Tracing the Oral in Hispanic Literatures

The medieval and its preoccupation with its own principal genres, such as the epic, poetry written in *cuaderna vía* verse, courtly literature, may appear far removed from modern-day literary critical concerns. Indeed, Paul Zumthor characterizes interest in the Middle Ages as study of 'otherness' (1986: 28–29), whilst the Golden Age with its religious poetry, its formalized poetry in the form of the sonnet, and its religious and political theatre, may also seem far removed from modern concerns. Yet, in many respects, medieval and Golden Age letters are not far removed from issues relevant to modern literature. Questions such as what is the relationship of nineteenth-century novelistic dialogue to conversation in the streets and in domestic settings are similar to matching the conversations in a sixteenth-century novel to possible glimpses of words heard in streets and private settings. Recording real-life conversation from earlier periods is impossible and the nineteenth-century oral world just as evanescent as that of the Middle Ages or the centuries that followed.

Parry and Lord: Oral Composition

One of the first fields in Hispanic literature to take account of the oral was the epic and it is fitting to begin there. A major impact on study of medieval Hispanic literature occurred when Milman Parry and Albert Lord set out how formulaic composition marked traditional poetic composition, using the insights gained to revolutionize and re-conceptualize Homeric composition. The formulaic became a watchword in study of Hispanic epic poetry in British universities from the late 1960s, challenging previous understanding of the composition of poetry.

Much of the conceptualization of how oral poets performed relied on memory and on using the formulae as fillers to enable the poem to move through its phases of narration. Memory however was a very different concept to medieval and Golden Age societies and this also casts light on the symbiosis between the oral and the written. Memory was not simply a mechanism for retaining taught knowledge but was an architectural construct, permitting structured thought. Memory, thus, included creative thinking but not thoughts created 'out of nothing' (Carruthers 1998: 23). Carruthers goes on to cite St Augustine's concept of memory: 'in the vast cloisters of my memory […] are the sky, the earth, and the sea, ready at my summons, together with everything I have ever perceived in them by my senses, except the things I have forgotten' (Carruthers 1998: 29).[1] This concept of memory has much to add to reflection on how oral poets composed but it also enriches the view of how poets whose works were recorded in writing related to poetry and other sources, including liturgical ones, they had heard. Further Cleofé Tato demonstrates how writing and orality overlap with memory when she discusses how poets set down in writing *romances* they remembered:

> el hecho de que de modo tan significativo estas formas poéticas se relacionan con tales fenómenos de la literatura [apuntes realizados en los márgenes] sin duda ha de vincularse con la forma oral de su transmisión y aun con la posibilidad de que algunos de estos fragmentos trazados a vuelapluma y sin excesivo cuidado estuviesen musicados (2010: 281).

Memory and remembering information previously spoken underpins transmission of oral culture in one form or another. It might refer to recipes or rituals, pertaining to a particular culture, passed on by older generations. It might also relate to narration of events significant for the groups, including performance of epic poems for the entertainment of elite

groups. Goody argues there is no evidence that oral composition relates to word-for-word memorization (1987: 178), acknowledging that memory did not imply verbatim memorization. It is also a feature of pieces written down, although less acknowledged, where recollection of poems or song previously heard plays its part. Yet, as Ruth Finnegan acknowledges, the role of the oral poet-performer is one of structuring and manipulating material rather than acting as repository of memory (1992: 115) and, in this way, poets composing orally and the poet composing and recording work in written form are drawn closer together.

John Miles Foley recognizes the impact of Lord and Parry's work but considers it favoured the mechanisms of composition over the reception of the poetry (1996: 23). He had earlier argued that readers were called upon to interpret formulaic epithets with reference to what he terms a collective 'wordhoard' (1986: 217). Mark C. Amodio follows this path when he speaks of how Anglo-Saxon epic poets composed poems closely aligned to what their audience expected to hear (2004: 29). He asserts that

> However radical, quick, and complete the shift from (re)composing orally in front of an audience to composing in the privacy of, say, a monastic cell may or may not have been, the horizon of expectations of those who received poetry shifted only very slowly (Amodio 2004: 29).

Amodio compares this phenomenon to the way print books retained their similarity to manuscript copy, since printers sought to meet the expectations of book-owners. People buying books expected the new printed texts to look similar to manuscript. Even though poets might pre-compose in writing when the works were made public their auditors expected them to sound as they always had. Further if the 'shift' from oral to written was not at all 'radical',

'complete', or 'quick', if the postulation that there was no 'shift' is upheld, and that oral and print continued together in a symbiotic relationship, then this casts a new light on how and why clerical authors decided to compose, writing down those compositions.

Some fifty years after the original impact of Lord and Parry's work, time is ripe to review theories of the oral in Hispanic literatures, both in terms of the oral formulaic and its relationship to earlier compositions, but also in terms of a broader based acknowledgement of how written texts relate to the oral both a pre- and post-textual phenomenon. It is also time to review the reception, audition, and public reading of medieval and Golden Age texts and to evaluate how recent scholarship from other disciplines, particularly approaches to recovery of the spoken word in transcripts from archival witnesses, shows how oral and written forms continue to interact across the subsequent centuries, long after the oral had been supposedly superseded by the written.

