

Survival of the Traditional *Romancero*: Field Expeditions¹

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Research work in the humanities and the social sciences at times demands two kinds of parallel and complementary activities: first, obtaining material directly from the context in which it is produced and, second, processing the data later outside of its context. The ways in which the fieldwork should be organized as well as where and how it is to be carried out depend upon the objective that is being pursued.

Oral literary genres differ in the ways they are transmitted, but we can find them together in the same cultural environment. Narrations in prose, like stories or legends, live together in the collective memory along with proverbs, riddles and sayings, and poetic forms, among which are included *canciones* (songs), *coplas* (couplets), and *romances* (ballads).

Our primary objective in going out on collecting expeditions is to obtain examples of the traditional *romancero*. It is not a question of storing literary fossils for the mere desire of increasing the number of texts in existence in present-day collections, but rather of trying to gather, in so far as it is possible, new data which will help to illustrate and clarify the various questions that have arisen in this literary field.

Some of the conditions that in principle are required in order to undertake the task of collecting *romances* do not differ substantially from those that are necessary for obtaining other categories of oral texts: a certain amount of previous knowledge in order to keep the data from turning into a mosaic of confused information, a permanent way to store and assemble interesting information when the opportunity arises, and an adequate knowledge of the language of the interlocutors (Lacoste 1981:141),

which means in our case, the poetic discourse in which traditional ballads are expressed.

Direct contact with the reality in which the *romancero* survives today is not going to tell us anything about the exact moment in which a version became fixed in the memory of each one of its “authors” nor, consequently, about the evolutionary process of each one of its most significant variants, since the most important transformations seem to be produced during an apprenticeship period, and we will never be able to witness that process. Despite the fact that as students of the *romancero* we are outside of the chain of traditional transmission, we have an advantage over the reciters in being able to observe simultaneously a greater number of ballad *fabulas* (themes) in their multiple divergent realizations (versions), and that possibility is what will permit us to interpret the meanings that the poems offer at different levels. Therefore, the more abundant and the more varied are the examples that we have at our disposal on carrying out an intertextual comparison, the better command we will have of the poetic language in which *romances* are expressed and the closer we will come to an understanding of their mechanisms of transmission.

The *Romancero*

The *romancero*, the most important living oral literary tradition in the western world, has been stored up to the present in the collective memory of the Hispanic peoples and has come to occupy potentially the same area as that of the languages in which it can be expressed: Spanish, Galician-Portuguese, Catalan, and Judeo-Spanish.

We can come close to a knowledge of the *romancero* of the past thanks to fifteenth- and sixteenth-century printers who published in chapbooks and songbooks not only poems composed by authors who were more or less learned, but also *romances*, which were circulating orally at that time in a society interested in transmitting them. Certain kinds of information printed in works of a very different sort offer invaluable material for the reconstruction of the history of the genre. The Golden Age theater frequently makes use of fragments of *romances* which must have had wide circulation among the people who habitually attended the performances. Ballad stories themselves have inspired various re-elaborations of a theme transmitted to us by printed literature.

The survival today of many themes present in medieval tradition, of which there are early printed examples, does not at all suppose that we can consider the thematic panorama of the *romancero* to be limited to the sixteenth century, since from that time on poems with a very different origin have become popular, alongside of older stories, to the extent that they have considerably enlarged repertoires with new types or subtypes of traditional *romances*.

When we attempt to reconstruct the history of the *romancero*, the eighteenth century appears to be a silent parenthesis. We know, nevertheless, that those poetic narrations which delighted ladies and gentlemen and even Queen Isabel in the fifteenth century gradually disappeared from courtly circles and ended up taking refuge in rural environments. Except for the Sephardic *romancero*, which went far afield with the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in the fifteenth century and generally reappeared in urban areas, the inhabitants of the towns and villages of Portugal and Spain have become the outstanding repositories of this valuable cultural inheritance.

The diachronic study of this type of poetry helps us to understand its evolution and consequently its process of adaptation. By knowing the history of the genre, we can try to calculate the approximate age of the traditional texts that we find and locate their sources: whether they are related to the epic, whether they have a historical base, whether they enter into the large group we customarily call folkloric, whether they began to circulate from chapbooks sung by blind men, or whether their origins are nearer at hand. Nevertheless, none of the foregoing seems to be of concern to the traditional transmitter, who belongs to a cultural environment in which the poems are inherited from his immediate forebears without any importance being given to the age or the original text of the stories that are memorized. On being integrated into the chain of traditional transmission, the folkloric subject learns naturally the poetic discourse in which *romances* are expressed, and he makes use of them to set forth and to comment upon problems that interest or affect in some way the society in which he happened to be born. What has definitely kept the *romancero* alive up to the present is its intrinsic capacity to accommodate itself to the successive societies that have kept re-creating it.

History of Ballad Collecting

Collecting the modern *romancero* has its own history. At the end of the first quarter of the nineteenth century, almost simultaneously in Portugal and in Spain, Almeida Garrett and Bartolomé José Gallardo collected the first versions, which mark the initial moment of the reappearance of the traditional *romancero*. From that date up to the middle of the twentieth century, when collecting methods change, we can distinguish four great stages in the exploration of the *romancero*: (1) the era of the pioneers of the nineteenth century when collecting was centered particularly in Portugal and Catalonia; (2) the first period of Menéndez Pidal and María Goyri, when we began to be aware of the continued presence of the *romancero* in Castile (1900-10); (3) the most fruitful period (1911-20); and (4) the middle years (1921-51) (see Catalán 1979:217-56; Armistead 1979c:53-60).

Since the first texts were collected, the contributions of hundreds of fieldworkers have put at our disposal thousands of versions, published or unpublished, which have offered abundant data for study (see Sánchez Romeralo 1979a:2:15-51 and *Bibliografía* 1980). But until a few years ago, in the majority of the cases we could only count upon the testimony of the poems themselves, and we knew little or nothing about the experiences or the collecting methods that our predecessors used. Aside from the commentaries of Menéndez Pidal in some of his works dedicated to the *romancero* (1953:2:291-439; 1973:403-45), certain allusions in prologues of printed collections and some correspondence between collectors of unpublished versions (part of which is preserved in the Menéndez Pidal archives) constitute the only “bibliography,” which is far from complete, of the topic in question. It was María Goyri, pioneer of ballad collecting, who, after rediscovering the Castilian *romancero* in the company of her husband Ramón Menéndez Pidal, published the first field manual. This little book, in which she makes explicit allusions to methodology, has served as a guide to succeeding generations (1906:10:374-86, 1907:11:24-36; Torner 1929).²

It is also necessary to recognize that this type of fieldwork has generally not been systematic and has depended on chance. The great collection of Menéndez Pidal could be assembled thanks to the collaboration of family and friends, students, and correspondents, the quantity and the origin of the contributions depending upon the personal circumstances of the collectors.

