

## STONE WALLS AND DISTANT CALLS: FEMININE SPACES IN ORAL TRADITIONAL LYRIC

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In his book about oral traditional lyric of the world, *Lyra Minima*, Stephen Reckert identifies a feeling of "suspended time" in such song, resultant from a pleasing mix of verb tenses (38). Alongside this phenomenon of disorienting temporal expression one may note a prevailing sense of ambiguous space, for often in the Hispanic feminine love lyric such as the *villancico* or the *cantiga de amigo*, in addition to the *romance*, time, space and image combine with the medium of the voice to heighten the emotional impact of the piece. These are originally oral texts, often displaying a subtle consciousness of song as a tool of transcendence in itself, and perhaps this phenomenon accounts for the endurance of so many traditional lyric songs and ballads centered on themes of captivity and the liberating power of the voice. The oralist Walter Ong explains:

Language is a mode of action and not simply a countersign of thought . . . Sound cannot be sounding without the use of power. A hunter can see a buffalo, smell, taste and touch a buffalo when the buffalo is completely inert, even dead, but if he hears a buffalo, he had better watch out: something is going on. In this sense, all sound, and especially oral utterance, which comes from inside living organisms, is "dynamic." . . . The fact that oral peoples commonly and in all likelihood universally consider words to have magical potency is clearly tied in, at least unconsciously, with their sense of the word as necessarily spoken, sounded, and hence power-driven (32).

The words used by Ong to describe the oral tradition: "action," "power-driven," "dynamic" and "magical" are all applicable to the *villancicos*, *cantigas* and *romances* discussed below, for each example displays some element of lyricism. This broad-ranging, common term, "lyricism," calls for definition. Walter Ong has unwittingly defined it above. A more deliberate attempt, and an equally successful one, can be found in the work of Krinka Vidakovic, a scholar of the Balkan ballad tradition, who has defined "lyricism," not as a

genre-specific concept, but as the foregrounding of emotional or psychological tensions and contrasts. This phenomenon occurs in the ballad as well as in the "lyric" traditions. The most striking similarity between the assessment of lyric by Vidakovic and Ong's discussion of orality lies in the emphasis on power and dynamism. In a lyrical ballad or song, in the Balkan as well as the Hispanic tradition, metaphysical oppositions overtake the "narrative" elements of the piece; they center on setting, dialogue or monologue rather than physical actions and socio-historical events. By and large, traditional songs which meet Vidakovic's criterion for "lyricism" are sung by or about women — the very characters who are frequently marginal to the better known, epic-based narratives of the oral tradition. Whereas narrative song, commonly relates events associated with particular geographical entities, the feminine lyric or lyrical ballad leads the audience into a magical space without bounds: the realm of the voice.

One oft-quoted lyric, which offers an example of the confinement motif in traditional Hispanic lyric, poses a fine starting point for definition of feminine space as a deliberately disorienting, lyrical entity:

Miraba la mar  
 la malcasada,  
 Miraba la mar  
 como era ancha y larga (Frenk #241)

Clearly, the sea is linked to a sense of both vagueness and lack of freedom for the *malcasada*. We see no possible escape for her. Perhaps she looks to the water because her true lover is out to sea, and this sorrowful bride gazes in a manner reminiscent of the *cantiga de amigo*, which often is set on the shore, and even relates drownings in the erotically charged churning of the waves, as examples below shall demonstrate. Water's edge, be it a spring, river or vast ocean, is a common setting for both the *cantiga de amigo* and the *villancico* of the 15th-16th centuries. It is a dangerous realm for a young female to visit alone, as water in motion is an uncontrollable force capable of overpowering her; it is dizzying and entrancing. In "Miraba la mar," the sea's boundless form eternalizes the circumstance of the young woman. This particular lyric is spoken in the third person, although a strong identification between object and audience is certainly achieved.

