

## ORALITY AS CRITIQUE OF HISTORY: READING THE *POEMA DE MÍO CID*<sup>1</sup>

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The 1989 publication of Joseph Duggan's *The "Cantar de Mío Cid": Poetic Creation in Its Economic and Social Contexts*<sup>2</sup> (*PCEESC*) raised once again a number of key questions about the *Poema de Mío Cid* and the powerful critical tradition that has been constructed around it. Just as happened in the earlier publication of María Eugenia Lacarra's epoch-making *El Poema de Mío Cid: Realidad histórica e ideología* (1980)<sup>3</sup> (*RHI*), however, many of those questions have their full implications short-circuited by the very critical gesture that articulates them—in the case of *PCEESC*, as we shall see, in a much less analytically consistent though, for present purposes, much more interesting manner. Suffice it for the moment to say that in both cases those key questions are recuperated into the dominant critical logic that articulates *Poema de Mío Cid* (*PMC*) studies and that that recuperation is carried out in such a way as to nullify them virtually at the very instant of their proposition. Moreover, the all-but-simultaneous proposal and denial of those questions comes deeply linked to issues of the modern constitution of history, and critique of them must therefore involve analysis of that connection.

Specifically, the *PMC* critical tradition has long revolved around a very particular set of motifs, mainly ones seeking to link the events represented in the poem directly to "historical" events and "historical" social practices. To be sure, the various articulations of that linkage have not been as naïve as my bald portrayal suggests, but the ineluctable last redoubt of this, the dominant critical gesture of *PMC* criticism has been just that: to argue from text to social history and back again, in a circle that has, in its very circularity, taken on self-confirming qualities. Those qualities operate in reading and criticism as well as in historical work on the period and events involved.<sup>4</sup>

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1.- This text comprises the revision and expansion of one section of a lecture/seminar, "The Problems of Orality," given in the Department of Comparative Literature of the University of Minnesota in April, 1991. In many respects, that development derived, in turn, from a public discussion with María Eugenia Lacarra on *The Poem of the Cid*, held in the same location in May, 1990.

2.- Joseph J. Duggan, *The "Cantar de Mío Cid": Poetic Creation in Its Economic and Social Contexts* (Cambridge: 1989).

3.- María Eugenia Lacarra, *El Poema de Mío Cid: Realidad histórica e ideología* (Madrid: 1980).

4.- The dilemma of circular reference is confessed in many places, implicitly when not explicitly. See, e. g., the article on "The Cid" in the current (fifteenth) edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 3, 316. The article's author, Peter E. Russell, remarks in the last paragraph on the "problems" that biography of the Cid presents because of his status as subject of tales. While it is not my point to elaborate upon the topic here, I would remark that Russell himself immediately accepts some of the terms associated with the Cid's

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The great systematizer of this critical practice, Ramón Menéndez Pidal, and his followers down to the present day have successively refined and redefined a basic position, moving it from its initial grounding in a nineteenth-century Romantic-Positivist notion of "the people as singer and as historical memory" to a seemingly unproblematic accommodation of the early oral-poetic composition theories of such as Milman Parry and Albert Lord to their outlook. And, as we shall see, investigators who posit literate composition of the poem have in the main also insisted upon a variety of such an outlook. In effect, a kind of exegetic imperative grounded in a direct and self-confirming historical referentiality presumed *a priori* has long held sway in *PMC* critical practice.

Only in 1980 did someone challenge that outlook in a systematic way:<sup>5</sup> with *RHI* Lacarra argued that *PMC* seems to obey a logic more easily relatable to social struggles of a later moment than to those of the *Cid*'s lifetime and that the poem, using the figure of the *Cid*, in fact sets forth motifs that correspond to factors in force at the time of its composition, which she locates approximately 100 years after the Castilian warlord's death in 1099. Among those factors she posits the ongoing Castile-Leon conflict and as well the question of the domains and practices of public versus private law, an issue very much in question—and transition—in the late-twelfth and early-thirteenth centuries, when she would have the poem composed. And, in relation to the latter issue, she postulates a literate author familiar with legal documents and legal practice. In short, Lacarra posits a rationale in the poem that can loosely be termed "ideological," instead of the direct historico-referential one that, in various guises, had dominated criticism up to the publication of *RHI*.

Joseph Duggan suggests a scenario in many ways similar to that of Lacarra, on whose work he admittedly builds for many dimensions of his own, especially for the pinpointing of the huge number of demonstrable anachronisms in the poem, which pose a major obstacle for even the most revisionistic of direct historicist arguments. In his view, however, the social circumstances at stake at the time of composition are somewhat different from those in Lacarra's thesis; indeed, they include the question of the legitimacy of the royal lineage. He dates the poem at around the time given in the *explicit* contained in its last lines: 1207. Furthermore, he points to an oral performer as "author," and one, in contradiction to Lacarra's thesis, whose knowledge of law is merely that of anyone familiar with various practical legal proceedings, which he sees as still primarily oral in practice and perpetuation. Despite that modal difference, however, in a functional sense his rationale differs little from that of *RHI*.