Outside of the Menéndez Pidal archives, the totality of regional or local printed collections does not reflect either greater or less vitality of the traditional *romancero* in different communities of the Peninsula because collecting and, especially, editing ballad texts have always depended upon interests of the moment.

This situation was beginning to change at the time of the Primer Coloquio Internacional sobre el *Romancero* held in Madrid in 1970.³ The harvest of traditional *romances* and the methodological aspect this task involves seem to have awakened great interest among researchers in the field, and this revitalization of the collecting activity, together with the new possibilities offered by technological advances (tape recorders, etc.) have produced a spectacular enrichment of ballad archives in recent years.⁴

Point of Departure: My Collecting Experience

My first field trip in search of *romances* goes back to July, 1977, the beginning of the series of large field expeditions organized by the Seminario Menéndez Pidal.⁵ In the village of Tresabuela del Valle de Polaciones, Santander, I found myself for the first time face to face with one of the authentic recreators of the traditional *romancero*. She was Adela Gómez, a sixty-year-old resident of Salceda, who happened to be in Tresabuela that day. Although she did not have much time, she was kind enough to recite and sing for us a splendid version of a Carolingian ballad.

Adela was the first person we came upon when we entered the town. We asked her directly if she knew any *romances*, and we were lucky in that one of the ballads that she knew, *Belardo y Valdovinos*, includes in one of its formulaic verses a reference to the singing of a *romance*. Therefore, she began at once to recite to us:

Tan alta iba la luna	The moon was as high
como el sol al medio día	as the noonday sun
cuando el buen conde Belarde	when good Count Belarde
de sus batallas venía.	came from his battles.
Cien caballos trae de rienda,	He has a hundred horses on rein,
todos los ganó en un día,	he won them all in one day,
y los echaba a beber	and he let them drink
en la reguera de Hungría.	in the canal of Hungary.
Mientras los caballos beben	While the horses are drinking
este romance decía: . . .	he recited this ballad: . . .

At the same time, another one of our ballad-collecting teams was working in Salceda and, as a result of information from other

villagers, they waited for Adela's return in order to question her. Adela repeated for them afterwards the same version of *Belardo y Valdovinos* without introducing a single important variant.⁶

Our next expedition, in the summer of 1978, was in the south of the Peninsula, where our activities were centered in the province of Jaén and the southern part of Granada, but we also covered the northwest of Murcia and the south of Albacete. The contrast between the two areas was evident from the very beginning. Given the large size of the towns in comparison with the scantily populated villages of the north, it was impossible to try to interview a significant number of inhabitants in one day. For that reason it became necessary to keep returning to the same locality, since the most infrequent *romances* might survive in one spot without our coming upon them in several trips.

Although in the expedition of 1978 no texts of extraordinary rarity appeared, in general the *romancero* came to us in very complete versions with themes like *Conde Claros en hábito de fraile*, *La bastarda y el segador*, *La mala suegra*, etc., which showed a tradition in a better state of preservation than we had found in 1977.

The ballad reciters of the south are apt to be relatively younger than those of the north. Certain farm tasks, like harvesting grapes or olives, which still bring two or even three generations into contact, have undoubtedly contributed to the fact that oral tradition is still alive among young people and even among Andalusian children, who still sing *romances* as an accompaniment to their games. Andalusia is also the home of the versions called *vulgatas* which, with melody and text practically fixed, cover long distances and in some areas come to take the place of regional types.⁷ In contrast to these *vulgatas*, which spread very easily, there also exists in Andalusia a small group of *romances* of very limited circulation which have been incorporated into Andalusian gypsy song and which in most cases "belong" to certain gypsy families who originally came from Puerto de Santa María, Cádiz.⁸ These are very special versions of the epic or historical cycles, some of which derive from post-sixteenth century printed re-elaborations.

Subsequently rural areas of the northern half of Spain have been preferred for our exploratory activity in the thirteen additional expeditions sponsored and organized by the Seminario Menéndez Pidal in the last seven years (1979-1985).⁹ As an example of the

situation concerning the *romancero* found in these northern zones and the urgent need to carry out both extensive and intensive field work in various districts, I am going to comment in some detail about our experience in an isolated corner of the northwest part of León, the district of La Fornela, made up of seven villages in close communication with one another: Cariseda, Chano, Faro, Fresnedelo, Guímara, Peranzanes and Trascastro.¹⁰

In the final period of the northern field expedition of 1977, a team made up of permanent members of the Seminario Menéndez Pidal, Diego Catalán, Jesús Antonio Cid, Flor Salazar, and Ana Valenciano, went on the nineteenth of July to La Fornela. After a stop in Cariseda,¹¹ we proceeded to the village of Trascastro, where, according to the inhabitants themselves, scarcely thirty-five families were living in a somewhat unsatisfactory situation.¹² The elementary school had been closed by the government for lack of children of school age and, as a result, the smallest children were transported daily to various centers, while those who were fourteen or older and wanted to continue their studies had to reside as boarding students in the private high schools of Ponferrada and only returned home during vacations.

That day in Trascastro two subteams, the composition of which changed during the day, worked independently until well after nightfall, managing in this way to contact almost all of the villagers.¹³ Among the men who remembered *romances* and who on that occasion far surpassed our feminine informants was David Ramón, age 69, a true representative of the great ballad singers, who died the following year. Among the women, Gloria Álvarez, age 67, gave us fifteen magnificent versions one after another. Out of a total of eleven informants, we succeeded in collecting forty texts which corresponded to twenty-eight different ballad stories, many of them belonging to the most hidden depths of ballad tradition.¹⁴

The excellent results obtained in Trascastro showed us the category of the ballad store that the remaining villages of La Fornela could offer us. For that reason we believed it to be important to return to such a promising district and to devote to it a good part of the northern field expedition of 1979. Six collectors participated in this work during the first two days (September 20-21) dedicated to exploring the area around the upper valley of the Sil. The group was reduced to four during the remaining days (September 22-25) centered in La Fornela. We

systematically divided up into two teams and when circumstances required, one or another of the investigators would go off to do individual interviews. During this expedition we were lodged in Villafranca del Bierzo.