The female lament for her isolated confinement or separation from her lover is a prevailing theme in traditional lyric from the earliest known examples of this genre on the Iberian Peninsula, the *kharja mozárabe*, through the rise of the *villancico* in the 16th century. By

and large, in the lyric oral tradition, a woman's confinement is not literal. For the *malcasada*, her marital state circumscribes her to the domain of her husband. On the one hand, the sea, and the implicit shoreline, serve to demarcate this confinement; and on the other, because it is "ancha y larga," the sea suggests the expansive freedom which cannot be hers. The recurrent assonance of the "a," internal and in rhyme position, suggestive of the rolling sea, and the open-ended conclusion generate a sense of infinite yet confining space. The short lyric ends with the *malcasada* at a liminal but static and tense state. J. G. Cummins remarks in his work *The Spanish Traditional Lyric*, "the poem is raised from this pleasant but placid and largely visual level by the presence of the single word *malcasada*. We need no further details as to why the girl through whose eyes we are enabled to look is unhappy; this single discordant note is sufficient to transform our perception of the sea, to further subjectivize the reaction in l. 4, and to introduce tensions which belie the placidity of syntax, statement and image." The sense of some sort of "discord" in this women's song implicitly alludes to Vidakovic's theory of lyricism, which complements the argument presented here, that feminine space in the Hispanic traditional song is indeed one of encounter between conflicting, even paradoxical, phenomena: solitude/marriage; present/past; firm land (finite)/sea (infinite).

The image of the ocean heightens the impact of the tensions between past and present. In fact, the use of time in this *villancico*, which moves from the imperfect past to the present, invites other visual and psychological oppositions to come into view. The *malcasada*, whose presence fades in and out as the lines progress, stands against the horizon. She poses a vertical interruption in the endless horizontal plane that is the ocean. In addition, she stands alone and passive, at the shore of the forceful sea. Finally, she disappears in her "ancha y larga" surroundings, as the speaker's view of the scene widens.

Stephen Reckert's assessment of water in traditional lyric poetry as an image which reconciles opposites holds true with respect to the relationship between water, time and space. The opposition between past and present in this song parallels the encounter between humanity and nature. In traditional Hispanic lyric and balladry, natural entities frequently pose a mysterious, sometimes threatening setting for the characters whom they surround. This space, always closely associated with powerful emotions on the part of the subject or object of the poem, is simultaneously calming and dangerous. The pain or conflict of the main character is generally echoed in the setting, yet at the same time the conflict is not resolved. On the contrary, in this very brief but tense lyric, the *malcasada*, and the audience, encounter

the dizzying realm of nature. This occurs where the sea meets the shore and the past meets the present. The onlooker is simultaneously inside and outside of the *malcasada's* body, hovering between two realms which appear to be one. It must be pointed out here that the bridge between these two metaphysical realms is the oral text; the power of song conjures up these magical spaces.

An example which follows shows the application of this disorienting confinement theme to the narrative oral tradition. But first, for purposes of contrast, it is useful to mention perhaps the only narrative example in which it is a male subject who laments his confinement, one of the best known ballads, the "Romance del prisionero" in its shorter version, from the *Cancionero de 1550*:

Por el mes era de mayo  
 cuando haze la calor,  
 cuando canta la calandria  
 y responde el ruiseñor,  
 cuando los enamorados      5  
 van a servir al amor,  
 sino yo, triste, cuitado,  
 que bivo en esta prisión,  
 que ni sé cuándo es de día  
 ni cuándo las noches son,      10  
 sino por una avecilla  
 que me cantava al alvor.  
 Matómela un vallest[e]ro,  
 déle Dios mal galardón.      (Débax #63)

The "avecilla" in the "Prisionero," be she simply a bird, a surrogate love-object who calls to her lover at dawn or the symbolic manifestation of the prisoner's devoted wife, is significant. All of life's natural rhythms cease with the silencing of her song. The absence of this dawn-song which marks the arrival of a new day leaves the prisoner in an atemporal realm. He has no perception of night and day, and he is now left in an eternal night. The link between the bird and love is made quite evident in the opening lines of this very ballad. Without this amorous, musical presence in his life, time is an amorphous entity; time and space compose a hopelessly disorienting void.

The function of the bird's morning song, according to J. M. Aguirre, is that of every lyric song to some degree. It represents a transcendence of reality, in this case, an anguished lover's isolation; it soothes and consoles one in pain. In the end, silence replaces the song, leaving only a bitter outcry in the dark. The sense of confinement is overwhelming, for the imprisonment is literal and explicit.