The aspects of Lacarra's work, and Duggan's after her, that are of interest here are two; and they are all but mutually contradictory. First, they react against the direct historico-referential gesture that has long dominated *PMC* criticism and they do so in the name of a critical model grounded in notions of ideology, albeit notions that differ substantially between the two authors. That model raises a central question about the text: "In the light of the argument of ideology, can signification in the poem be as completely linear-narrative and referentially-based as is presumed in traditional criticism, or, indeed, as *RHI* and *PCESC* themselves presume?" That is, if reference in the poem is one made to an order of language, indeed to one more recent than the events represented, with the various disjunctures that that claim presumes, is it sensible then to presume fixity of signification on all sorts of other scores? Could it be that that probable contradiction should be approached by looking at the entire matter quite differently? The two studies do not, however, explore such issues, or even seek to develop their implications, for their goals are ultimately exegetic in the manner of *PMC* tradition. Indeed, to the contrary, they both, more or less simultaneously with their opening-up of that multifaceted question, fall back into compliance with the general referentialist gravitation of *PMC* critical practice through indirect

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place as cornerstone of a very specific version of Spanish national historiography, if not his place as subject of literary canonization as well. (I myself, of course, use "the *Cid*" here, preliminarily, as a cover term for the amalgam of historical and "literary" figure that it is in fact my purpose to differentiate.)

5.- To be sure, there has been all along a diffuse critical line divergent to that dominant mode, usually taking the form of some sort of rhetorical reading of the text. It, however, has never taken its position to the extreme of opposing the historicist line—usually casting itself in the guise of narrative poetic technique subordinatable to the wider—read "historical"—core imputed to the "poem itself." Two important figures out of many who have followed that line are Edmund de Chasca and Antonio Ubieta Areta.

means: Lacarra by positing direct textual reference to a describable ideological order at the time of the poem's composition, Duggan by carrying out what is functionally the same gesture as Lacarra's with a slightly changed referent and the added factor of the invocation of a single oral performance situation that constitutes the occasion of the articulation of a substantively different but functionally similar ideological order.

In both cases, the possibility that the stabilization of the poetic text through critical practice linked to history should be questioned is thus momentarily suggested only to be subordinated again to what can be argued to be mere functional analogues to features in the dominant critical practice. That is, the reading of the poem is merely subordinated to another determinate reference system: a static ideological order replaces a directly historical one as the strong term in a pre-established allegory that enables a specific sort of reading of the text and denies others—not to mention other critical operations altogether. Thus the poem is now to be explicated through new references set up, procedurally-speaking, *a priori*, just as the old, direct historical ones had been.

It would seem to be the case, then, that the overriding feature of *PMC* criticism—namely, critical stabilization of the text to create a neatly definable object of a specific sort of exegetic activity by means of appeal to a determinate historical referentiality—continues on. Also, needless to say, this sort of stabilization enables the critic to continue to assume with total ease the objectivist position of unearther of “historical factuality” about the poem, be that factuality directly or indirectly “historical.” And, of course, the movement from text to social history and back to the text, valuable as stabilizer of the text/historical object, is thereby allowed to remain in force. Let us look at what those critical postures hint at and then exclude, and let us do so, for reasons that will be dealt with momentarily, via use of *PCEC*'s suggestion of oral composition.

Despite appearances and even claims<sup>6</sup> to the contrary, “orality” studies are remarkably segmented and contradictory across the many academic disciplines and other undertakings which involve them. Across that range, the profiles that “orality” acquires can be said to have as many points of diversity as they do characteristics in common. One common point, however, seems to be that those diverse “oralities” are beset by a phenomenon that is often acknowledged at what might optimistically be called a “meta-theoretical” level but is seldom taken account of beyond that: they are constantly—one might say inevitably—inflected in their methodology by the presumptions of what is, by their own logic, characterized as “orality's” “opposite,” namely the “literacy” that all investigators of “orality” necessarily bring with them. The results that this double fragmentation produces are sometimes remarkably complex ones.

Moreover, the problem clearly does not reside within methodology alone, thus, as a result, remaining addressable, and thinkably solvable, on that terrain. Instead, it is a problem that leads back from methodology, from, that is, “orality” as an overarching, though fragmentarily-realized concept, to epistemology: “What sorts of statements can we presume to make about what is admitted beforehand to be different from our very mode of conceptualization and therefore from the bases of our investigations?”, “What status can we ascribe to such statements?” Seen in relationship to this problem, “orality” comes to represent much more than a culture theory and the ground of a hermeneutics; it comes to stand as a sign for the very problems of that cultural and/or hermeneutical theorization which posits something called “orality” to begin with. And the opposite proposition is equally the case: “orality's” very problematicity comes to problematize its named opposite as well, and the long-presumed neutral status of “literacy” must in turn come under scrutiny. Indeed, the two concepts must ultimately come to be seen as

6.- See, e. g., Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London: 1982), esp. 1-3.