During those four days in September of 1979 the number of informants who sang or recited ballads for us came to more than forty. Although a few men, like Felipe Cerecedo García, age 56, from Chano, showed that they had exceptional knowledge of traditional poems, the women we interviewed surpassed the men, in contrast to what had happened two years before in Trascastro. Among the women who stood out for their familiarity with *romances* were Joaquina García, age 81 (mother of Felipe Cerecedo) and Eva Robledo, age 72, of Chano, and Valenta Fernández, age 79 and Adelaida Álvarez, age 83, of Peranzanes.¹⁵

All but one of the *romances* collected in Trascastro reappeared in La Fornela two years later, but, in addition, alongside of these ballad themes, magnificent versions of many others enlarged the repertory of 1977. Only an enumeration of these oral poems can show the enormous variety and wealth of the *romance* versions that were stored in the memories of the inhabitants of La Fornela in 1979.¹⁶ These magnificent results obtained in the exploration of La Fornela in 1979 instilled in us a certain amount of optimism concerning the possibility of survival of the *romancero* in regions with more conservative traditions. Unfortunately that optimism has not been maintained as we have continued our collecting activities in the decade of the eighties.

During the northern field trip in 1980, devoted to the exploration of the *romance* tradition of western León and Asturias from its base in Villablino (León), one of our teams went as far as Peranzanes and Guímara, where *romances* were collected from four informants, three of whom had been interviewed in 1979.¹⁷ Again during the León field trip in 1985 another team went off from the capital of the province on July 18 to the village of Chano, where eleven versions were collected, including the reappearance of several interesting themes like *Belardo y Valdovinos*, *La caza de Celinos*, *El conde Grifos Lombardo*, *Flores y Blancaflor* (*Hermanas reina y cautiva*).

The situation that was found in this last field trip is quite discouraging for the future of the *romancero* in the district. Two great reciters interviewed in 1979, Joaquina García and Eva Robledo, had died, together with another of our informants, Arturo

Fernández; others had moved away, and among our former informants who remained in the village, one of them did not even remember having been interviewed by us six years before. The disappearance of these witnesses of the continued existence of the *romancero* has not been compensated for by the discovery of younger informants of analogous character. This rapid deterioration of the ballad tradition in one of the areas that had been most fruitful in the search for *romances* is related to a sociological change which seems to be irreversible: the progressive extinction of the small villages as a result of the rapid reduction of their population.

If we go back to the last century, we know that a few years before 1849 the district of La Fornela had a total of 1337 inhabitants distributed among 295 families (an average of 4.53 members per family). This population increased during the course of the century, reaching 1709 in 1888. In this century, after the civil war (1936-1939) the number of inhabitants in La Fornela stayed about the same, 1758, but in 1970, as a result of the emigration of people from the country to the cities during the sixties, the total of the inhabitants remaining in their villages was reduced to 1253, distributed among 325 families (an average of 3.85 per family). After that date the reduction in population accelerated enormously, since, according to the most recent census of 1981, the number of inhabitants, after eight more years of emigration, has been reduced to 446 for the whole district, distributed among 175 families (an average of 2.45 per family), that is to say, a third of those who were still living in La Fornela in 1970.

In the winter of 1981, thanks to a generous invitation from Professor Aaron V. Cicourel of the University of California, San Diego, I had the opportunity of collaborating with his teams set up for a sociological project. One of the phases of the project consisted of carrying out interviews in towns in various regions of Spain with people who had been selected in advance by means of a questionnaire. During the period of my collaboration we visited several villages of Las Hurdes Altas (Cáceres) and the town of Cortes de la Frontera (Málaga). Encouraged by Professor Cicourel, I took advantage of the opportunity and devoted my free time to searching for ballad texts. The results were again encouraging since, in a very limited period of time, I managed to gather a sizable number of versions in Las Hurdes as well as in Cortes de la

Frontera.¹⁸

That experience was different from the field trips of the Seminario Menéndez Pidal and therefore rewarding. It made me realize that, although the aims were not the same, in practical terms and in technique they had much in common. The length of a field expedition, the time of year in which it takes place, the number of investigators, whether it is more desirable to have a fixed base which facilitates a continual exchange of experiences or to be free to move on to more promising areas—all have to be taken into consideration in organizing a field expedition for sociological purposes, for collecting *romances*, or for any comparable research project.

Aims Pursued. Data Pertinent to the Classification of Materials

The principal objective in our field expeditions is to collect texts that are as complete as possible and to record the melodies to which they are sung. If it is not possible to collect a sung version, it is necessary to ascertain whether the reciter memorized it with or without the music. The *romances* we have found in our explorations in recent years have not always been offered to us in sung form. Although sometimes the reciters acknowledge that they learned them with music, advanced age, mourning, or insecurity prevent them from giving us versions accompanied by their *son* or *tonada*, as they call it. We have also been able to determine that many poems have been transmitted by recitation only, although possibly they began by being sung. Thanks to the tape recorder, it is now possible to record the melodies that accompany traditional poetry. Thus these new audio archives will be able to provide valuable data for scholars interested in the study of traditional music.

In order to collect a text, aside from the actual recording, it turns out to be useful, while the recitation or singing is going on, to take notes that will facilitate the transcription and the processing of the information afterwards. It is also interesting to obtain information about the various designations that are used to identify the ballad themes they know and even to ascertain the personal interpretation of each reciter of certain passages in their stories. In practice, however, this type of question can produce serious interference at the moment of performance and spoil the results. The delivery of traditional ballads demands a certain rhythm on the part of the reciters to which they adapt themselves

as they gain self-confidence. They re-create their versions recalling them verse by verse, for which reason forgetting a single verse in the middle destroys the fluidity of the recitation. Their memory becomes recharged after the delivery of each *romance*, and in this way the informant remembers more easily the rest of the themes that make up his repertory. For all of these reasons the ballad collector must try to stimulate the recitation, taking care not to spoil with inappropriate questions the effort that the informants are making to recall poems that they memorized in the past.

Nevertheless, there are data that are indispensable for this kind of research, and they are readily accessible. The place of origin of a version or of a repertory does not always coincide with the locality where it is collected. It is advisable, therefore, to find out where the informant came from and to ask him (or her) directly where and when he remembers having memorized his poems, even though, in the case of widespread themes, the definitive location will be able to be made later by means of a comparison of the texts obtained with others typologically similar. The testimony of the reciters themselves often turns out to be confused because natural forms of interference have been produced (which they are not even aware of) between imported versions and ballad types and repertories from the place where they live. As for the circumstances that surrounded their apprenticeship and the origin of the versions (the person or the printed source from which they learned them), these are data that go far back in time and not even the reciters can recall them clearly. This information generally emerges in a spontaneous fashion during the interview, and if it is of interest, it should be noted down.

Other data that should be recorded are the age and sex of the informants, their first name and family name (and their nickname if they have one), provided that obtaining this information does not disturb ballad collection, because, after all, the reciters who generously offer us their poems have the right to remain anonymous if they so desire. The date of the field trip and the names of the team members are facts that should be recorded in the field workbooks at the beginning of each day. The classification of the poetic genres transmitted orally is somewhat outside the cultural world that produces them, since it is the students of balladry, foreign to this world, who have “baptized” the different genres in order to compartmentalize their field of research.

