

## The Spanish Epic: Trends in Contemporary Research

Proceedings of the M.L.A. Special Session 26  
New York Hilton, December 26, 1976

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m., by Professor Miguel Garci-Gómez (Department of Romance Languages, Duke University). After a brief presentation of the panelists by the discussion leader, the first order of business was to elect a discussion leader for a meeting on this same topic, the Spanish epic, to be held in Chicago in December 1977 and to be sponsored by the Société Rencesvals. Nominations from the floor were requested, but none having been made, Professor Garci-Gómez nominated Professor Salvador Martínez (Department of Spanish and Portuguese, New York University), a motion seconded and passed. It was unanimously agreed that the Session on the Spanish Epic should continue; the estimated 125 persons in the room and standing in the corridors outside were an encouraging sign of the enthusiasm for the topic.

The rest of the meeting was devoted to the reading and discussion of three position papers previously sent in *résumé* to interested participants.

### I

Professor Miguel Garci-Gómez's paper, entitled "Amigos de los criticos, mas amigos del MS.," consisted of a simple reading and a commentary on some controversial passages of the *Cantar de mio Cid*, according to a new edition he has prepared for Editorial Planeta of Barcelona. Some of the specific lines of the poem commented upon were:

- 180 Cid: Plázeme.  
Cronista: Dixo el Çid.  
Cid: D'aquí sea mandada.  
¡Si vos la aduxiere d'alla! Si no, contadla sobre  
las arcas.
- 221 Cid: Vuestra virtud me valat Gloriosa, en mi exida y me  
ayude;  
El me acorra de noche y de día.
- 420 Cid: Temprano dad çebada. ¡Sí el Criador vos salve!  
El que quisiere comer y qui no cabalgue.
- 440 Minaya: Vos, con çiento de aquesta nuestra compaña,  
pues que a Castejón sacaremos a çelada.  
Cid: Vos con los dozientos idvos en algara; allá vaya  
Alvar Alvarez
- 832 Cid: A la tornada, si nos falláredes aquí;  
si no, do sopiéredes que somos, idnos conseguir:
- 881 Cronista: Dixo el rey:  
Rey: ¡Mucho es mañana!;

- ¡homne airado, que de señor no ha graçia!  
For acogerlo a cabo de tres semanas,  
Más después que de moros fue, prendo esta presen-  
taja.
- 1070 Cid: Si vos viniere emiente que quisiéredes vengarlo,  
si me viniéredes buscar, fallarme podredes;  
y si no, mandedes buscar dó me dexaderes  
de lo vuestro, dó de lo mío llevaredes algo.
- 1082 Cronista: Ido es el conde, tornóse el de Bivar,  
juntóse con sus mesnadas, compeçólas de llegar  
de la ganancia que han fecha maravillosa y grande.  
¡Aquí se compeça la gesta de mio Çid el de Bivar!  
Tan ricos son los suyos que no saben qué se han.
- 1369 Rey: Los que quisieren ir servir al Campeador  
de mí sean quitos y vayan a la graçia del Criador:  
Minaya: Más ganaremos en esto que en otra deshonor
- 1947 Cronista: Esora dixo el Çid:  
Cid: Plázeme de coraçon;  
¿estas vistas dó las hayades vos?  
Cronista: Dixo Minaya:  
Minaya: Vos sed sabidor.
- 2375 Obispo: Pendón trayo, ha corças y armas de señal;
- 2538 Cronista: Amos salieron aparte; veramente son hermanos,  
d'esto que ellos fablaron:
- 2759 Fernando: No las debíamos tomar por barraganas,  
¡si no fuésemos rogados! –  
pues nuestras parejas no eran para en braços.
- 3212 Don Ramón: Si ploguiere al rey . . .  
Rey: ¡Así dezimos nos!  
Cronista: Dixo el rey.  
Don Ramón: A lo que demanda el Çid, que le recudades vos.  
Cronista: Dixo el buen rey:  
Rey: Así lo otorgo yo.  
Cronista: Dixo, Alvar Fañez levantándose en pie, el Çid  
Campeador:  
Cid: D'estos baberes que vos di yo, si me los dades,  
¡dó?; dedes d'ello razón.
- 3233 Rey: Tornárselos quiero , ca todos fechos son  
enterguen a mio Çid, el que en buen hora naçio.

3276 Don García: no se las debíen querer sus fijas por barraganas.  
¡Oh quien se las diera por parejas o por veladas!

3365 Antolínez: fústete meter tras la viga lagar,  
mas no vestido el manto ni el brial.

## II

The second paper, entitled "Constantes y cambios en la crítica del *Cantar de mio Cid*," was read by Professor Martínez. The primary objective of this paper was not to present any new discovery in the field of *Cid* studies, but rather to bring to the consideration of the participants the most recent developments of contemporary criticism on the matter of the origins and formation of the Castilian epic in general, and the *Cantar de mio Cid* in particular. There is no doubt that most theories proposed during the past century to explain the origins and formation of the epic poems in Castile were conceived with respect- to the only poem preserved almost in its entirety: the *Cantar de mio Cid*. This paper presented a brief critical analysis of the following:

- The Romantic Vision.
- Neo-Traditionalism and the critique of the historicity of the *Cantar*.
- "Word-counters" and the oralists.
- C.C. Smith, the Latin influence and the "endocrítica" studies.