The viewpoint of the monologue is from the inside of the cell, placing the sympathetic listener in the dark prison with the subject. This poses a contrast to the lyrical female lament, for her confinement is not so literal. The *malcasada*, for example, leads as dark and lonely an existence as the male prisoner, though she is surrounded by no visible enclosure. As observed above, the voice is all that remains at the close of the "Romance del prisionero." All other senses are dulled. In this ballad it is his final outcry which transcends the impossible obstacles of silence, time, and prison walls, to reach the audience.

In the following *villancico*, a different sort of "prisoner" longs for the "outside," her only link to it being erotically-charged "gritos," analogous to the bird's morning song, from afar:

Gritos davan en aquella sierra:  
¡ay, madre!, quiérom'ir a ella.

En aquella sierra erguida  
gritos davan a Catalina.  
¡Ay, madre!, quiérom'ir a ella. (Frenk #191)

Clearly, the desire for freedom, the frustration with her confinement and the enchantment of the cries from the inarguably phallic "sierra erguida" parallel the experience of the "prisionero" in his despair at the death of the songbird. Catalina *wants* to go to the source of these enchanting voices, but her pained cry, "¡Ay, madre!" suggests that she cannot. She, like the "prisionero," is experiencing a confinement which is presented as unjust. For both, Catalina and the Prisoner, and even the *malcasada*, there is an erotically-charged and implied "allá," which through the manipulation of words engulfs the foreground of the scene presented. Time is "suspended" as the prisoner or Catalina lets out his or her final exclamation, uttered from the confines of a cell locked by bars or a mother's cautious hold on a daughter.

The role of the voice which overcomes the constraints of time, space and confinement of a young woman is even more explicit in the "Romance de Rosafiorida," which also emphasizes a disorientation where night and day are concerned:

En Castilla está un castillo,  
que se llama Rocafiorida;  
al castillo llaman Roca,  
y a la fonte llaman Fiorida,  
el pié tenia de oro,  
y almenas de plata fina;

entre almena y almena,  
 está una piedra zafira;  
 tanto relumbra de noche,  
 como el sol a mediodía. 10  
 Dentro estaba una doncella  
 que llaman Rosaflorida:  
 siete condes la demandan,  
 tres duques de Lombardía;  
 a todos les desdeñaba, 15  
 tanta es su lozanía.  
 Enamórose de Montesinos  
 de oídas, que no de vista.  
 Una noche estando así,  
 gritos da Rosaflorida: 20  
 oyérala un camarero,  
 que en su cámara dormía.  
 —¿Qué es aquesto, mi señora?  
 ¿Qué es esto, Rosaflorida?  
 o tenedes mal de amores, 25  
 o estáis loca sandía.  
 —Ni yo tengo mal de amores,  
 ni estoy loca sandía,  
 mas llévaseme estas cartas  
 a Francia la bien guarnida; 30  
 diéselas a Montesinos,  
 la cosa que yo más quería; . . . (Wolf #179)

Akin to Catalina who pleads, "quíerom'ir a ella," Rosaflorida occupies, if not a realm of suspended time, one of ambiguous space. She remains physically cloistered in her castle of light at the same time that her letters, and her spirit, travel to France to be with her lover, the object of a passion initiated purely "de oídas."

Rosaflorida's "cell" is certainly not filled with darkness and despair. Rather, even at night she is surrounded by light and splendor, for the brilliant sapphire against the silver and gold fortress "tanto relumbra de noche, / como el sol a mediodía" (ll. 9-10). Thus, it is impossible to ascertain whether it is night or day, until her shouts wake up the servant, who we are told was asleep in his bed. This overlap between light and dark, the immediate and the distant, is plainly echoed in the verb tenses, which almost seem to alternate between the present and the past in the descriptive passages of this ballad. This ballad has in fact been identified as one displaying a high degree of "lyricism," although the study in which this occurs fails to define precisely what this label signifies: "El anónimo artista