7.- Here and henceforth, I use the terms “orality” and “literacy,” in relation to each other, in a way like that of a number of scholars who fairly thoroughly agree in employing them as modal opposites as regards language behavior and bases of cultural organization. In this regard, the Ong title, n. 5, provides both a bibliographical overview and a paradigm of practice. My own orientation toward the concepts is somewhat different from this one, in ways not irrelevant for this study. Nevertheless, its development is not essential here and would be digressive to present goals; it will therefore not be undertaken.

existing in an ongoing dialectic relationship to each other. As such problems of difference in cultural mode are emphasized, it becomes clearer and clearer both that the implications of "orality" are very difficult to grasp and keep in mind and also that virtually anything we attempt to say about it represents some sort of transference, usually through metaphorization, from our own, "literate" culture store.<sup>8</sup>

A sense of those problems is, however, one of the elements that is diversely shared among the various areas of "orality" study. Literary studies have by and large suppressed such questions in the face of an apparently accessible "text"—i.e., once the oral presentation has been transcribed it is there to be "read" directly, just like any other "text." Work on "orality" in other areas—in particular, philosophy, classics, anthropology, and folklore—suggest, however, a far different story.

What such studies not of the oxymoronical "oral texts" but rather of "oral culture(s)" have suggested is that, of the various differences ascribable to "orality" and "literacy," one is that the signifying system of "oral culture" (a term used categorically here only for the purposes of discussion, in concert with standard practice; see n. 6) has to be seen differentially with respect to "literate" presumptions. Oral culture would not seem to rely on the discrete fixities that our written culture claims for itself—especially our supposedly stable conceptual universe. The distinction is advanced by, among others, both Eric Havelock and Claude Lévi-Strauss. Havelock's classic study *Preface to Plato*<sup>9</sup> reads the Platonic project as one attempting, in the face of a powerful oral tradition and social-cohesion practices grounded in "oral" language use, to institute just such a "literate" conceptual universe in the Greece of the fourth century B. C. as a new cultural mode. Lévi-Strauss similarly but more contrastively distinguishes between on the one hand the *bricoleur* of so-called "primitive" cultures, the reuser of linguistic and other oddments, and, on the other hand, the literate "engineer."<sup>10</sup> The former sees no problem in *ad hoc* reuse in a project that forms itself—on the basis of a previously-accumulated practice, to be sure—as it goes along, while the latter plans the project out in advance on the basis of a system of inscribed representation abstracted from hands-on practice. The difference, for Lévi-Strauss, is a general conceptual one rather than one of cultural specifics. Literally dozens of other studies could be adduced to make similar basic points in greater or lesser degrees of directness. The profiles advanced basically characterize "oral culture" as, then, one in which language is much less tied down to systematicity and abstraction, at least as we understand the terms, than we are accustomed to assume.

According to those profiles, oral language deploys itself not in a series of stabilizing references to an elaborate system of pre-fixed concepts but rather in representation of key, concrete incidents wherein the terms used and, often, the verbal sequences in which they are employed, are always both pre-empted because of their prior associations and also evolving through their regular reuse. They thus in fact traverse their current context paradigmatically as well as figuring in its linear development. That mode of language use is, then, what we might call "rhetorical"—in very specific ways. Post-structural language critique, of course, holds that our literate language is in fact much more of a piece with that "oral" model than we would like to think. It suggests that, in effect, our language too is at its basis "rhetorical" in something like the sense in which I use the term here, though the specifics of its rhetorical processes are not those described above. For a part of its deployment is based on the "forgetting" of that "rhetorical" status and performative occultation of it, as well as on the gravitation of the very notion of conceptual fixity itself within literacy's rhetoric. This description, of course, is both highly schematic in its presentation here and also highly problematic in the neat polarity upon which it relies. The basic opposition, however, is quite widely accepted as the basis for cultural characterization and will be used here without further direct comment.

8.- I am, of course, aware that in this statement, and others both prior and subsequent, I merely rehearse in a different discourse the argument made by Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore: 1976), esp. 27-73. For reasons that I suspect will be clear through context, I think it important to work through the argument again in relation to the issues in question.

9.- Eric A. Havelock, *A Preface to Plato* (Cambridge, Mass.: 1963).

10.- Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (Chicago: 1966), esp. 16-22. The implications of Lévi-Strauss' thought for orality work are developed by Jack Goody, *The Domestication of the Savage Mind* (Cambridge: 1977).

What is interesting is the close relationship between the "rhetoric" of orality as oral cultural theory profiles it and the "grammatology" of one line of post-structuralism. Both suggest a language behavior grounded in a kind of rhetoricity, one in which language itself *is*, in which that language structures our knowledge-creation processes, and in which that language therefore must be dealt with as a part of any critical act rather than being presumed to exist as a mere transparent bearer of information and/or prior thought.

The point to be made in regard to *PMC* studies is that *PCESC*, for its oral hypothesis to be coherent, has had to decharacterize the "orality" that "oral culture" studies propose. For Duggan, as for most literary oralists, "oral composition" must be reduced to something analogous to a poetic technique so that sub-rosa literate expectations about the resulting "text" can be maintained. This proposition could be demonstrated quite easily by recourse to his study. For present purposes, however, that issue is not as interesting as is an examination of one of the foundations of that unspoken "literacy" in the case of *PMC* scholarship. I refer to its primary stabilizing technique, namely its grounding in historical reference.