Perhaps the first problem faced by the investigator who sets out to collect traditional *romances* is to make himself understood when he tries to identify the genre he is looking for, because, except in unusual cases, *romances*, *canciones*, and *coplas* are mixed together in the memory of their transmitters. Aside from the always useful allusion to the names of the most popular ballad protagonists (Gerineldo, Sildana, Delgadina, etc.) or reciting to them fragments of ballads supposedly widespread in the area, it is helpful to find out the designations applied to the different categories of poems in the zone under investigation. It is normal for nearby towns or those in close communication to use a common term for the *romancero*: *coplas*, *canciones antiguas*, *cantarías*, *cántigas*, etc., but rarely *romances*.

Context in which Traditional Poems Are Delivered

The social or folkloric circumstances in which ballads are propagated in principle does not modify the ballad that is collected, but community tasks like harvesting, grape-picking, or gathering olives can serve as a reference point for categorizing certain repertoires that are considered appropriate for singing while these activities are being carried out (even though now they are almost never actualized in these contexts). *La bastarda y el segador*, for example, is usually included among harvest songs (*canciones de segada*), and *La dama y el pastor*, *La loba parda*, along with other *romances* with a similar theme, belong primarily to shepherds' repertoires, although any one of the themes alluded to may have been memorized by any villager interested in these narrations at a given moment.

Any reference to artisan work realized as a common endeavor or to any kind of gathering in the past in which the villagers, male and female, had a good opportunity to sing poems, goes back to bearers of folklore in distant times in which the re-creation of *romances* was more integrated into the daily life of the community. As for the officially sponsored *fiestas*, many of which are artificially revitalized, they do not seem to have been, as a whole, particularly favorable moments for the singing of traditional *romances*. This kind of poetry does not need especially qualified interpreters for its actualization, which are the kind that usually perform in public upon such occasions.

Ritualization

When a *romance* becomes ritualized, for example, in songs for children's games or in prayers, the content of the narration tends to lose its function and, as a consequence, the poem loses its open quality and becomes fossilized or greatly deformed. Although, except for these cases, ritualization is not very frequent in peninsular tradition, there are some very interesting exceptions. Refunctionalization has been the reason for the survival of two old historical themes, *La merienda del moro Zaide* and *La muerte del maestre de Santiago*, which, if they had not developed a petitionary function, would undoubtedly have ceased being transmitted, as has happened with the majority of ballads on contemporary events (*romances noticieros*).¹⁹

In the ballad that tells of the death of the Maestre don Fadrique, the printed version of the sixteenth century would seem to suggest indirectly that Doña María, the mistress of King Don Pedro, had asked the king for the head of Don Fadrique, since the king, on receiving his brother in the palace, says to him:

—Vuestra cabeza, maestre, mandada está en aguinaldo.	Your head, master, has been claimed as a gift.
(<i>Cancionero de Amberes sin año</i>)	

The second hemistich was without doubt the point of departure for the incorporation into the *romance* of the introductory formula referring to Christmas gift requests with which it is sung today:

Hoy es día de los Reyes, día muy aseñalado cuando damas y doncellas al rey piden aguinaldo. Unas le pedían seda, otras sedilla y brocado a no ser doña María que se lo pidió doblado, que le pidió la cabeza del maestre de Santiago.	Today is Twelfth Night, a very important day, when ladies and maidens ask the king for a present. Some asked him for silk, others satin and brocade, except for Dona Marla, who asked that it be doubled, for she asked for the head of the master of Santiago.
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Something similar must have occurred with *La merienda del moro Zaide* (Catalán 1969b:83-99). The two cases cited suggest that the possible existence of petitionary songs should be investigated while ballad collecting. The opening formulas are used not only in these two historical ballads but also in other Nativity ballads and in many different kinds of songs.

Strata of the Traditional *Romancero*

In the totality of orally transmitted genres, our collecting experience seems to indicate that the *romancero* is found in the memory of the subjects who are the repositories of folklore in a deep substratum from which it can only be actualized spontaneously with difficulty. Within the *romancero* itself we can distinguish, in turn, several levels of diffusion among the community of reciters.

In the most superficial level or stratum are found the *romances* often classified as *infantiles*, which were memorized to serve as an accompaniment to children's games. In them interest in the story that is being told has been lost, for which reason they generally show up in very degraded versions that are resistant to variation. Included in these repertoires there are not only poems like *Don Gato*, *Mambrú*, or *Hilo de oro*, which are at the outer limits of the genre, but also another series of versions which, although coming from stories with traditional roots, on being incorporated into this superficial level lose their capacity for openness, thereby checking their natural evolution. Among the latter are to be found *La doncella guerrera* with the opening "En Sevilla [a] un sevillano / siete hijas le dio Dios" (In Seville to a Sevillian / God gave seven daughters); *Ricofranco*, "En Madrid hay una niña / que la llaman la Isabel" (In Madrid there is a girl / whom they call Isabel); *La vuelta del marido*, "Estaba una señorita / a la sombra de un laurel" (There was a young lady / in the shade of a laurel tree); *El quintado*, "Mes de mayo, mes de mayo, / mes de mayo, primavera" (Month of May, month of May / month of May, spring); or *Albaniña*, "Estando la Catalina / sentadita en su balcón" (While Catalina is / seated on her balcony). With these and other similar openings these ballads appear in practically every region of Spain alongside of "vulgate" versions of *La hermana cautiva*, "El día de los torneos / pasé por la morería" (The day of the tournaments / I passed through the Moorish district); *Las tres cautivas*, "A la verde, verde, / a la verde oliva" (At the green, green, / at the green olive tree); or *Santa Iria*, "Estando tres niñas / bordando corbatas" (While three girls were / embroidering neckties).

In a second stratum are located the *romances* which belong to what we may call the *romancero común*. These are quite widespread themes known to us in a great variety of regional and local types, forming the most extensive block of ballad stories.

Finally, the third category of *romances* is formed by those themes that have only been preserved by exceptional ballad-singers, who are usually not young. For present-day collectors these singers constitute the great “finds” during their days of fieldwork. There survive in the memory of these “specialists” versions of *romances* of medieval origin which have been almost lost today, along with many others of limited circulation unknown to the majority of their fellow villagers.

At the same time, within the corpus of a *romance* belonging to what we have called the *romancero común*, it is possible to distinguish different groups of versions: independent versions, few in number, which are barely related to other versions in the vicinity; regional versions, which coincide in most of their motifs and in their basic structure with many nearby versions; and what we have called “vulgate” versions, which go beyond the traditional folkloric frontiers and take the place of the specific ballad types of a given district.

