⁶ *The Literature of the Spanish Peoples* (New York: Meridian, 1957), p. 474.

⁷ *El romancero: teorías e investigaciones* (Madrid: Paez, 1927); revised as *Romancero hispánico (Hispano-portugués, Americano y Sefardí): teoría e historia*, 2 vols. (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1953).

⁸ Alan D. Deyermmond, *Historia de la literatura española: la edad media*. (Barcelona: Ariel, 1973), pp. 96-98. My summary of the theory follows Deyermmond closely.

⁹ The only truly comprehensive description, unfortunately, of the internal processes of an oral tradition remains Albert B. Lord's *The Singer of Tales* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1960); cf. *A Bibliography of Studies Relating to Parry's and Lord's Oral Theory*, by Edward R. Haymes,

Harvard University, 1973 (Publications of the Milman Parry Collection, Documentation and Planning Series, 1). Other available studies tend to ignore one or more crucial parameters. For example, Linda Degh's otherwise excellent *Folktales and Society: Storytelling in a Hungarian Peasant Community*, tr. E. M. Schossberger (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1969) thoroughly analyzes the sociocultural context, but passes over the technical matters of tale composition.

¹⁰ See Franz H. Bäuml and D. J. Ward, "Zur mündlichen Überlieferung des Nibelungenliedes," *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte* 41 (1967): 351-390. An especially startling example of such influence is found in Kurt Herbert Halbach's *Vergleichende Zeittafel zur deutschen Literaturgeschichte* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1952), pp. 3, 4, 6, 11. One finds for the time ca. 430 a *Hunnenschlachtlied* noted, for 500-550 an *Urlied vom Burgundenuntergang*, for the ninth century a *deutsches (bairisches) Kriemhildlied*, and for around 1160 an *ältere not* - with no indication that these Heusler-invented titles have any lesser reality than the Gallehus-horn inscription, the *Widsith*, the *Waltharius* or the *Alexanderlied*, close to which they appear.

¹¹ See Haymes, *A Bibliography*.

¹² See Alan Dundes, *Morphology of North American Indian Folktales*, Folklore Fellows Communications, No. 195 (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedekatemia, 1964).

¹³ An excellent overview is provided in Ruth House Webber's unpublished "Theoretical studies in Hispanic oral literature: accomplishments and perspectives," presented at the MLA Seminar on Oral Literature, December 29, 1974, in New York. John S. Miletich's attempt to develop a "new" concept of "consecutive repetition" as a stylistic measure different from the Parry-Lord formula constitutes in fact only a numerical/statistical redefinition of the devices of "parallelistic repetition" and "incremental repetition" which ballad scholars have studied for generations: see his "Narrative style in Spanish and Slavic traditional poetry: implications for the study of the Romance epic", *Olifant* 2 (December 1974): 109-128.

¹⁴ "Formulistic diction in the Spanish ballad," *University of California Publications in Modern Philology* 34 (1951): 175-177.

¹⁵ Bruce A. Beatie, "Oral-traditional composition in the Spanish *romancero* of the sixteenth century," *Journal of the Folklore Institute* 1 (1964): 92-113.

¹⁶ See Charles G. Faulhaber's unpublished essay review, "A.D. Deyermond and the Problem of the Spanish Epic," which provides both critique and comprehensive bibliography.

¹⁷ Orest Robert Ochrymowycz, "Aspects of oral style in the 'romances juglarescos' of the Carolingian cycle," unpublished dissertation, University of Iowa: *Dissertation Abstracts* 29 (1969): 2222A.

¹⁸ *Philological Quarterly* 51 (January 1972): 36-53.

¹⁹ *Hispanic Review* 42 (Summer 1974): 311-321.

²⁰ Edith R. Rogers, "The Open Code of Ballads," unpublished dissertation, University of Colorado: *Dissertation Abstracts* 29 (1969): 3585-86A; "Games of muscle, mind and chance in the *romancero*," *Hispania* 55 (September 1972): 419-427; "The Hunt in the *Romancero* and Other Traditional Ballads," *Hispanic Review* 42 (Spring 1974): 133-171.