It is not, then, my intent here to seek to label *PMC* as either "oral" or "literate," though it must surely be clear from the foregoing that, if by "literate" we mean something like "susceptible of our modern reading and interpretation expectations," I do not think that it can be simply "literate." Too much of it is episodic, repetitive, and digressive and, seen from "our" viewpoint, it presents too many anomalies, if not outright contradictions, to fit a "literate" model. Indeed, to the extent that the ensuing pages bear on that issue at all, what I shall be implicitly arguing is that the barrier created around the poem by criticism grounded in unquestioned historical reference has had as one of its several functions that of providing a system of ultimate recourse for use in explaining away many of those problems. In any case, beyond a very minimal point, I do not find the process of labelling in accordance with the polar opposition "oral"-literate" to be a particularly meaningful or interesting endeavor; indeed, it may even beg, or obscure, many other more important questions about the material at hand. Moreover, as many convincing studies show, despite the original Lord/Parry argument based on intractable polar oppositions<sup>11</sup>, especially the Middle Ages is filled with works that seem to partake of both "oral culture" and "literate tradition" simultaneously (see, e. g., Ong, 78-138).

My goals in the ensuing pages are instead somewhat different: I wish to raise the question of the peculiar historico-referential mechanism underlying *PMC* criticism and, curiously enough, embodied in very different ways by the two major works that have fought against its more obvious workings. In that sense, *RHI* and *PCESC*, the latter much more than the former, will represent my starting places, both in the sense that their critiques have prepared the way in very solid fashion and also, conversely, in the sense that, since they both reinscribe the dominant critical mode, I shall be able to use them as objects of investigation. I do wish to make it clear that what follows is not intended as antagonistic to what those two titles, within the terms which they set for themselves, have accomplished within *PMC* studies.

My procedure will be a simple one: I shall reverse the emphasis contained in the above discussion of the internal inconsistency of *PCESC*. Instead of observing its recuperation of referentiality at the expense of what I would see as a more thoroughgoing notion of "orality," one grounded more in oral culture studies than in literary "oralism," I shall ask how "orality," seen along with the language critique that it brings with it, problematizes the referentialism of the *PMC* critical tradition which enables the unspoken presumption of unproblematic literacy to be ascribed to the text. That process will problematize as well a set of traditional historiographical notions, from such practical matters as use of such texts as transparent sources for the writing of history to such conceptual ones as the ability of historiography to represent in any sense whatsoever outside the realm of the medium of representation itself. And, of course, it will in effect pit one mode of "orality," that is, literary oralism, against another, namely oral culture study.

11.- E. g., Albert B. Lord, *The Singer of Tales* (Cambridge: 1960).

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To initiate that project effectively, I shall have to look at some of the workings of *PCESC*. I shall therefore begin with a comment made in that study; it has to do with the passage concerning the Cid's reaction to the news of his daughters' maltreatment at Corpes, in an event consecrated in the criticism as the "*afrenta de Corpes*." The passage in question in *PMC* reads as follows:

Van aquestos mandados a Valençia la mayor;  
 quando gelo dizen a mio Çid el Campeador  
 una grand ora penso e comidio;  
 alço la su mano, a la barba se tomo;  
 '¡Grado a Christus que del mundo es señor  
 quando tal ondra me an dada los ifantes de Carrion!  
 !Par aquesta barba que nadi non messo  
 non la logran los ifantes de Carrion,  
 que a mis fijas bien las casare yo!  
 Peso a mio Çid e a toda su cort  
 e [a] Albar Fañez d'alma e de coraçon.

(2826-2835b)<sup>12</sup>

Duggan's comment:

Indeed, although one usually supposes that the Cid is to be considered full of anxiety for his daughters' physical well-being when he hears of the outrage inflicted on them at Corpes, his utterances represent him as occupied to a greater extent with how the affair reflects upon him... (40)

The terms of the dependent clause are telling. "One . . . supposes" suggests, in its first term, some sort of normative reader of *PMC* and in its second term some equally normative system of "suppositions" that have accumulated in the criticism of the poem, in effect a separate narrative or meta-narrative implicitly held about the poem, by recourse to which the poem is then read and analyzed. The adverb "usually" drives that point home, for it virtually proclaims the presence of such a narrative on some general level, with rules for interpretation that are then applied to specific passages: "'usually' reads this sort of language in *PMC* this way." Furthermore, the verbal phrase "is to be considered" provides an operational index of that interpretative process. It does not say that the character *is* considered by someone or some opinion, or even that he *is being* so considered based on some textual evidence, but rather that he "*is to be*" considered; the normative implications at the level of application of the interpretative rules are quite clear in the phrase.

The questions that that remark raises are, therefore, many. Who is the normative "one" who carries out this aprioristic interpretative process? Likely not a naive reader who comes to the text cold, for he or she would not have access to that lateral narrative. Or would she/he? Of what does that narrative consist?