There is one additional category of versions, initially developed outside of the traditional culture, which with their influence can wipe out natural frontiers of folklore geography. Sometimes these are factitious versions made up by scholars from verses that are mostly traditional in origin, like those of the *Flor nueva de romances viejos* of Menéndez Pidal (1928); other times they are versions chosen by chance by professional singers or folklore groups. The latter are circulating today with a melody that has been artificially adapted to their new commercial function.

Although these texts make use of a language that is recognizable as their own by authentic speakers of the *romancero* language, they can re-enter traditional culture through scholarly books or other published means and through commercial tapes and radio broadcasts. Once they have been memorized by traditional singers or reciters, they live today alongside the versions and the melodies characteristic of each region; they can maintain themselves just as they are or, with the passing of time, they can incorporate words, formulas, and motifs from the specific version of the area (cf. *Romancero tradicional* 1971-72:5:227-55). Although in some cases it is difficult to identify them, it is necessary to detect this kind of version at the moment of processing the results of a field expedition in order to avoid erroneous conclusions.

Contamination

What has been called “contamination” is in reality one of the most frequent aesthetic devices used in traditional transmission. Speakers of this poetic language manipulate in a natural way a great abundance of lexicalized words and verses which they transfer from one *romance* to another, either keeping the same meaning or adapting it to the new context into which it is inserted. But the informants themselves are totally unaware of this phenomenon, since they recount to us in their poetic language stories that have a beginning, a development, and an ending that form a unit.

Contamination is detected after the fact by students of the *romancero* when they submit the samples they have obtained to comparative analysis. Since these samples of oral tradition are not always presented to us in a good state of preservation, when two or more *romances* are crossed, it is necessary to determine whether it is contamination with a traditional base, or whether, on the contrary, it is no more than the result of an artificial attempt at reconstruction caused by the uncertain memory of the informant at the moment of re-actualization.

The Fieldwork Manual

The fieldwork manual, together with the tape recorder and the field workbook, is a basic tool for the task of ballad collecting. Its function is to anticipate in so far as possible what *romances* will appear and to remind the collector of them by means of a version as close as possible to those they expect to find. It should include a complete inventory of themes known in the area that is being investigated, as well as in nearby areas, with alternate openings and the most representative segments of discourse, as well as complete versions of the *romances* that offer the most interest because they still are poorly documented. Whenever possible it should include names of reciters and collectors of the past, a list of the localities already searched, and demographic data that will help to select the localities they are going to visit. As for the internal organization of the manual, it is a good idea for each *romance* to occupy a loose, independent sheet to facilitate later reordering in accord with the preferences that we know are characteristic of the tradition of each subarea under investigation. The manual must not be considered a closed book; the new data collected during the course of the expedition must be entered in the manual to serve as

future reference.

Variation, a characteristic of traditional poetry, has not imposed itself sufficiently upon modern oral tradition to break up to any substantial degree the repertoires and models of each theme implanted from past times in a given area. The use of the manual during field explorations has shown that the majority of *romances* and *romance* types that had been sung in a region reappear in the present. Although it will be necessary to wait for the complete processing of all the data obtained in the field expeditions of recent years, we can state that the ballad tradition has not remained static and that phenomena of poetic re-creation are still being produced similar to those which occurred in past times. Alongside a large number of versions that have a tendency to summarize stories, there also appear others that are amplified in a discursive way or that have transformations that affect the plot and even the structure of the *fabula*. Certain themes like *Gerineldo* or *El conde Niño* are in a state of regression in zones where they had attained great popularity, while others, generally in “vulgate” versions like *Tamar* or *La doncella guerrera*, are expanding with great rapidity. The type of *La serrana de la Vera* that begins “Allá en Garganta la olla, / siete leguas de Plasencia” (There in Garganta la olla / seven leagues from Plasencia), which up to 1977 was only known in Extremadura and thereabouts, has traveled as far as the province of Lugo, where it was documented in recent field trips in Galicia. Also the appearance of new hybrid versions of previously well differentiated types of *La muerte del príncipe don Juan* serve as an example of the transformations that a traditional theme can still suffer by means of contact between repertoires of contiguous communities.

Teams and Functions of their Members

Any individual investigator can, of course, devote himself to ballad collecting. This is what has habitually been done in the past, and it is continuing to be done with great success in many cases. But there are many advantages to undertaking this task as a team, in addition to sharing experiences with colleagues or collaborators of different origin.

It does not seem to us to be a bad idea to have in a well organized collective field expedition a large number of participants, some of them lacking experience, since didactic aims can be integrated into the practical experience of field trips without

disturbing the progress of ballad collecting. But it is necessary, in the cases of “massive” participation, to distribute the collaborators in teams of no more than four people, to be sure that they are always directed by monitors who are experts in ballad collecting, and to assign ahead of time a task to each person so that there will not be any sort of interference that could affect the investigation. Taking notes by hand about unusual versions, recording information about informants and, above all, taking down systematically the incipit of each sample that is collected together with the identification, whenever feasible, of corresponding themes, can enormously facilitate the processing of the data at the end of each expedition.

Choosing the Area of the Field Trip

Choosing a small or very limited area seems indispensable for certain kinds of fieldwork carried out by sociologists, ethnographers, or anthropologists who include personal interviews in their methodology, since in this way they have the possibility of selecting their informants according to their different interests.

In the case of the traditional *romancero*, the selection in advance of a concrete locality or an excessively small area always carries with it the risk of finding wasteland and the conviction, albeit with reservations, that the *romancero* does not survive at that moment in that place. The seeker of *romances* will never cause by his presence, however prolonged it may be, a text to be produced that did not exist before his arrival. *Romances*, as we have said, can be in the memory of any speaker of the Ibero-Romance languages: men, women, young or old, even children. But at the same time whole communities, even though they speak those languages, have lived on the margin of *romancero* transmission or, what is more frequent today, they have forgotten it because of the absence or the death of the last repositories of this tradition. For these reasons it is wise to select a zone that is large enough to permit movement in several directions depending upon the state of the ballad tradition.

Insistence upon Areas with the Greatest Continuity in their Ballad Stores

Naturally, continued residence in one place or returning to a town already visited offers more opportunities for coming upon

informants and situations that are more favorable for carrying out interviews than a rapid visit in the course of one day.

On the other hand, we have been able to confirm repeatedly how the presence in the villages of skilled fieldworkers brings a resurgence of interest in the poems with which people entertained themselves in the past. Listening to fragments of ballads which they recognize as something familiar or hearing the recitations of one of their neighbors revives the memory of those who had lost their remembrance of ballads and stimulates them to contribute to the process of recuperating the traditional store. Therefore, when a district or a locality is identified as a zone of special interest because of the characteristics of its traditional repertory, it is indicated that we should return to the same place as many times as is necessary.