no se preocupa por la claridad del dibujo o el esmero de las formas, sino por las sugerencias que cada uno de sus toques despierta . . . Progresivamente, la mole de oro, plata y zafiro se enrarece en reflejos fabulosos, de suerte que la actitud inicial de ubicar frente al lector el medio externo acaba por introducir al mismo lector hacia otra realidad" (Gariano 134-35). This observation describes in "Rosafiorida" a phenomenon which, as implied in previous examples, is not unique to this particular ballad nor to this particular genre. The identification of an ambiguity of time and space, the entrance into "otra realidad" which Gariano attributes to magical and fabulous effects of imagery in this ballad, supports the argument that lyricism occupies a space of metaphysical encounter and psychological conflict. Lyricism, in the woman-centered texts cited here, relies upon manipulation of light or other imagery and voice in order to transport the listener to the intangible feminine space which the characters occupy in traditional lyric and ballads. In a study which aims not to define lyricism nor feminine space, but the function of light imagery in the *Romancero*, Patricia Pogat actually coins the expression "romancero hypnosis" (78). She captures in this expression the effect that Gariano describes in the example of "Rosafiorida." In the oral tradition, the feminine lyric manipulates the tools of voice and imagery to create 'otra realidad': "The blind acceptance by the listeners of the 'romance' tale is, indeed, so anti-rational that it is akin to a hypnotic spell" (78).

The disorienting effects of this ballad result precisely from the contrast between a vibrantly clear, descriptive opening passage and the emotional state of Rosafiorida, as she falls in love with Montesinos, cries out and then awaits the arrival of her love, which never comes to pass. She is left waiting forever, like the *malcasada* or Catalina and even the prisoner. The gleaming castle serves the same function as the *mar* faced by the *malcasada*, as well as the dark cell occupied by the lonely prisoner. Each of these looming images, at some level, obscures the dominion of chronological time and physical space. The blinding brilliance of the castle's facade is an effect we have seen achieved with or without the help of the splendor of gold, silver and jewels in other lyric and lyrical narratives. For the *malcasada*, through repetition and description, the sea deepens and expands as the lines progress, in harmony with the taciturn tone of the *villancico*. In the "Romance del prisionero" the confinement of the cell, upon the final loss of contact with the outside world, the silencing of the song, explodes into an abyss of darkness. Similarly, the brightness of the jeweled castle blinds the enamored Rosafiorida, who, like the prisoner, loses track of the natural cycle of light and dark.

Catalina is like Rosaflorida, though we do not see the walls which enclose the former, for the only image explicitly portrayed in this piece is that of the distant hills; the walls or immediate confines are suggested only in the "ay" exclamation. Two disparate symbols, both conventionally linked to male dominance, hills and castle walls, in separate genres, ultimately serve the same purpose and signify the same thing. In the ballad, the "allá," the elusive source of seduction, is embodied in Montesinos himself; in the lyric, the "sierra erguida" fulfills this role. Also in both of these examples, the verb tenses represent a scrambled blend of present and past, although the former prevails. The emphasis on these two tenses, despite any problematics they entail, clearly suggests one inarguable reality: lack of resolution with regard to the fate faced by these enamored young women. In the lyric, the circularity of the zejelesque or loosely parallelistic form, in which the opening and closing lines express the same unfulfilled desire, further conveys the notion of an unseen enclosure which restricts the speaker's movement. The "Romance de Rosaflorida" presents a similar structure. One ending to this *romance*, a version taken from Rodríguez Moñino's *Silva de romances* (Zaragoza 1550-51) relates an anguished, unfulfilled outcome:

que, a cabo de siete años,  
 fuera a buscar otra amiga;  
 y así yo por buen amor  
 quedé burlada y perdida. (Débax #27 =Rodríguez Moñino #3)

The ballad, in addition to a literal reference to the object of the speaker's love and the walls which confine her, makes mention of a specific, albeit formulaic, quantity of time elapsed, "siete años," a number which frequently occurs in the Hispanic oral tradition. It is often a sterile number, usually indicative of the end of a cycle. The lyric lacks all of these details, yet manages to convey an equally strong presence of spatial and temporal relations between the speaker and fulfillment of her desires. Both genres exhibit a reliance upon specific images to express the transcendental effects of time and space upon the characters involved.