We know from the passage in *PCESC* that the narrative dictates that the Cid should be "full of anxiety for his daughters' physical well-being when he hears of the outrage . . . at Corpes" and likewise have reason, from the passage's narrative diction, to suspect that a similar reaction would be expected of that lateral narrative states that the represented Cid of *PMC* is a person of emotion, if not in general then at least as regards some set of his interpersonal linkages: perhaps only his daughters, but perhaps as well his entire family, perhaps his family and other close personal relationships, perhaps all of the foregoing plus his followers in general. Moreover, he "shows" that emotion via direct textual representation (we shall bypass here the knotty problem of potential cultural variations in the manifestation of emotion or in the representation of such manifestation). It is likely that another rule, this one of an operational sort, says that the former rule is to be universally applied, another, partial formulation of

12.- *Poema de mio Cid*, ed. and intro. Colin Smith (Oxford: 1972). Passages are cited by line number included in my text.

this rule being that no other consideration, representational or textual, can countervene its operation. This formulation of interpretative rules on my part is provisional, of course, since it is based on a small sample, albeit one that enables much because of the categorical nature of its discourse. We also know that the expectations that correlate with those rules are frustrated here, at least in Duggan's initial reading of the passage.<sup>13</sup>

At least one aspect of this scenario would seem to favor accessibility for our naive reader: the few interpretative rules that can be extrapolated from the passage in *PCESC* seem to favor consistency of characterization and of representation of emotion in something like a modern-novel sense. The Cid character is "supposed" to consistently demonstrate his emotionality when his interpersonal relationships are in peril and that representation is "supposed" to be constitutive of his "character." That is, the "Cid" presumed in Duggan's passage is the representation of an autonomous individual interacting with an autonomous phenomenal world. The lateral narrative seems, then, to presuppose modern "realist" linearity of narration and consistency of representation—in this case, of "individual" characterization. This *is* what a modern reader would expect.

By contrast, however, the very weight of the apparatus that leads to this conclusion is telling. All of the strictures and directions inherent in Duggan's "one usually supposes that the Cid is to be considered" suggest that this apparent breakdown of the operative rule structure for interpretation of the poem is very problematic, that something much more is at stake than modern readerly expectations, though it may well enlist those expectations as the basis of its working. After all, a modern reader can very easily say to him/herself: "The Cid, in being 'occupied to a greater extent with how the affair reflects upon him' is now revealing himself to be either a self-centered man, or a frivolous one, or a poor parent, or a male chauvinist [this is not to say that, on other scores he may not be interpretable under some of those titles already], and I will take this development into account as one more linearly-accumulated feature in his, now less consistent and less exemplary, character." That is, modern reading is more attuned to accommodating changes in the linear accumulation of language going toward characterization than Duggan's remarks seem to allow for the reader of *PMC*. To be sure, the weight of context may make even the modern reader reluctant to accept such a change equanimously, but it is doubtful that in any contextual circumstances that reluctance would lead to the sort of remark Duggan makes. For in that remark the threat to the Cid character's consistency is overtly attributed to the lateral narrative and interpretative rules themselves. There, it is clear, the Cid *is* linearly consistent as regards emotional reaction to the emperilment of some set of his interrelationships, and any violation of that rule is of major import. In this sense the "one" who is the reader of the text cannot be a naive reader but can only be someone schooled in the critical expectations that have accumulated in *PMC* criticism and have constituted the lateral narrative to which we have referred.

Why is that lateral narrative so strict in a circumstance such as this one? Clearly because it has a strong stake in seeing the represented Cid character, if not all *PMC* characters, as consistent in terms more or less of a piece with the expectations about character representation in modern narrative practice. Plainly put, the problem can well be argued to have its content created by Duggan's foregrounding of his own modern, literate, *PMC*-critic expectation that the character of the Cid and the sense of emotional reaction present in the text up to the point where the passage reproduced above begins will necessarily continue to carry the narrative forward when the focus shifts to the Cid—and that he should therefore show emotion at the news of the *afrenta de Corpes*.

Something is amiss in those expectations, however, and that something has to do with a rhetorical arrangement that should look quite familiar: there is an allegorical relationship existing between the lateral narrative and its allied interpretative rules on the one hand and the *PMC* text on the other, and

13. To be sure, Duggan continues on to explain the matter—by recourse to narrative thematics, which he sees as caught up in a "discourse of economics" (my term) in the text. The terms of that explanation, therefore, do not affect my argument in the ensuing pages. Incidentally, I would not disagree with the notion of the presence of a "discourse of economics" but, rather, more precisely with the profile of "discourse" itself ascribed to the text in that critical act.

in this case the allegory has broken down. Now, let us recall that the former instance we have seen of such an allegory locates it as part of a reading problematic in which the workings of the allegory conflicted with the language implications of oral-culture studies. It should, then, come as no real surprise to see allegory again here, for the two allegories are in fact one and the same. The stabilizing "historical" narrative that we glimpsed in our capsule history of *PMC* criticism and the lateral narrative that we see here differ only in that we can observe in the latter the operative dimension that makes it the vehicle by means of which the "text" is squared with "history." What we see in the remark from *PCESC*, then, is precisely an instance of the sort of conflict we wish to stage: here the text is not wholly controlled by "history"; indeed, it threatens to overwhelm history and create an aporetic moment for the traditional mode of interpretation.