Access to Rural Media

The best way to gain access to community repositories of oral tradition is conditioned by the personality of each fieldworker, and it differs according to the circumstances, including climatic factors, at the moment of beginning a day of ballad collecting.

In urban areas it seems necessary for the one who is trying to investigate the living reality of the *romancero* (and we have abundant examples of this in fieldwork on the Sephardic ballad) to belong to the community or be introduced into it by some relative or common friend of the subject one wants to interview. In this kind of fieldwork, establishing a relationship with potential informants by means of people with a certain amount of prestige seems to offer good opportunities for the investigator.

On the contrary, in rural areas of the Peninsula, using as intermediaries people who are socially outstanding does not usually give good results. It is difficult for the school teacher or the priest of the town, often as much of an outsider as the interviewer, to be well informed about the identity of the authentic ballad singers. On the other hand, if they are present at the interviews, by representing authority they can provoke auto-censure in the informants.

At present, for obvious reasons, there is greater comprehension than there was in the past among individuals who belong to urban cultures and among people who still adhere to rural culture. But the arrival in a town of a group of investigators continues to excite natural curiosity in the inhabitants to find out the reason for the

presence of strangers in the community. Presenting ourselves as we really are, field investigators of oral poetry, and showing at once our knowledge of the genre that we are looking for seems to us to be the most honorable and effective way to explain our presence in a cultural world that is foreign to us. Peasants who have had some contact with the ballad tradition and who have been witnesses to how, with the passing of time, these poems have ceased to be sung, understand immediately our interest in saving from oblivion the *romances* that some members of the community can still recall.

It can happen that the first people whom the investigator encounters know nothing about the *romancero* and are not even capable of identifying it. In those cases they will direct us toward the most erudite or the most knowledgeable person in the town, or, in some cases, toward the one who is known for his (or her) ability to sing any kind of song but who is not necessarily a good repository of tradition. But with a little practice, in most instances it is possible to avoid these false paths without losing too much time and to obtain trustworthy information about those who may be well informed about the *romancero*.

Although it is preferable to try to contact the oldest people, any one of the town's inhabitants can be, in principle, an active speaker of the traditional poetic language or at least a passive speaker who has listened to it and can recognize it on hearing it again. For this reason, it is essential to try to establish relations with the greatest number of individuals possible until we come upon the person who can offer us the information that we are seeking.

Once we have succeeded in identifying the *romancero* as the object of our interest for our informants, even though we may have hardly collected a fragmentary sample, names of people suggested by them who may be acquainted with the *romancero* usually lead us to discover individuals who knew *romances* at least at one time.

The Interview: Collector, Informant, Manual

Approaching people in their homes, generally elderly people who are not at all prepared for the presence of an investigator, in order to ask them to tell us what they know about traditional texts doubtless supposes an action that is not without an appearance of aggressiveness, since the collector, who knows very well why and for what purpose he is in a given place, is the one

who is breaking into the peasants' daily life. But in my long collecting experience, I have proven, day after day, that the "traditional" hospitality of rural folk shown to the stranger who knocks at his door continues to function as the norm in all rural communities. Provided the investigator from outside knows how to wait for a favorable opportunity and not interfere with sometimes pressing obligations in which the peasants are occupied, he will find the means to establish an excellent relationship. The collector and the informant do not know each other, but they have in common their knowledge of the *romancero*. This shared culture is, in my opinion, what contributes most to the opening up of communication between them. The two interlocutors have made a discovery: the investigator foresees the possibility of listening to some admirable, hitherto unknown texts, and the one who is being interviewed discovers that "his" *romancero* is recognized and appreciated by someone who is not an integral part of his traditional culture.

Good results are obtained when interviews are carried out in the presence of relatives or neighbors of the informants so that everybody can collaborate, but this situation, which often presents itself, creates difficulties that the collector has to overcome so that the texts being collected are comprehensible despite the interferences that are naturally produced on such occasions. In these collective interviews it is also important to understand the various levels of authority that are in effect in each case. The acceptance of certain hierarchies (between husband and wife, parents and children, good and bad singers, etc.) can cause even the most talented singer to remain silent since, despite his knowledge, he respects the role of protagonist assumed by another one of the group. Just as there are many styles among those who devote themselves to collecting oral texts, the bearers of traditional knowledge offer us varied personalities that make us adapt collecting techniques to each particular situation.

The various levels of the *romancero* that different types of reciters can offer oblige us to choose our questions during the interview in such a way as not to discourage our interlocutors by insisting upon *romances* that almost surely they are not going to recognize. Therefore, it is wise to use the manual and alternate popular themes with those that appear less frequently. Whenever possible the initiative should be left to the informants themselves so that they will offer us their whole repertory, but this does not always turn out to be possible, owing to the fact that the

transmitters, because of the crossing of genres in their minds, easily turn to singing or reciting *coplas*, *canciones*, or even songs from *zarzuelas*, or tangos learned in their youth.

Not having been re-actualized in years, the ballad texts that we find in our current field trips almost always remain in a state of lethargy from which they must be brought out. It is surprising, nonetheless, how the first actualization with omissions and verses that are incoherent or out of place, with our help, turn into a magnificent version delivered all in one piece once the reciter gains self-confidence. Therefore, the collector can and must, with or without the help of the manual, make suggestions in order to bring a recitation to a good conclusion, although in no case should he propose perfect verses or hemistichs that are then integrated into the version after being respectfully accepted by the informant. The first rule of collecting is not to alter or deform a ballad text at any time on the basis of our own knowledge.

The collector must be patient and devote all the time that is necessary to every interview in order to overcome the natural resistance of the transmitter to give us fragmentary texts. The most important key to awakening the memory of the reciters is to hit upon an incipit that make them recall the opening of one of their own versions, because if the beginning does not come out right, it is not likely that they will go on to sing (or recite) the rest of the *romance*.

If the poem was learned with its melody, we must ask the informant to repeat it by singing, and if this is not possible, to intone at least four to six verses, since the melody that accompanies ballad texts keeps repeating itself with scarcely any variation. Aside from the musical interest of the melody, singing can facilitate the collecting of a more perfect text. Between two consecutive actualizations of a well-remembered version, we are not going to find significant differences, but when a ballad is not remembered with precision, the melody memorized with that version usually helps the singer produce one verse after another more easily. Nevertheless, it must be emphasized that, even though the melody or the assonance helps the informant recall verses that he did not manage to actualize correctly or had omitted, he always has the option while reciting of stopping to think or to correct his words, or add or remove verses or hemistichs afterwards. However, the desire not to disturb the continuity of the performance while singing will oblige him to

accept verses whose traditional form he does not remember well or else to omit them completely.

