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**Transatlantic Discordances:
The Problem of Philology**

Nadia R. Altschul and Bradley J. Nelson
Johns Hopkins University and Concordia University,
Montréal

If there is one place where the critical commerce between what will be drastically simplified here as Spanish and North American approaches to the study of Hispanic literature should produce epistemological gains for both schools of thought, it is Philology. The relatively direct access peninsular scholars enjoy with respect to archival resources, especially in fields such as medieval and Golden Age studies, should position Spanish philology to both support and critique the more theoretically-oriented work being done on this side of the Atlantic. This is decidedly not the case. While the traditional practice of extracting authorial intent through refined textual editing methods and increased linguistic sophistication has reasserted its institutional and even national preeminence in Spain, in

theory-oriented North American criticism philology has become somewhat of a foreign, even quaint, term. The goal of the present think-piece is to offer a partial explanation for the increasing alienation between Peninsular and North American Hispanism by locating some of the blind spots at the heart of two projects heading in opposite directions, as well as to offer an avenue of productive collaboration from within philology itself.

From its origins in nineteenth-century German scholarship, philology historically served as the measuring stick of scholarly modernity in the modern languages and literatures. Since then, German-style philology was adopted as a sign of methodological “arrival” in both European and American universities. French scholars adopted German methodology after their defeat in the Franco-Prussian war in 1870-71, students from the United States traveled to Germany to be trained in the methodology that would found US research universities like Johns Hopkins in 1876, while, although lesser known, a new republic like Chile brought German trained philologists to jump-start its entrance into scholarly modernity in 1889 with its *Instituto Pedagógico*. Spain and Spanish-Castilian philology, however, under the familiar sign of Peninsular “belatedness,” only incorporated this methodology through the scholarship of Ramón Menéndez Pidal, particularly with the foundation in 1910 of the *Centro de Estudios Históricos* of Madrid and of its journal *Revista de Filología Española* in 1914. Despite this apparent arrival into the crucible of scholarly modernity, the philological endeavors of the “Spanish school” trained by Menéndez Pidal did not produce *critical editions* as stipulated in German-style methodology. Instead of critical texts formed by the hierarchical collation of all extant copies, the Spanish school tended to edit in a less severe manner, using a group of chosen manuscripts or even a single available textual “witness.” With medieval Castilian as its foundational ground, and despite justifications pointing to the fact that many major medieval texts are extant in only a handful of manuscripts (the *Poema del Cid*, for instance, is extant in only one copy), it was clear that during the greater part of the twentieth century the Spanish school was not up to “international standards.” Despite the scholarship of Menéndez Pidal, who was a centerpiece of the Spanish school almost until his death in 1968, Spanish-Castilian language philology was not yet comparable to the measuring stick of German-style editorial methodology. For instance, as late as 1964, what is viewed as the first critical edition of a medieval Castilian text—the *Libro de buen amor*—was produced in the German-

style neo-Lachmannian editorial school not by a Spanish-trained philologist but by the Italian-trained Giorgio Chiarini.¹ A decade after Chiarini's critical edition the first center devoted to Castilian neo-Lachmannian textual editing was created in Argentina, when in 1978 Germán Orduna founded and chaired the *Seminario de Crítica Textual* in Buenos Aires. Just a few years later Alberto Blecua published in 1983 the first tool for training neo-Lachmannian editors, the *Manual de crítica textual*, which led to the first wave of university-trained scholars in what would become the new general philological method of Spain.²

From this short survey, it is apparent that the reorientation of Spanish philology was motivated in large part by what has often been defined as the Spanish inferiority complex with respect to its relationship with European culture, politics, economy, and, of course, *science*: in short, *modernity*. North American literary criticism, however, should not be excluded from the analysis of recent developments in Spanish philology. Two recognizable projects in Golden Age studies that are profitably read from this transatlantic impasse include Francisco Rico's recent edition of *Don Quixote* and the *GRISO* project at the University of Navarra, whose current initiative is the production of what can only be called monumental editions of Calderón's *autos sacramentales*.³ In both cases we find philological projects that attempt to offer authoritative, even monumental,

¹ The Lachmannian school of philology grew out of the work of Karl Lachmann (1826), who sought to bring methodological rigor to the study of medieval German literature by modeling it on Classical-Biblical scholarship. The goal of the Lachmannian school was to reconstruct a putative lost original—the *Urtext*—by reading all extant textual “witnesses” as inferior copies of the desired *Urtext*. The neo-Lachmannian school developed in Italy, calling itself *Nuova Filologia*, and it placed the reconstruction of the *Urtext* on an unreachable horizon. Under the banner of a “working hypothesis,” instead of attempting the reconstruction of the *Urtext*, it attempts the reconstruction of the common ancestor from which the existing tradition derived. For a more detailed history of the philological field see Altschul, “El método genealógico.”