Enter here the several critiques of modern (i.e., post-Enlightenment) historiographical theory and practice advanced by such as Dominick LaCapra, Reinhart Kosseleck, and Hayden White. Two major points in that critique will be of interest for present purposes: the concepts that modern history is effected through specific sorts of narrative structuration and that that structuration functions as the unrecognized stabilizer of a "scientific"—or para—"scientific"—object of study. In the latter area, LaCapra looks at the historian's creation of the historical object of study as an act of "repression," seeing him or her as existing in something of the psychoanalyst's position in relation to the "historical" "analy-sand" without the hermeneutical sense that is present in the dialogical activity that is psychoanalysis:

[Rhetoric] fosters the awareness that a dialogical relation to the past encounters the problem of coming to terms with "transference" in the psychoanalytic sense of a repetition/displacement of the "object" of study in one's own discourse about it—a problem that is circumvented or repressed both in the idea of full empathetic communion with the past and in the idea of a totally objective representation of it.<sup>14</sup>

On the score of narrative structuration, let us look at a part of Kosseleck's analysis of the development of history at the end of the eighteenth century:

A great descriptive talent was required of history; instead of relating chronologically, it had to inquire into hidden motives and arrange fortuitous events according to an internal order. Thus both genres [history and novel], through a reciprocal osmosis, led to the discovery of a historical reality won only by reflection.<sup>15</sup>

Luiz Costa Lima has observed, in speaking of Kosseleck's analysis:

...It is not by chance that Kosseleck's argument is based on the novel... [A] tension was created between emphasis on history and autonomous art. From that tension derives history's maintenance of parallels with literary practice (the novel)...<sup>16</sup>

Costa Lima goes on to quote Johann Gustav Droysen, the often-pointed-to "last opponent" of nineteenth-century historicism, to the effect that the "production [of an authentic historical account] is accomplished by finding and capturing the idea contained in the facts."<sup>17</sup>

From such claims for specific forms of narrativization as means of "capturing the idea contained in the facts" it is a short step to Hayden White's work in examination of the rhetoricity of modern historiography and of the consequent claims that can be made for historical knowledge. White, as is well known, sees modern history as structured around various possible, more-or-less culturally given narrative "emplotment" strategies.<sup>18</sup> He explains succinctly:

14.- Dominick LaCapra, *History and Criticism* (Ithaca: 1985), 40.

15.- Reinhart Kosseleck, "Die Herausbildung des modernen Geschichtsbegriffs," *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, ed. O. Brunner, W. Conze, R. Kosseleck (Stuttgart: 1975), 2: 662. Translation mine.

16.- Luiz Costa Lima, *Control of the Imaginary: Reason and Imagination in Modern Times*, trans. and intro. Ronald W. Sousa, afterword Jochen Schulte-Sasse, *Theory and History of Literature*, 50 (Minneapolis: 1988), 93.

17.- The quote comes from Johann Gustav Droysen, *Historik: Vorlesungen über Enzyklopädie und Methodologie der Geschichte*, ed. R. Hübner (Darmstadt: 1971), 95-96; it is reproduced in the Costa Lima title on p. 94.

18.- Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: 1973), esp. 7-11.

My thesis is that the principal source of a historical work's strength as an *interpretation* of the events which it treats as the *data to be explained* is rhetorical in nature. So too the rhetoric of a historical work is, in my view, the principal source of its *appeal* to those of its readers who accept it as a "realistic" or "objective" account of "what really happened" in the past.<sup>19</sup>

What such positions propose, the discontinuities amongst them aside, is a self-deployment on the part of modern historiographical practice that is deeply compromised with other modern narrative practices, especially the novel. (The matter is further linked to the rise of the modern nation state and to the contemporary concept of nationality, connections very much implicated in the development of *PMC* criticism but unfortunately much beyond the practicable scope of this study; I should point out, however, that Lacarra, both in *RHI* and in other work, does an admirable job of opening up the question.) In effect, a part of the argument is that production/reception patterns were/are shared, albeit differentially, among narrative practices, including history, and that linear narrative form grounded in recognizable "emplotment" strategies thus becomes the order of the day for history, serving both to give shape to the "hermeneutical desire" (in this context, my term) to which LaCapra alludes and also to repress any doubts about the efficacy, if not the "truth," of the result.

We can now return to the reading and critical practices surrounding *PMC*. In the light of the above, the lateral historical narrative set in an allegorical relationship to the text itself can be seen as the product both of a desire for stabilization and also of a narrative emplotment used to effect the realization of that desire. The "is to be considered" from *PCEESC*, then, as well as the other terms of compulsion in the passage, betray the insistence of the "hermeneutical desire" pointed to above, clearly in the face of its frustration. Both the working of that desire and the means of its effectuation are, however, set into action at a remove: while the lateral narrative attached to *PMC* may in principle be textualizable, it would in practice seem to be composed of a set of explanatory regresses to the basic lineaments of modern historical narration itself, and, conversely, this is not just a casual recourse to history but an emplotment of *PMC* through the agency of those available explanatory regresses. The *PCEESC* passage quoted above in fact represents the textualization of one such regress in action, albeit the action of attempting to impose itself in a difficult moment. And the role of history in the stabilization of the text is profiled in that same moment.