All the informants we have been referring to up to now are those we have encountered most frequently during the course of our ballad collecting, but this does not mean that there do not still exist exceptional ballad singers, men or women who continue to practice singing or reciting themes that are very scarce in modern oral tradition and who have the ability to produce dozens of versions without the least hesitation. There is no definable prototype of this kind of individual and, although, unfortunately, they are usually elderly people who have kept their memory intact, we can also find middle-aged “specialists,” often the children or grandchildren of expert reciters who know they are repositories of an important family heritage.

The knowledge of a ballad collector and even the data accumulated in the field manual can turn out to be insufficient when we find ourselves face to face with these balladeers. The investigator must accept the fact that his interlocutor is the one who is truly knowledgeable about the traditional language. At the same time he must profit by every opportunity to plumb the depths of the store of *romances* hoarded in that privileged memory. This traditional transmitter usually accepts our questioning with good grace, pleased to be able to offer us the information that we are seeking, but it is not easy for him (or her) to give us fragmentary texts, however important we consider them to be; rather, if he is unable to recall the complete story, he will refuse to give it out.

The periods of time shared with informants with an exceptional traditional memory are the best reward that the field-worker who devotes himself to ballad collecting can receive, but these rare encounters warp for a while our evaluation of the true state of health of the ballad tradition by making us believe in the survival of the *romancero*.

Unfortunately, taking the tradition as a whole, there is no reason for optimism concerning the possibility of the *romancero*'s continuing to be re-created in the future. The singers and reciters whom we have met during our field trips in recent years are much older on the average than the informants interviewed by ballad collectors up to the middle of this century.²⁰ In the time that passed between the northern field trip of 1977 and the expedition of 1985 in León, we have been able to confirm the rapid

disappearance of traditional culture as a result of the depopulation of the small rural communities in which the *romancero* was being kept alive.

This pessimistic assessment, in which can be foreseen the end of authentic singing of traditional *romances*, is only partially compensated for by the fact that, even today, the research worker interested in searching for *romances* still has before him a great deal of terrain in which he can discover for himself the enormous quantity of devices that traditional creativity utilizes, as demonstrated by transmitters of the *romancero* when encountered at the right time and place and under propitious conditions.

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Notes

¹Translated from the Spanish by the editor.

²Upon their return to Madrid from their honeymoon, María Goyri wrote a note (which is in the Menéndez Pidal archives) in which she explains in detail the circumstances that surrounded their discovery. Doña María tells how, when she was lodged in an inn in Burgo de Osma (Soria), while she was helping a woman (who was from La Sequera, Burgos) with domestic tasks, it occurred to her to sing the *romance of La condesita*. On hearing it, the woman began in turn to sing *romances* among which was found the first Castilian version of the *Muerte del príncipe don Juan*. This manuscript note of María Goyri has been reproduced in an interesting work which has to do with various aspects of ballad collecting written by one of the most enthusiastic and successful collectors of the Portuguese *romancero*, my good friend, who died recently, Joanne B. Purcell (1979:61-73).

³The papers presented in the Primer Coloquio bring out the interest on the part of the students of the *romancero* in questions related to the collection of traditional texts in very different geographical areas. Between 1971 and 1979, date of the publication of *El romancero hoy: nuevas fronteras*, the acts of the Segundo Coloquio Internacional sobre el *Romancero*, there was a great increase in the amount of ballad collecting being done. In the Tercer Coloquio Internacional sobre el *Romancero* y otras Formas Poéticas Tradicionales, organized by the Colegio de México and the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid in 1982, a considerable number of papers were read about the successes obtained by an ever larger group of fieldworkers dedicated to collecting oral texts. The acts of the Tercer Coloquio are in press at the present time.

⁴In the field expeditions organized by the Seminario Menéndez Pidal (1977-1985) in all 845 tapes were recorded, which are to be found in the ASOR (Archivo Sonoro del *Romancero*).

⁵I am referring to the Northern Field Trip of 1977. The 687 oral versions collected during that search were published in *Voces nuevas del romancero castellano-leónés* (1982). For the methodology used in that expedition, see F. Salazar and A. Valenciano (1979:361-421).

⁶The full text of the ballad with variants is found in *Voces nuevas del romancero castellano-leónés* (1982:1:23-24).

⁷An example of the expansion of these *vulgatas* can be seen in the ballad of *La muerte ocultada*. Out of a total of 300 versions, almost two-thirds correspond to the *vulgata* type. See B. Mariscal de Rhett (1984-85).

⁸We can find references to this very special tradition in two articles published by Diego Catalán (1972:88-89; 1979:232-236). On the other hand, a few months ago Luis Suárez, an expert in Flamenco singing and very knowledgeable about folklore themes related to his native Andalusia, made contact with the Seminario Menéndez Pidal and informed us that for several years he had been investigating the genealogy of the gypsy families who were repositories of this kind of ballad and had collected several versions from the mouths of the few transmitters who were still alive. At the present moment Luis Suárez is preparing a book that has the suggestive title *Rosas y mosquetas de romances viegos*, which will include these rare Andalusian *romances*.

⁹For a list of these expeditions, see note 2 of the preceding article by Diego Catalán. Most of the fieldwork of the Seminario Menéndez Pidal has been carried out during the summer months with a sizable number of participants (from 15 to 45). Among them there have been experienced research workers, students, and dedicated amateurs who were novices in collecting oral texts.

¹⁰The transmission of oral poems is more favorable in small rural communities in which the peasants have the possibility of establishing contact with other nearby localities, since inhabitants of very small and excessively isolated villages have fewer opportunities for collective re-creation of traditional *romances*.

¹¹There most of the villagers were working in the fields. We only interviewed Catalina Carro, age 94, originally from Fresnedelo, who sang for us *Gerineldo* followed by *La condesita* and a quite fragmentary version of *La serrana de la Vera*, all learned in her native village.

¹²According to the census of 1970 Trascastro had 291 inhabitants distributed among 81 families. By the census of 1981 the number of inhabitants was reduced by more than half, 148 inhabitants and 48 families, a larger number than the villagers themselves had given us two years earlier.

¹³At the beginning of the day the teams were Flor Salazar/Antonio Cid and Diego Catalán/Ana Valenciano, but when Antonio and Diego were summoned by the men in the tavern, Flor and I continued our interviewing along the village streets. That was one of the occasions in which the advantages of organizing teams with researchers of both sexes were made clear to us.