² This is not to say that Neo-Lachmannism has achieved a complete hegemonic status in Spanish literary studies. The work of Fernando R. de la Flor and Francisco Domínguez Matito is representative of a counter-current of ideologically and materially framed criticism.

³ For a pointed critique of Rico's encyclopedic efforts as well as the edition's institutional embeddedness, see Julio Baena.

statements on authors and texts that have been insistently linked to narratives of national identity, narratives that have been productively questioned by critics who take more theoretically-oriented approaches to the study of literature, culture, and history. This decisive turn away from postmodern queries into the roles, functions, and critical implications of what Gumbrecht and Karl Ludwig Pfeiffer have called the “materialities of communication” speaks to a paradigmatic divide between philological *science* and more open-ended inquiries into complex problems of authorial intent and the identification of ideological ambivalence in canonical texts, just to name two of the more common foci of approaches from Cultural Studies. In marked contrast to the outward facing posture manifested by the importation of neo-Lachmannian philology into Spain, the aforementioned monumental editorial enterprises, which can be seen as the culminating achievements of the Italian philological school, manifest an inward orientation. What is more, both projects mark the decline of philology in North American criticism.

At most only two decades after neo-Lachmannism had made its entrance into Castilian textual criticism, and with repercussions beyond medieval texts, a special issue of the US-based journal *Speculum* ushered in a crisis of editorial tenets that was particularly adversarial towards the Lachmannian self-assured school of editing (Stephen G. Nichols). This new critical position was called New Philology and is today better known as material philology. In simplified form, Material Philology posits that each manuscript or witness is a text in itself and submits that meaning cannot be dissociated from the material matrix within which it is produced. The level of animosity that this change in US methodological outlook provoked in the Spanish-Castilian editorial world can be gauged by the lengthy Forums of debate published in the US-based journal *La corónica* in 1998 and 1999 (“Forum”). What is most pertinent to our discussion here is that this short history of Spanish-Castilian philology points to one of the great dangers present in the Spanish academy as seen from North American institutions: its apparent foreclosure of critical heterogeneity in a structural organization that rewards intellectual subservience and allows an authoritarian institutional world that revolves around Menéndez Pidal, Alberto Blecuá, or the new scholarly *caudillos* of the times.

This general situation has been both recognized and criticized before. Luis Beltrán Almería has pointed out that, stained by Franco’s dictatorship, the Spanish University is a cultural dominion that “has been

unable to rid itself of a crude and authoritarian style of reflection” (44); and Ángel G. Loureiro has remarked that the gravest problem in Spanish Hispanism cannot be pinpointed on the heavy influence of nineteenth-century inspired philology, the exclusion of certain theories, nor the tensions existing between theory and literary criticism but is, instead, systemic. Arising from “the incestuous endogamy of Spanish Hispanism” and the “rigid, autarchic, endogamous, and hierarchized structure that still dominates the Spanish university,” the way university positions are adjudicated is strictly controlled, introducing “strong dependency” and the “subordination” of the new generations towards their superiors (34; 33). Despite the needed critique of concepts of modernity, the case here is not so much that Spain strives to become a peer of European modernity but that a “scientific” method becomes an end in itself. We would submit that it is not a question of copying the successful methodology favored at the time but of “adopting” or even taking ownership over linguistic, cultural, and methodological heterogeneity in ways that allow for the production of something different in its own terms. For example, once we dispose of the hierarchical idea of international standards, Menéndez Pidal’s textual theories can be seen as a contestatory model, because it is a short step from the theoretical underpinnings of neo-traditionalism and his “vivir es variar” to the core theoretical positions that structure French and Anglo-American New Philology of the 1990s: *mouvance* and *variance*. There is, in other words, another way to look at the century-long evolution of Spanish philology and its pre-Lachmannian “shortcomings,” in that there have always been signs of resistance to neo-Lachmannian practices in Spain, and it is these points of resistance we would now like to address.