Once this procedure is identified, one can react to it in many ways. That lateral narrative *in potentia* could be textualized as fully as possible, thinkably through work with the various *PMC* historians and literary critics who have employed it. The nature of the explanatory regresses operating between the poem and the problematics of modern history could be explored. There are other options as well.

The path that I should like to take here involves return to the *PCEESC* passage one more time. Focussing on its characterology, I shall take up again, now as a potentially useful point of entry for critique, the matter of orality outlined above. My goal will be to suggest some routes to construction of a different critical viewpoint from which to begin looking at the poem. I shall in effect be seeking to imagine a reading without reference to modern "history" (to the extent that such is possible). I undertake that brief attempt primarily to explore what I would see as some of the resistances to modern historical narrativization to be glimpsed in *PMC* as they are revealed in such moments as its unfelicitous confrontation with historicist stabilization seen here. For obvious reasons, I cannot, and shall not, present the result as a counter-narrative about the text.

One key observation can be made about the passage in which the Cid reacts to the news of Corpes, namely that it resembles a number of other *PMC* passages on several scores: it repeats, or nearly repeats, lines and half-lines seen elsewhere; it employs a practice, common in the text, of focussing in on the Cid's head (and, in the text, only *his* head is focussed in on in this manner) as he reacts. It is a technique that looks like a verbal version of a cinematographic close-up; and it contains, in connection

19. Hayden White, "Rhetoric and History," *Theories of History* (Los Angeles: 1978), 3-25, at 3.

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with that focus, a speech on the Cid's part that falls somewhere between what we would call monologue and what we would call dialogue.<sup>20</sup>

Recourse to some of the notions linked to "orality" will now be helpful. For all of the various approaches to "oral culture" deal with what is not only a lack of any prohibition against verbatim or near-verbatim repetition in narration but indeed seeming use of such repetition—the reuse of what for Lévi-Strauss is a pre-semiotized cultural oddment—as expectable language behavior. Indeed, the conventional term "formula" (which has a complex and mainly unsatisfactory history in theories of "oral composition") is often used to designate such repeated utterances. Also included in theorization about "orality" are both the notion of "motif-sequences"<sup>21</sup> such as the verbal focussing-in on the Cid that we see in the passage in question and also the notion of "dialogue" as one of the bases of oral-cultural language and therefore a frequent technique in oral language presentations. These matters are brought up here because they characterize some of the features of oral language behavior that, as we shall see, will allow us to offer insight into other approaches to the text.

Having noted these language features, one could explore passages with verbal parallels, with structural parallels, and with procedural parallels to the passage in question, in order to investigate its place within the veritable network of other developments in what might be argued—indeed, in various analyses of "orality," has been argued (see, e. g., Nagler)—to be the highly contextual signification processes of "oral poetry."

The point is, however, that the manifold parallels that could be pointed out and the network that they establish suggest a signification process that is itself incompatible with the processes of modern narrative, be it specifically historiographical narrative or any other. Instead of linear narrative with modern "characters" whose supposed "individuality" is constituted by rules requiring, among other indices of that "individuality," a unique psychological core demonstrated through consistent behavior in relation to issues of emotion and so on and whose behavior is displayed in linear, usually simple cause-and-effect-motivated interactions, we see in *PMC*, read "orally," what would appear to be an entirely different set of representational procedures.

In demonstration of those differences, let us go back to the passage in which the Cid hears about the *afrenta de Corpes*, as well as to the passage some lines later in which he meets his daughters upon their return after they have undergone that horror. The former has been reproduced above; the latter reads as follows:

Al que en buen ora nasco legava el mensaxe;  
privado cavalga, a receber los sale,  
armas iva teniendo e grant gozo que faze;  
mio Çid a sus fijas iva las abraçar,  
besando las a amas tornos de sorrisar:  
'¿Venides, mis fijas? !Dios vos curie de mal!  
Hyo tome el casamiento mas non ose dezir al.  
!Plega al Criador que en çielo esta  
que vos vea mejor casadas d'aqui en adelant,  
de mios yernos de Carrion Dios me faga vengar!

(2885-2894)

The first passage, of course, has formal linkages to the entire set of similar passages in which the Cid's head is focussed in on. Indeed, it is most similar to several other such sequences (esp. ll. 6-9, 10-

20.- In this and the ensuing paragraphs I produce a series of assertions about *PMC* in quite compressed form. The specific critique will be accessible to those involved in *PMC* scholarship, while its basic purport is, I trust, accessible to generalists and thus supportive of my overall argument. For those assertions, I draw on a more detailed study of the "close-up" passages in *PMC*, still in progress.

21.- See, e. g. Michael Nagler, *Spontaneity and Tradition: A Study in the Oral Art of Homer* (Berkeley: 1974).