The "Romance de la bella en misa" makes use of the familiar liminal image toward a similar aim:

En Sevilla está una hermita,  
 cual dicen de San Simón,  
 adonde todas las damas  
 ivan a hazer oración.  
 Allá va la mi señora,



sobre todas la mejor.  
 Saya lleva sobre saya,  
 mantilla de un tornasol;  
 en la su boca muy linda  
 lleva un poco de dulçor; 10  
 en la su cara muy blanca  
 lleva un poco de color,  
 y en los sus ojuelos garços  
 lleva un poco de alcohol,  
 a la entrada de la hermita 15  
 relumbrando como un sol.  
 El abad que dize la missa  
 no la puede dezir, non;  
 monazillos que le ayudan  
 no aciertan responder, non; 20  
 por dezir "amén, amén"  
 dezían "amor, amor." (Débax #90 =Wolf #143)

This example meets the definition of the lyrical ballad, as notable oppositions structure this piece. In fact, William Entwistle labels this as such in his study, "La dama de Aragón." Entwistle discards the setting of this ballad, and aptly argues that the "essential elements" of this piece lie in the beautiful lady's rich drapings, and the stunning effect which her presence has upon the people in the church (86). When read in relation to Vidakovic's definition of the lyrical ballad, Entwistle's assessment grows more convincing, for the description which he finds so captivating in this ballad plays directly into the undeniable oppositions which structure the *romance*. The parallelistic enumeration of physical qualities culminates with a contrast of dark against light, and then light against dark. First, we find the familiar combination of a "cara muy blanca," with "ojuelos garços." She is a vision of innocence and purity as well as of seduction and mystery. Finally, as the focus shifts from the close-up view of individual facial characteristics to a more distant view of the entire form of the "bella," she fills the entrance with light: "a la entrada de la hermita / relumbrando como el sol" (ll. 15-16). She is a displaced sun — outdoor sunshine carried indoors. The stark contrasts and the overpowering light blind all onlookers. The "monazillos" of "La bella en misa" lose their grip on the immediate reality. A solemn mass turns into a moment of delight.

Even before the appearance of the "bella," the initial opposition between exterior and interior foreshadows the more startling contrasts which follow. The "hermita" first appears in the distance. At the close of this initial segment of the ballad, which relates the

description of the woman, we follow her into the chapel, now fully focused on her physical presence, as the image of the place of worship itself has faded. Thus, the line "a la entrada de la hermita" truly serves as the threshold between the outside and the inside, the carnal and the spiritual, light and darkness. This last series of contrasts, however, provokes the confusion and lyrical "emotional tension" of this *romance*. It is not insignificant that no actual conjugated, personalized verb forms narrate the lady's entrance into the chapel. Rather, the vague "a la entrada" leaves open to question whether or not she ventures inside. She appears to hover, suspended in her own glow, in the doorway as all heads, previously bowed in prayer, turn to see the source of this light. In fact, the very notion of a "bella en misa" concisely exemplifies the concept of the lyrical ballad as set forth by Vidakovic; these two nouns represent a psychological confrontation between the physical and the spiritual, light and dark. The beauty's presence at the threshold of the chapel reiterates the implicit image of the shoreline. It is indeed fitting that the object of attention in this piece occupy the questionable space between the outdoors and indoors, for, as argued by Vidakovic, contrast at any and all levels poses the foundation of lyricism in the oral-traditional ballad.

The opening lines of "La bella en misa" present the hermitage of San Simón with an impression of "todas las damas" entering for prayer. As has been noted, the chapel represents a far-off focal point, a call to those outside to come within. The middle of this ballad directs all attention to the beautiful woman herself, one among the many who are drawn to this place of worship. In this portion of the narrative, the oppositions accumulate in a swirl of fabrics and colors. It has been suggested above that the image of the hermitage actually vanishes as we focus upon the young woman. She appears to engulf her surroundings, or the context actually takes on her qualities. Either way it is clear that some merging process between the physical and the metaphysical is at work. This central passage concludes with a burst of sunlight at the entrance of the hermitage, the culmination of the blending of emotionally charged images and impressions, resultant in another instance of blinding "romancero hypnosis," as described in the discussion of *Rosaflorida* above. The action which displaces everyday reality and generates a hypnotic spell is best captured in the word "relumbrando." The beauty herself does not deliberately "act" in any way. She simply appears at the doorway. Patricia Pogal explains how it is that a relatively static figure can perform so dynamically, noting that "the Spanish ballad's characters themselves attain a third dimension when imagery of light animates them" (76). The intertwining of the powerful, highly animate

realms of water, light and voice, each fluid and disorienting in its own way, culminates in confusion and delight.