²¹ *El arte juglaresco en el 'Cantar de mio Cid'*, (Madrid: Gredos, 1967). See the discussions by Webber "Theoretical studies . . ." (note 13) and Faulhaber "A. D. Deyermond . . ." (note 16.)

²² *Romance Philology* 24 (August 1970): 16; note 56.

²³ *Romancero tradicional de las lenguas hispánicas (español-portugués-catalán-sefardí)*: colección de textos y notas de María Goyri y Ramón Menéndez Pidal, Madrid: Gredos (Seminario Menéndez Pidal). I. Romanceros del rey Rodrigo y de Bernardo del Carpio, 1957. II. Romanceros de los condes de Castilla y de los infantes de Lara, 1963.

²⁴ III-V. Romances de tema odiseico, 1969, 1970 and 1971-1972.

²⁵ "The poetry of the 'Poema' and the music of the 'Cantar'," *Philological Quarterly* 51 (January 1972): 10-11.

²⁶ See *Morphology of the folktale*, second ed. rev. and ed. with a preface by L. A. Wagner. New introduction by Alan Dundes. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1968 (Indiana University Research Center in Anthropology, Folklore, and Linguistics, publ. 10).

²⁷ *Romancero tradicional* III, pp. 67-94.

²⁸ See Beatie, "Oral-Traditional Composition," p. 107, and notes 68-69.

²⁹ Both because there is some value in sticking to one-word function-designations, and because classroom use has shown the ambiguity of the Propp-translators' word "Return," I have substituted the terms "escape," "disguise," and "fraud" for the translation's "Return of the hero," "Unrecognized arrival," and "Claims of a False Hero." I also substitute "reward" for the translation's "Acquisition of a magical agent."

³⁰ Propp, *Morphology*, pp. 79-83.

³¹ *The Sword From the Rock: An Investigation into the Origins of Epic Literature and the Development of the Hero* (London: Faber & Faber, 1953). See also Bruce A. Beatie, "Patterns of Myth in Medieval Narrative," *Symposium* 25 (Summer 1971): 101-122.

³² "Strukturelle Studien zum *Ortnit* und den mittelhochdeutschen Spielmannsepen," unpublished dissertation, University of Colorado, 1970: *Dissertation Abstracts International* 31 (1971): 4714A-4715A.

³³ *Elements of Traditional Structure in the Couplet Epics of the Late Middle High German Dietrich Cycle*, (Göppingen: Kümmerle, 1975; Göppinger Akademische Beiträge, No. 170). See also Michael Curschmann's comments in his paper "The concept of the formula as an impediment to our understanding of Medieval oral poetry," delivered at the Seminar on Oral Literature, MLA Meeting, New York December 29, 1974; (see note 13).

³⁴ Eugene Dorfman, *The Narreme in Medieval Romance narrative: An*

Introduction to Narrative Structures, Toronto Romance Series, No. 13 (University of Toronto Press, 1969).

³⁵ See note 12.

³⁶ *Romancero tradicional* III, 95-142; IV, 269-272 (“Contaminations” with “La Condesita”).

³⁷ *Romancero tradicional* III, 15-63 and 143-145 (the last, a unique version, is called “La vuelta del esposo”).

³⁸ *Romancero tradicional* III, 147-180.

³⁹ *Romancero tradicional* IV-V.

⁴⁰ *Romancero tradicional* V (only in the form “contaminated” with “La condesita”; for sixteenth-century versions of “Gerineldo,” see *Primavera* (note 5) II, pp. 96-101 (nos. 161-161a).

⁴¹ *Primavera* II, pp. 52-55 (nos. 136-136a). In many of the versions of “La partida” the heroine is called “Blanca-Niña.”

⁴² *Romancero tradicional* III, 56 ff.

