

Luis Díaz G. Viana (coord.), *Palabras para el Pueblo*, vol. I: *Aproximación general de la Literatura de Cordel*; vol. II: *La colección de pliegos del CSIC: Fondos de la Imprenta Hernando*, edición a cargo de Araceli Godino López, Pilar Martínez Olmo, Carmen Ortiz García and Cristina Sánchez Carretero, Madrid, Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 2000 and 2001.

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This solid two-volume set offers a welcome and long-overdue collection of essays on various aspects of *literatura de cordel* and almost 500 pages of facsimiles from the *pliegos* collection of the Imprenta Hernando housed at the CSIC in Madrid.¹ The chapbooks contain stories, sketches and songs on themes ranging from the pious through the melodramatic and the satirical.

Luis Díaz Viana's introduction provides a substantial overview of *literatura de cordel* and the history of attitudes toward and studies of the genre. He recalls Julio Caro Baroja's characterization of it as a "infierno literario" and discusses the *juglar* as a kind of "amphibion" navigating between different registers of culture (I: 34). Díaz Viana goes on to resume and further develop themes at once related to chapbooks and broadsides, and, in a broader application, central to his thinking over the years, particularly challenging the concepts of the "traditional" and the "popular", and the very existence of "traditional culture" (I: 31ff). He also, in vol. II, refers to the relatively new concept of the glocal, applying it to the *goigs* (*gozos*; see Josep Martí's discussion, I: 191-226) and to cordel literature more generally (II, 232). His thoughtful questions and reflections stimulate readers to pose our own about the very idea of "value" and "importance" and who is entitled to make judgments about them.

The other twenty essays discuss both general and specific issues, each with its own knowledgeable and valuable perspective. For reasons of space, each can be mentioned only briefly. The essays in volume I are grouped in three sections. In the first section, on cordel literature and its relation to other popular expressive forms, Jean-François Botrel's discussion of the genre includes interesting observations on strategies employed by authors, printers and readers. Pura Fernández provides a fascinating overview and discussion of the legal status of the romance de ciego in the 19th century. This section also includes essays on non-narrative genres such as almanachs and calendars (Honorio Velasco), and widely distributed formats including prints and leaflets, with a discussion of the "real" and "ideal" people (Carmen Ortiz García).

The second section, on "different cultural traditions", includes two studies of Mexican corridos and other genres (Guillermo E. Hernández; Madeleine Sutherland), and two on Brazilian cordel literature (Candace Slater on its current situation, and Francisca Neuma Fehine Borges on classification issues). In the only excursion outside the Luso-Hispanic world, Luis Estepa takes us to Kenya. The absence of any essay on cordel literature in Portugal is rather surprising here.

The third section is devoted to issues of cataloguing and classification (it is often hard to decide where to put an essay such as Borges' which straddles, in this case, "different cultures" and "classification"). Joana Encobedo discusses broadside ballads in 18th century Catalonia, Sagrario López Poza explores useful data base possibilities, and José Luis Rodríguez describes a late 17th-early 18th century *entremeses* collection. Javier Portús analyzes illustrations, pointing out that until the mid-18th century their presence was rare in novels or poetry collections, while it flourished in cordel literature. This section, and volume I, conclude with Cristina Sánchez Carretero's essay on narrative genres, which goes well beyond its modest title referring to classification, to offer an original and perceptive discussion of performance-related issues, drawing on her work in folklore genre studies.

The bulk of volume II is devoted to the facsimiles themselves, and indices, preceded by several essays which specifically address the Casa Hernando collection. After an informative introduction by Luis Díaz Viana, Pilar Martínez Olmo discusses the project of the collection as a whole, while the theatrical sketches, humour in the sketches, and the public and private dimensions of the religious poetry are the subjects of essays by Carmen Menéndez Onrubia, Araceli Godino and Antonio Cea Gutiérrez, respectively. Cea's extensive essay includes several musical transcriptions: five pieces from Asturias (II: 94-95) and one from Salamanca (II: 124); while it is splendid to have these included, along with brief descriptions of their performance context, the melodies' sources are unclear. The only other written melodies in either volume appear in two facsimiles reproduced in Martí's essay on the Catalan *goigs* (I: 222. 224). One wishes that more music could have been

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¹ For more information, see <http://www.csic.es/cbic/intrared/proyectos/proyeaut.htm>.

included among the essays on sung genres, especially in discussions about performance. “Mini and Mero” [Rivas and Iglesias]’s important and too often overlooked two volume set of Galician blindmen’s songs is an example of the richness of the genre in all its aspects, though it is an anthology, not a study.)

A short essay by Díaz Viana precedes the generous facsimile sample, which includes the following genres: prose, rhymed narratives, *romances*, and sketches. They form a rich and varied collection, with its own delights, which it is simply impractical to comment on in detail here. In the *Canción Nueva de Gerineldo* (II: 555-557), our familiar ballad hero is transported to Constantinople and falls in love with a “joven rusa” with whom he escapes on two fiery horses and lots of jewels, to Tartary; besides its entertainment value, it suggests the possibility of exploring orientalism in cordel literature, perhaps along the lines suggested in Tom Cheesman’s study of German parallels. Other irresistible titles include the first item reproduced, with a suitably alarming illustration, *El Caballero sin Cabeza* (II: 239-270); *La Española Inglesa* (II: 475-498); *La Pedomancia o la Libertad Aérea o El Indulto Pediculario* (II: 611-614) (worth checking out in this vein is Cid Bravo’s small gem), and many other more and less familiar themes.

It seems unreasonable to ask for any more in two such volumes, with their impressive level of expertise, reflection and documents. Future work on this or similar collections might include Portugal, as well as other countries and cultures; more music, and more commentary on performance practice. The Judeo-Spanish chapbooks are another important aspect of the genre. The Salonican Sephardic composer and compiler Yacob Abraham Yona, now familiar from Armistead and Silverman’s classic study, lends a realistic, practical note when he begs people to buy their own copies of his chapbooks so that he can support his family, and even tries to enforce a sort of folk copyright — a century before today’s attempts to restrict copying of books and CDs: “Es defendido de dar ‘a mendar ‘a ‘otros” (p. 9, n. 12). Díaz Viana and his colleagues have not proposed any such restriction — but anyone who sits down with this set and starts to read the essays and the collection itself, will not willingly hand it over “a mendar ‘a ‘otros”.

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