¹⁴Versions of the following *romances* were collected in Trascastro and subsequently published in *Voces nuevas del romancero castellano-leónés* (1982): *El moro que reta a Valencia*, *Belardo y Valdovinos*, *El conde Grifos Lombardo*,

Hermanas, reina y cautiva (Flores y Blancaflor), Gaiferos libera a Melisendra, La doncella guerrera, El conde Niño, Las mala suegra, La muerte ocultada, Las señas del esposo (La vuelta del marido), El quintado La aparición de la enamorada, Albaniña, Tamar, Delgadina, La hermana cautiva, Los soldados forzadores, Una fatal ocasión, Conde Claros en hábito de fraile, Gerineldo, Gerineldo + La Condesita, La dama y el pastor, La bastarda y el segador, La serrana de la Vera, La Gallarda, La loba parda, La difunta pleiteada and a romance from a late broadside that showed incipient traditionalization.

¹⁵Interviewed this exceptional reciter on the twenty-fifth of September. The father-in-law of the owner of the inn where we ate every day had spoken to us about Adelaida on several occasions, but since she had been ill in bed, it was not possible for us to see her until the last day of our visit. During the interview, her enthusiasm for the *romancero* made her forget her state of health, and it was I who had to stop and make her rest after singing each poem. According to what she told me, she had been interviewed several months before by a journalist from the province, but the lack of knowledge of the *romancero* on the part of the interviewer had confused Adelaida, who was only able to give her a version of *Gerineldo*. For me she sang, among other romances: *Belardo y Valdovinos, Gaiferos libera a Melisendra, El moro que reta a Valencia, El conde Grifos Lombardo, Sacrificio de Isaac, and El robo del Sacramento + La penitencia del rey don Rodrigo*. Given her situation, I did not want to prolong the interview excessively, for which reason the following year I recommended her name to one of the teams of the Seminario Menéndez Pidal, which made a detour to Peranzanes. See note 17.

¹⁶These texts include: *El moro que reta a Valencia, Don Manuel y el moro Muza, Pérdida de don Beltrán* (found only once before in Spain) with several verses taken from *El marqués de Mantua* and *Belardo y Valdovinos, Gaiferos libera a Melisendra, El conde Grifos Lombardo, La caza de Celinos* (not found here before 1979), *Sacrificio de Isaac, Muerte del príncipe don Juan, Conde Claros en hábito de fraile, El robo del Sacramento* (which almost always ends with the *Penitencia del rey don Rodrigo*), *El veneno de Moriana* (not found here before 1979), *Una fatal ocasión, El ciego raptor* (which usually goes on with *La noble porquera* and *La casada de lejas tierras*), *Flores y Blancaflor* or *Hermanas reina y cautiva, Gerineldo + La condesita, La condesita, La muerte ocultada, La infanta preñada (La mala hierba) + La infanta parida*, a fragment of *El conde Alarcos, El conde Niño, Blancaflor y Filomena, La serrana de la Vera, La gallarda, La dama y el pastor, La bastarda y el segador, La loba parda, Los primos romeros, Los mozos de Monleón, El mozo arriero y los siete ladrones, La Virgen romera, La devota de la Virgen en el yermo, La difunta pleiteada, Cristo testigo + El difunto penitente, La infanticida, El galán y la calavera, El quintado* (which usually goes on with *La aparición de la enamorada*), *La mala suegra, La casada de lejas tierras, Albaniña, La doncella guerrera* (which may go on with *El ciego raptor* and *La casada de lejas tierras*), *La vuelta del marido, Las tres cautivas, Santa Iris, Ricofranco, La hermana cautiva, ¿Dónde vas, Alfonso XII?, Don Gato, Atentado anarquista contra Alfonso XII* and *La muerte de Garcia y Galán*. Among traditional religious themes are: *La Virgen y el ciego, ¿Cómo no cantáis, bella?* (a lo divino) and *La confesión de la Virgen*. In addition, there are several old Christmas songs with verses that belong to *La muerte del maestro de Santiago*, a few blind men's ballads with partial traditionalization, several *canciones* and *coplas*, prayers, prose stories, and a few poetic compositions about political events that took place recently.

¹⁷On June 29, one of our best informants from 1979, Adelaida Álvarez, repeated for the 1980 team some of the *romances* collected from her before, but she added to her previous repertory *El conde Niño*, *La serrana de la Vera*, *La loba parda*, *La doncella guerrera*, *La Virgen y el ciego*, and a *copla*. They again encountered Valenta Fernández, who did not offer anything new this time, and Narciso Álvarez, who added to what he had recited in 1979 the ballad of *La muerte ocultada*. They interviewed Primitiva Fernández Román for the first time, who recited a version of *Gerineldo* and another of *La loba parda*.

¹⁸The *romances* that I collected in Las Hurdes (January 25-29) and in Cortes de la Frontera (February 6-10) correspond to themes that have been well documented in both geographical zones. In Las Hurdes: *Conde Claros en hábito de fraile*, *Gerineldo*, *La condesita*, *La muerte ocultada*, *La infantina + El caballero burlado*, *El conde Niño*, *La serrana de la Vera*, *Tamar*, *Blancafor y Filomena*, *La vuelta del marido*, *La doncella guerrera*, *El quintado + La aparición de la enamorada*, *Los mozos de Monleón*, *La casada de lejas tierras*, *La bastarda y el segador*, and *La loba parda*. In Cortes de la Frontera: *Silvana*, *Delgadina*, *Gerineldo*, *El conde Niño*, *La mala suegra*, *La casada de lejas tierras*, *La bastarda y el segador*, *El quintado*, *La vuelta del marido*, etc.

¹⁹These two *romances* have been used in Christmas festivities as a petitionary song to solicit money or food. In the province of Segovia the theme of the *maestre* is also sung at Christmas time in a festival called “El Reinado” (the selection of a boy and girl as king and queen who collect money from the townspeople). On this occasion the ballad ends by saying: “Aquí se acaba la historia, / aquí se acaba el reinado, / aquí se acaba la historia, / señores de hoy en un año” (Here the story ends, here the reign ends, here the story ends, gentlemen, for a year). During the field expedition in Segovia in 1982, I collected in the towns of Siguero and Siguero two good versions of *La muerte del maestre de Santiago* which were very similar to those that Diego Catalán had collected in the same villages in the fifties, but neither of the two reciters, who were about seventy, remembered having taken part in the festival of “El Reinado.”

²⁰The advanced age of our informants is a fact that has been observed daily during our recent field trips. Taking as a base the *romance of Gerineldo* in the province of León, from the beginning of modern ballad collecting up to approximately 1950, the average age of the informants familiar with this theme was slightly over 43. In the Northern Field Trip of 1977, the reciters in the province of León who knew this same theme had an average age of almost 70. The difference in age between the two groups of reciters coincides with the number of years that passed between the two periods of fieldwork.