⁴³ “Zum Liedkreis vom heimkehrenden Ehemann,” *Beiträge zur Sprachwissenschaft und Volkskunde: Festschrift für Ernst Ochs* (Lahr [Schwarzwald]: Schauenburg, 1951), pp. 168-179.

⁴⁴ *Romancero tradicional* III, 161.

⁴⁵ See Beatie, “Patterns of Myth,” pp. 106-107 and notes 21-24.

⁴⁶ An exception is the excellent and thorough study of *Gerineldo*-variants by Menéndez Pidal, “Sobre geografía folklórica: ensayo de un método,” *Revista de Filología Española* 17 (1920): 278-322, completely revised (with Alvaro Galmes and don Ramón’s son-in-law Diego Catalán) as *¿Cómo vive un romance?* (Madrid 1954).

⁴⁷ J. Barre Toelken, “An Oral Canon for the Child Ballads; Construction and Application,” *Journal of the Folklore Institute* 4 (1957): 75-101. This paragraph was originally written in recollection of Toelken’s article, when I did not have it at hand; for the sake of coherent argument, I leave it unchanged although it misrepresents slightly Toelken’s approach. He sets up three criteria for orality, the presence of any one of which he takes as evidence of orality; he does not state, though he implies, the concept of “degree of orality.”

⁴⁸ The term “theme” is deliberately left undefined. As used here, the only valid definition would be something like: “a narrative element that one can isolate within the Rodrigo-legends as it appears in the texts published in the *Romancero tradicional*, volume I.” Themes 1 and 2, for example, are whole *romances* which could themselves be thematically sub-analyzed; but since each exists in only one variant, and neither overlaps with any others, I treat each as a single theme. Themes 6 and 33, however, are at most two lines long: but since they are present in some variants, absent in others, I treat them also as isolatable themes. This usage represents a compromise between Propp’s word “function” and Albert Lord’s usage of the term “theme” in *The Singer of Tales* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1960), chapter 5.

⁴⁹ *Romancero tradicional* I, 99-100; “romance erudito 3.” I will refrain from giving further notes relating themes to particular *romances*, since I intend to publish separately a detailed analysis of the cycles of Rodrigo and of Bernardo, where full documentation will appear.

⁵⁰ Themes 32 and 32a distinguish two separate strands of tradition. Theme 32^a appears only in two sixteenth-century *romances* based on the *Crónica sarracina* written ca. 1430 by Pedro del Corral; but it is interesting that this theme does *not* appear in Corral. The editors of the *Romancero tradicional* comment (I, 121); “Los últimos ocho octosílabos [containing this theme] son muy poco afortunados y se comprende perfectamente que fuesen suprimidos al popularizarse el romance.” But in the full context it is in fact this theme (32) which does become traditional.

⁵¹ An arbitrary device: I count the number of separately identified romances in which a theme occurs, the number of variants, the number of times published, and the number of modern oral variants, such that a particular text may weigh from one to three: a *romance* known only in a single sixteenth-century broadside has an index of one, while a *romance* known only in one published modern variant has an index of three. The device could doubtless be refined, but it serves its purpose here.

⁵² See Beatie, “Patterns of myth,” p. 104.

⁵³ Had Propp identified it, this theme would have come under his “Materials for a tabulation of the tale” (Appendix I, pp. 119-127): the non-functional variables that make up a function. But while Propp listed in detail the constituent elements of some functions (especially the “Initial Situation”), his analysis of most is sketchy.

⁵⁴ See notes 48-49 above.

⁵⁵ See note 51 above.

⁵⁶ See Propp, *Morphology*, pp. 92-96.

⁵⁷ The editors of the *Romancero tradicional* argue for its sixteenth-century existence, but the two fragments which survive contain only the conception and imprisonment themes, which were known from the *crónicas* and appear in two other *romances*.

⁵⁸ *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton University Press, 1957), p. 20.