14, and 1931-1942) in which, so centered for the reader/receiver of the poem, the Cid character seems to be meditating about how to understand what has happened as a part of an overall, perhaps divinely-ordained, plan for his life. That is, these passages stand out as substantially different in verbal realization even from the other close-up passages (though they do not constitute the only such subset of them). If the formal parallels can be seen to indicate that readership/receivership is supposed to recognize a commonality in regard to signification in such passages—and almost all oral-poetic analysis argues from that presumption—, then in the passage in question the Cid character must be seen as asking questions about the role played in his destiny by the outrage against his daughters. In that regard, there are several lines in the passage that parallel those in another of these “transcendental” close-up sequences—a sequence (1931-1942) in which the Cid meditates on the wisdom of his daughters’ marriage itself. Indeed, the line about the Cid’s meditative process (2828) and as well the line about his first reaction (2830) constitute exact or all-but exact repetitions of lines from that prior sequence. What is suggested, then, through formal cues contextually framed, is that here too the Cid is thinking beyond immediate situational reactions to try to grasp an overall pattern into which this turn of events can be fitted.

It is unclear in the text whether he is doing so in public or in private, though the subsequent reference to the *cort* and his dramatic raising of his hand seem to indicate a public scene. (Hence a part of the difficulty in distinguishing dialogue from monologue, though that difficulty arises from other sources as well.) This is not an inconsequential observation, for another set of implications connected to the “close-up” passages is the matter of authority in society, as well as, perhaps, sources of identity and even of correct knowledge for the subordinate members of the social unit that that Cid heads. On all these scores, the Cid character is “looked to”—quite literally—within the represented world of *PMC*. There is even a passage (2217-2218ff.) in which we not only see the Cid’s head focussed on as he deliberates and then publicly demonstrates both his decision and his leadership but we also see his followers focus on him in that deliberation, in clear anticipation of a decision that will establish for them cause for reasonable action if not “true” understanding. Moreover, the reader/receiver of the text, who often ends up contemplating the verbalized head of the Cid character, thus sees for him/herself a scene of reception within the text, which I would argue both seeks to legislate that receiver’s response to the poem’s representation of the central character and gives him/her a glimpse of how her/his reception is supposed to be carried out.

Needless to say, no part of this entire complex involves a linear following-out of the plot of a narrative effected through representationally autonomous “characters.” Indeed, much to the contrary, the Cid character can be seen to be the center of a meaning-making process within a represented social system and also within the poem (the two being by no means the same system). As such he would be the nexus of the continuous production of language and the subject of continuous reproduction by language, with that reproduction then having a consequent reproductive value for the textualized followers and the poem’s receiver as well. The entire narrative system of the poem so read would therefore be discontinuous with both the representation practices of modern narrativity and the reception practices associated with it.

In any case, in the passage in question, the Cid character seems to say—or publicly proclaim—that he now sees a way clear to vengeance and a better future for his daughters within the pattern of his destiny. Too, depending on how we read ll. 2830-2831, he may be concluding that the matter has been “ironically” prepared by that destiny. Indeed, as is suggested in similarly structured passages elsewhere, he may be seeing the opposition of the Heirs of Carrión and their entire family as placed there precisely to be overcome and their activity therefore as what we would call structurally ironic. In fact, the word “*ondra*,” ‘honor,’ in l. 2831 must be read as ironical in more or less that vein. Be all this as it may, it is only after that “transcendental” business, ranging from deliberation about providence to direct acting-out of leadership, is taken care of that the matter of the Cid’s personal reaction to the Infantes’ attack upon his daughters is treated: he and all his court grieve. That grieving, however, is merely noted. While this seems counter-intuitive to modern narrative expectation, it is in fact more common in the text than not.

The second passage, of some fifty lines later, which presents the Cid's first actual meeting with his daughters after the events at Corpes, may well supplement the more Cid-centered, destiny-oriented focus of the first passage. It seems a mixture of emotion and diplomacy/leadership—probably not only for the benefit of the young women themselves but also for the followers who are presumably with the Cid—again we cannot tell—and witness the scene. In the passage, as the Cid's face is focussed in upon, he smiles; in other roughly parallel sequences the smile is suggestive of the diplomatic side of the meaning-making and identity-giving social interaction we have examined briefly above. What is more, the Cid's subsequent speech to his daughters is little more than a diplomatic repetition of his "transcendental" understanding achieved in the passage in which he hears of their experience. The second passage thus may exercise some force in expression of emotional reaction but would seem not really to be an "intimate" passage at all.

The foregoing examination of the *PMC* from the standpoint of an "oral rhetoric" that we might construct to deal with it has been suggestive of a number of issues. First of all, it posits a functionality for the presence of a high degree of paradigmatic involvement and outright repetition or near-repetition in the poem, in effect a strong role for that dimension in the poem's grammar and its projected reception. In the process, it suggests as well a set of narrative interrelationships in relation to characterization that are far from linear, as we might expect them to be. Furthermore, it points to a series of represented social interrelationships that require more analysis than the presumption of a modern-style consistency allows. Most specifically, however, in the light of the argument that precedes it, it suggests that such a consistency does not reside within the text itself but rather has long been produced at the nexus of literary exegesis and modern historiography.