Finally, the audience attempts to regain its focus on the mass in progress. Again, two worlds are presented in opposition to each other. Line 17, "el abad que dice la misa," offers an impression of an orderly proceeding, until it is countered with line 18, "no la puede decir, non." This rhythm of affirmation and negation repeats in lines 19 and 20: "monacillos que le ayudan / no aciertan responder, non." Finally, disorientation reigns as the hermitage is turned inside-out and a praying abbot falls tongue-tied. The final two lines, "por decir: amén, amén, / decían: amor, amor," bring together the opening and close of this ballad. The replacement of a single syllable (mén / mor) sums up the axis on which the tensions of "La bella en misa" rotate. Upon this final utterance, all tangible images vanish: the hermitage, the woman's finery, the sunlight, the doorway. All is funneled into the two words, "amén" and "amor"; and in the end, only the psychological conflict remains, a tension captured in the utterance a simple, (mis-)spoken word.

The void in which the "bella" hovers, between the ocean-swept landscape and the orderly inner world of the hermitage acquires an even more magical, perilous quality when viewed in relation to an oft-quoted *cantiga*:

Sedia' me eu na ermida de San Simion,  
e cercaron-mi as ondas, que grandes son.  
*Eu atendend' o meu amigo!*  
*Eu atendend' o meu amigo!*

Estando na ermida ant' o altar,  
cercaron-mi as ondas grandes do mar . . .

E cercaron-mi as ondas, que grandes son;  
non ei [i] barqueiro nen remador . . .

E cercaron-mi as ondas do alto mar;  
non ei [i] barqueiro, nen sei remar . . .

Non ei i barqueiro nen remador:  
morrerei, fremosa, no mar maior . . .

Non ei [i] barqueiro, nen sei remar:  
morrerei, fremosa, no alto mar . . . (Frenk Alatorre, *Lírica* #43)

As in the *romance* above, this *cantiga* opens with the simple establishment of location, "na ermida de San Simion." Also, as is seen in the ballad, this concrete image of the hermitage dissipates as the lines build, progressively mystifying the space occupied by the poetic subject in this *cantiga*. The notion of an inner space, with a highly spiritual, religious connotation being turned inside out through the amorous desire from a distance, is clearly common to both of these works, and in both, the intensity builds in a similar fashion. The perspective and the rhythm, however, differ immensely.

In all of the examples above, the transition between enclosure, "na ermida de San Simion," or "ant' o altar," and nature is instantaneous. The *malcasada*, too, is engulfed by her watery surroundings. Water does not play a role in the "Bella en misa" beyond what is implied by the mention of geographic location. However, each of these works suggests a liquefying of the woman's presence, in the form of a bundle of flowing fabrics and light in the ballad, or water, in the lyric. The atemporal refrain in the *cantiga* continues to resonate, translated by Frenk as "yo, esperando a mi amigo," with an effect similar to that achieved by "ancha y larga" or "amor, amor." Elga Morales Blouin, in her book, *El ciervo y la fuente*, argues that in the Early Hispanic folk lyric all bodies of water point to the same symbolism, whether the aquatic image be a spring or river for laundering or retrieval of water, or a stormy ocean. This is a sweeping generalization which presumably refers to the high frequency of erotically-charged aquatic settings found in so many traditional lyric songs. In the *kharija*, *cantiga* and *villancico*, however, exceptions do occur, and it must also be kept in mind that such songs are open to a wide variety of interpretations; the eternally rolling waves faced by the *malcasada*, for example, may simply reflect the perpetual anguish, or even symbolize the salty tears, of the hopeless young woman. Whatever the specific connotation the water image may carry, it is not inappropriate for Morales Blouin to imply that water *functions* in a similar manner in every oral-traditional song. By the very nature of every body of water of any size which implies a shoreline or boundary, aquatic settings in the traditional genres discussed here generally do generate a sense of encounter between worlds — one fluid and dynamic, one firm and static.

