



The Judeo-Spanish Ballad Chapbooks of Yacob Abraham Yona.

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Samuel G. Armistead and Joseph H. Silverman. *The Judeo-Spanish Ballad Chapbooks of Yacob Abraham Yoná. (Folk Literature of the Sephardic Jews, Volume I)*. Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1971. 640 pp. \$15.00. ALTHOUGH there is a considerable tradition of the study of oral popular literature in Spanish, there is less such for the study of written popular literature, especially for the contemporary period. Whereas for the Siglo de Oro (for which we have, of course, no oral records), the popular publications are finally being catalogued, reproduced, and edited,¹ the abundance of contemporary oral texts, unedited or yet to be collected, has not permitted any substantial attention to be given to the printed literature addressed to the masses, which is still being produced.² Drs. Armistead and Silverman, justly famous for their publications in the field of the Sephardic *romancero*, attempt with this edition to change this situation for that part of the Hispanic community whose oral tradition is nearest extinction. In so doing, they have produced a work of solid scholarship which makes a further important contribution to the area to which they have already contributed so much.

Yacob Abraham Yoná (1847-1922) was a poor Jew of the Sephardic community of Salonika, who barely managed to support his family by various lower-class occupations. To supplement his income, he published several collections of *romances*, as well as narrative poems of his own composition. Eight volumes containing romances, printed on cheap paper and sold at a very low price, are known to have survived the destruction of the Salonika community and the attrition which affects this type of material. These volumes are reproduced here in facsimile and the romances, 27 in all, are edited and studied.

Not only did Yoná thus preserve for us poems of the Sephardic oral tradition of the turn of the century, and more of them than any other similar editor, but he did so with exceptional fidelity, comparing favorably, according to Ramón Menéndez Pidal, with the editors of the well-known *Cancionero de Amberes*. He made no attempt to editorially alter the poems he published, but instead transcribed them extremely faithfully; furthermore, through his republication in subsequent volumes of the same text, we can study variants in the oral tradition. It is his conservatism which gives his publications their exceptional importance.

A detailed analysis of each *romance*, its history, and the relationship of Yoná's version(s) to the other available texts is outside the scope of this

¹ In particular we must mention the activities of A. Pérez Gómez and the late A. Rodríguez Moñino. The latter's *Diccionario bibliográfico de pliegos sueltos poéticos (Siglo XVI)* (Madrid: Castalia, 1970) is as nearly definitive as is possible at present.

² A welcome and unexpected exception is Julio Caro Baroja's *Ensayo sobre la literatura de cordel* (Madrid: Revista de Occidente, 1969).

review, and one could scarcely hope to improve on the editors' thorough discussions.³ It should merely be noted in conclusion that the editors have dealt with ease and skill with the difficult problem of transcription norms, not yet standardized for Sephardic texts, that they have collated duplicate copies, when available, that they have made an attempt, hopefully to be copied by other scholars in this area, to relate Yoná's texts to other Mediterranean versions (the discussions of modern Greek influence are particularly welcome), and that they annotate motifs with references to Stith Thompson's standard work, *Motif-Index of Folk Literature*. Six indices, a glossary, and a thorough bibliography complete the volume.

Drs. Armistead and Silverman deserve the congratulations and thanks of the Hispanic community for their definitive edition of these important texts.

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June Hall Martin. *Love's Fools: Aucassin, Troilus, Calisto and the Parody of the Courtly Lover.* London: Tamesis, 1972. xiv + 156 pp. £2.80. ONE of the easiest, and usually the least valuable, forms of criticism consists of comparisons of ostensibly unrelated figures or works—the Cid, Hamlet, and the Stone Guest, for example. Countless second-rate dissertations and third-rate articles use it. It is a pleasure, therefore, to find that Dr. Martin has taken this rather hackneyed form and, with a breadth of vision and a keen critical eye, used it to produce surprisingly valuable results through a comparison of the parody of courtly love in three dissimilar works, in which neither parody nor courtly love has always been acknowledged to be present.

In *Aucassin et Nicolette*, Dr. Martin sees Aucassin as the central figure of an essentially humorous, non-didactic parody of Chrétien de Troyes and the *Tristan*. Aucassin is a ridiculous figure, who tries to follow literary ideals in a real world which is at best indifferent to them. By so presenting him, the author exposes, though kindly, the falsity of these literary practices.

Dr. Martin devotes more space to Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, as a consequence of the greater values she sees in the English author's work. Chaucer's Troilus is the subject of a "gentle parody" which combines both the comic and the tragic, as Chaucer admires, at the same time he burlesques, courtly practices. Troilus is not the ideal lover, the incarnation of the rules

³ Unfortunately, the publication of this lengthy volume has been delayed for several years (the introduction is dated June, 1967), and although there is a Bibliographical Epilog (pp. 489-90), there is little reference in the text to contributions published between 1967 and 1971.