Taking as a starting point the most valid aspects of the "neo-tradicionalismo," Professor Martínez pointed out the latest developments and changes in the theory of historicity, the problem of the "cantos noticieros" and their relevance to the process of formation of the *Cantar*. He emphasized specifically the importance of recent studies that have tried to view the poem as a work of art influenced by the most sophisticated techniques of the poetic arts of the Middle Ages.

In this context, Professor Martínez tends to see the *Cantar* as an organized poetic phenomenon, complex and precise, which is the result of a synthesis of archaic and contemporary elements. This symbiotic fusion was carried out by a learned poet, deeply rooted in the Latin poetic tradition.

Because of a particular interest in the Latin influence on the Castilian epic, Professor Martínez wanted to know the reaction of the participants at this session to the article by C.C. Smith, "Literary Sources of Two Episodes in the *Poema de mio Cid*," (*BHS*, 52 [1975], pp. 109-22), in which the author contends that the poet of the *Cantar* possibly wrote two of the key episodes of the first part (the conquests of Castejón and Alcocer) in imitation of the Latin writers Sallust and Frontinus.

In conclusion, Professor Martínez proposed as a sound criterium for future criticism of the *Cantar* a kind of critical syncretism that will embrace all the diverse elements of medieval art, in the same manner that the author of the *Cantar* was able to combine them.

## III

The third paper was presented by the distinguished hispanist, Professor Erich von Richthofen (Department of Hispanic Studies, University of

Toronto): "Viejas y nuevas polarizaciones en la crítica del *Cid*." Professor von Richthofen said that lately there have been some antithetical attitudes concerning the *Poema del Cid*, attitudes apparently not reconcilable among themselves. They belong to such old and new literary controversies as "fragment" or "non-fragment," "unity" or "non-unity," Per Abad "copyist" or "author-refundidor," "endocritic" versus "exocritic" and the so-called "postpidalism" versus the so-called "pidalism."

In some cases it seems possible to envisage a more balanced judgment concerning these opposing views. The paradox of the "historicity" or "non-historicity" of the work is a very real one, and critics will have to accept it as it is. However, in the attempts that will have to be made to determine the degree of historicity versus the authentic poetic components of the poem, we must be very careful not to exaggerate one element over the other. This objective, of course, will never be perfectly achieved, for the simple reason that the specific interest of each scholar inclines him toward one side or the other of the pendulum. It would appear, therefore, that the problem has its origin not in the epic poem itself but rather in the different perspectives of literary criticism. This is valid too for some other literary disagreements. One has to admit that the text itself and the structure of the poem have also been responsible for certain opposing and unreconcilable opinions.

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After the presentation of the three papers, the discussion began with questions from the floor addressed to the panelists. The major interest of the audience focused on the new edition of the *Cantar* prepared by Professor Garci-Gómez, and most of the questions were addressed to him.

Professor G. Correa (Yale University) questioned the criteria used in preparing this text and he maintained that a mere reproduction of the manuscript, with all its obvious errors, repetitions, and imperfections, would not do very much to help us understand the poem. Professor Garci-Gómez replied that we should not allow ourselves the freedom of correcting and improving the text by regularizing the lines, adjusting the rhyme, introducing new words, lines, and entire passages from the chronicles to complete it, as Menéndez Pidal did. The text, concluded Professor Garci-Gómez, should be taken as it is. Other participants in this discussion, however, expressed views and concerns similar to those of Professor Correa.

The discussion on the "fidelity to the manuscript" approach dealt with the most recent developments in research on the *Cantar*, the "endocrítica" studies, outlined by Professor Martínez in his paper and defended by Professor Garci-Gómez. Again Professor Correa, and later other participants, questioned Professor Garci-Gómez about the objective critical value of "endocrítica," which appears to be in open conflict with accepted values of the *Cantar* as a "poema de la honra," a "poema nacional," a "cantar de un pueblo," and so forth. Some of the participants were particularly sensitive to new tendencies (e.g., C.C. Smith, A.D. Deyermond, S. Martínez) of *Cantar* criticism dealing with its "learned" features rather than the "popular" ones of the past. Professors Garci-Gómez and Martínez were asked how the epic could be called a "poema culto" when it was written in Castilian and apparently in the "familiar language" of the period. Professor Martínez replied that we know too little about twelfth and thirteenth

century "familiar language" to be able to compare it with the language of the *Cantar*: it is very doubtful whether the people of late twelfth century Castile would have spoken the language of the *Cantar*. But apart from this, Professor Martínez went on to say, when we talk about the *Cantar* as being a "poema culto" we do not refer primarily to its language but rather to the sources, style, disposition of its matter, rhetorical and poetical features, all of which presuppose a prior literary tradition which is mostly Latin and "learned."

Finally, Professor Botero asked Professor von Richthofen whether it would be possible to see the *Cantar* as a family quarrel similar to the Nordic sagas. Professor von Richthofen replied that he did not think so; it might, he continued, be possible to draw parallels with other Spanish epics but not with the *Cid*.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:50.

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