Morales Blouin recognizes a feeling of contrast carried within aquatic images in her water-related discussion of the essential role played by tensions at all levels of communication in the traditional lyric. Her observations may be extended beyond the popular lyric to the ballad tradition, and to all imagery related to expression of time or space in the oral genres discussed here: "Esta vaguedad de lugar que se acerca a la abstracción y que se manifiesta de otros modos en

la lírica medieval ibérica (por ejemplo, el uso de múltiples tiempos verbales tan notado en los romances, más la falta de precisión de otros detalles), indica que la materia tratada puede ser arquetípica y toca viejos temas de interés colectivo para comunidades previas" (36). That is, the "collective" and "archetypal" nature of water can also be detected in the dramatic effects of light against dark, inside opposed to outside, body versus spirit. It is the "vagueness of location" alluded to by Blouin which unites all water imagery in the folk tradition. Frequently but not always erotic in connotation, aquatic images in such song overwhelmingly serve to underscore the "abstraction" and "lack of precision" which characterize the settings of so many *villancicos*; the dizzying visual effect combines with the atemporality as expressed in the verb tenses to disorient the audience. The feminine space in the oral tradition is, paradoxically, confining yet unbounded. It is as nebulous as water in motion. Thus, water poses a metaphor for the metaphysical feminine space described here. Morales Blouin's observations above appear to echo theories described by Gaston Bachelard in his book, *L'Eau et les Rêves*, although he makes no explicit references to Hispanic traditional poetry. Bachelard emphasizes the vagueness often associated with aquatic images, but further argues that of all the elements, water is the most inherently linked to the voice; it is "le voix de la nature" (217). Aquatic imagery, then, for the visual, auditory and even alliterative effects that it creates in poetry, harmonizes with the aim of every oral traditional song expressing a desire to transcend that which is static and/or confining. The female subject or object occupies the transcendental space of the voice, a fluid and fleeting realm which comes into the audience's view upon utterance of words which express contrasts and tensions.

The image of the shoreline, one which is relatively common in the oral tradition, archetypically connotes confrontation between two worlds, and often generates an erotic tension in some songs. The female subject or object often finds herself at a shoreline, literally or figuratively. In a manner that echoes the often transitional temporal or physical space (adolescence, daybreak, a threshold) occupied by the female, at a metaphysical level her realm poses the hinge between text and reality, between song and silence. We have seen both water and light serve this purpose of establishing an amorphous, abstract, "in-between" space, "a la entrada de la hermita, / relumbrando como un sol." This transitional realm is itself the feminine space in the oral tradition; it is the intangible point of encounter between voice and audience, or even text and reader. This liquid, liberating realm of the voice is precisely the feminine space in the *villancico*, and often the *romance*. Only the mighty voice is capable of surpassing seemingly

insurmountable barriers, or crossing the vast expanses of a turbulent sea. The undeniably essential role played by aquatic and mountainous imagery in problematizing, even dissolving, otherwise definable forms and spatial relations in the lyric or *romance* certainly does contribute to the often magical feel elicited by such images. However, whereas water and rugged landscapes frequently suggest, if not an amorphous enclosure, at least the threat of a perilous fate for the young lady who encounters them, the voice suggests liberation and expression.

A female lyric character need not necessarily be exposed to nature's wrath to find herself somehow entrapped. The most helpless, victimized characters one may encounter in reading literally thousands of traditional lyrics now in print are those who do not speak, but are spoken about, such as the *malcasada*, frozen in time and space. Her silence further isolates her from the immediate reality, as the speaker serves as go-between, bridging the space between object and audience. This vocal space, a liberating realm for the female character which becomes real only at the instant of utterance, of a cry, or a seductive song at the seashore, highlights the tension between physical reality and spiritual or erotic desire in both the lyric and narrative genres. Thus, the feminine space in the oral tradition is one with that of lyricism; it is a fluid realm of psychological, disorienting tensions and contrasts, generated through dizzying visual images of water and light, brought into view by the power of voice. The intangible medium of the voice underscores the sense of encounter, for it is the act of singing the lyric or narrative piece which bridges the realm of the oral text, and that of the audience.

The voice, as it floats between singer and listener, dissolves castle walls and defies the limitations and barriers normally imposed by time and space. Thus, it briefly frees both the singer and/or object of the song from the perils of daily reality. Both of these genres, lyric and narrative, represent branches of the world's oral tradition, which has its roots in what C.M. Bowra called "primitive song," that is, ritualistic songs of early civilizations which possess a "concentration of energy"; they express a desire to control things physical or metaphysical through words (259). Even in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, song continues to serve this transcendental function, briefly empowering the singer, or the object, releasing her from the bounds of time and space, if only for the duration of the utterance of a four-line lyric poem.

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