According to discussions by Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht and Juan José Sánchez, what sets the literary and historical work of Spaniards like Menéndez-Pidal and Américo Castro apart from the aforementioned European schools is an expression of historical time distinctive to the Spanish field (Gumbrecht and Sánchez; and Altschul “Acercamiento” and “Nueva crisis”). Whereas the German and French models maintain a distanced relationship with the past, based in the first case on the recovery and sentimental valorization of a national past and in the second on the universal human values of the *science de l’homme*, Spanish historiography and philology as practiced by scholars such as Castro, and particularly Menéndez Pidal, is based on a sense of *presence* that closes the gap between the past and present. In each case, the contemporary *problem* of

Spain is not kept at an *objective* distance but rather plays a constitutive role in critical practice.

Very different from the universalizing posture of the aforementioned editions of Cervantes's and Calderón's texts, what interests us here is that in this scheme it is impossible for the critic to completely distance him- or herself from the object of study, and vice-versa. This understanding of the active role of the intellectual and his or her material matrix in determining the meaning of the historical document is later formalized by José Antonio Maravall in his 1958 treatise *Teoría del saber histórico*. According to Maravall, history is not the uncovering of a progression of events and movements but rather the relationship the historian articulates with historical data through processes of selection based on structures, or constructs, the historian applies to a corpus. This admittedly curious dialogue between Menéndez Pidal, Castro, and Maravall, all of whose work largely predates the neo-Lachmannian school's arrival in Spain, pivots on the idea that the plurality of texts and editions cannot be reduced to an original "archetype"; rather, texts mean different things and perform different functions in different temporal and spatial coordinates. More to the point, we would suggest that scholars like Menéndez Pidal and Castro present a critical response to the Italian Nuova Filologia not just in spite of but because of their differing views of medieval Spanish culture(s), and in so doing they also undercut Russian formalism and its exclusionary definition of literature as a communicatively-based "text-message." Following on Gumbrecht's and Sánchez's claims, the work of Menéndez Pidal, Castro, and Maravall can be seen to prefigure Sean Gurd's definition of literature—and, by extension, history—not as an object or artifact but as a relationship between those who study literature and the object of their study. The many material, social, moral, and political contingencies and compromises of literary creation—and criticism—articulate a critical posture for which, unlike the formalist definition of literature, works are not centered within themselves but rather open onto their material and historical processes of production and ideological compromises, which include the desire and motivated interest of the reader. It is worth pointing out that these same conditions do not merely inform the act of creation; they motivate, indeed make possible, the creative act itself. This does not mean that there is no author, as post-Foucauldian criticism would have it, but it does mean that the author and his or her creation are equally engaged with the historical

forces that bear down on and make possible their creative performance (David R. Castillo and William Egginton).

One place to start productive collaboration from within philology itself would thus be a critical consideration of how objects of study are defined and how much authority and self-consciousness should be granted both to the critic and to the authors whose genius philologists claim to uncover. Such a platform would necessarily support multiple and even contradictory definitions of authorial control and intent. Following Gurd's (and Maravall's) work, the truth of art—and philology—lies not within the artifact itself but in its relationship to its context of production, and by 'context of production' we are referring also to philology, since philology informs the way texts are read both as artifacts and as communicative events. In this sense, philology is itself a performance steeped in material circumstances and contingencies, one that should strive to maintain a rigorous posture of historical consciousness not merely with the literary object it seeks to (re/de)construct but also with itself.

To conclude, one should not lose track of the fact that the task of the university as a site of research is not the dispensation of information but first and foremost the encouragement and structural enabling of *critical thinking*. This, of course, is a luxury, and a luxury that Spain and Latin America might not always easily afford; especially when even North American universities, with a comparative wealth of resources, have to fight for the privilege of enabling critical thinking instead of producing more tangible societal goods. The major task of the research university is not to provide knowledge when knowledge is available—as it is in libraries, in books, in museums, on the internet, etc.—but to allow and train students to think for themselves within complex and sometimes mystifying pools of ideas and data. Research might not encourage community and belonging, but in all areas of Arts and Sciences it should encourage a refusal to follow the crowd, which is of momentous import for societies as a whole.

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