The Interface between the Oral and the Written

At the same time as interest in orality grew, the question of textuality, in the shape of narratology, flourished, often in neighbouring university departments.[2] In some, the influence of structuralism dominated. Logocentrism and deconstructionism meant the text was conceived of as a closed whole to be studied without reference to authorial biography or other potential influences external to the text. Logocentrism had of necessity to be text based and the closed nature of the text meant that outside influences, oral or other, became irrelevant. No attention was paid to the relationship between the text and its reception, and even less to their possible relationship, such as how the author intended to engage his auditors. By implication, there can be no logocentrism applicable to the oral, since oral material is

evanescent. In earlier times, any legal or cultural event had to be recorded in writing in order to preserve it.

One of the most important and still much debated features of medieval and early modern studies is the interface between orality and literacy. A major contribution to the subject of how writing impacted oral culture is rooted in the ground-breaking study by Jack Goody and Ian Watt (1963). Goody and Watt set out to demonstrate how the example of a truly literate society enabled thinking to change from transmission of cultural traditions to transmission of knowledge divided into categories or *doxa.* Taking the example of Greek society, Goody and Watt consider that the emergence of a first truly literate culture enabled people to develop a dialectic approach to thought processes. Yet their theory rested on Greece abandoning its oral culture and they believed there was a 'relatively quick handover from orality to literacy', a concept much challenged (Coleman 1995: 68), not least because of its underlying assumption that what is set down in writing must be superior (Finnegan 1992: 18; Finnegan 2003: 182). Goody (1987) developed his thinking on the interface between orality and literacy, studying the historical development of writing, and examining oral poetry in Africa and Greece as well as oral composition and transmission in Vedic recitations. He ends with a statement, associating writing with advances in civilization: 'Cognitively, as well as sociologically, writing underpins "civilization" the culture of cities' (1987: 300). Goody's sweeping statement fits well with his experience of ancient Greece but less well with the rural environment where Castilian was first set down in written form, unless it is possible to consider medieval monasteries, the seats of learning in Castile and Aragon, as cities. More recently, Goody argues that there cannot be any oral 'literature' as, without letters, literature cannot exist (2010: 42).

As Simon Gaunt and others have demonstrated, the very concept of interface between orality and literacy was a nineteenth-century construct (Stock 1996: 9; Gaunt 2005: 123), in

much the same way that divisions between critical approaches to medieval, Golden Age, eighteenth-, and nineteenth-century texts were imposed and continue in universities to this day. The debate continues to this day over what Antonio Carreira refers to as Frenk's 'censura de la "escritocéntrica" de la actual ecdótica hispánica' (2012: 212). Frenk responds by challenging the limitations of establishing a single preferred reading:

> Si la crítica textual establece para cada poema un texto único y rechaza o relega las variantes, la otra visión de las cosas considera que el poema, en estas circunstancias, no tiene un solo texto fijo e inmutable, y ve con interés las variantes– dejando de lado los errores evidentes– revelan la vida que el ya anónimo poema cobraba en boca de gente que lo recitaba y lo cantaba. (2013: 212)

Such a life might cast doubt on all the foundations on which Hispanism has been built but nevertheless enables a more nuanced view of the oral shelf-life of any given motif or episode.

Another important characteristic of the interface between oral and literate culture must take account of the many variabilities. In the rush to process the oral into the written, little account is taken of disparity between those who possessed such literate culture and those who lagged behind. Little, for example is known about how aristocratic girls acquired the knowledge and skills to manage large estates (Krug 2002: 69), although in late medieval and early modern Spain books began to address girls' education, even though these were only relevant to girls from royal or noble backgrounds.[3] It is one aspect of girls' education, how girls wrote plays for their peers to perform, that Knox uncovers in this volume.

If, however, the change from oral to written were a very different one, slower, less defined, more continuous one that might have an important impact on how modern scholars view the written products. Works such as Ryan Giles's in this volume fit within more recent

development of scholarship in anthropology, rejecting the change from oral to written, pointing to the ongoing and complex relationship between orality and literacy, presenting them as continuous rather than contrasting categories. To do this, Giles engages with trends in scholarship on the oral established by Peter Burke (1987) writing about Italy, and on Hispanic studies, Antonio Sánchez Jiménez (2004), and, more recently, E. Michael Gerli (2016). Gloria Chicote has done much the same in her study of the *Romance de Lanzarote* and its motif of the crow, she points to a co-existence of oral and literary modes of composition: 'la circulación paralela (y la consecuente red de interrelaciones de un motivo narrativo en textos compuestos por escritores pertenecientes al estamento 'culto' y en elaboraciones literarias pertenecientes al ámbito oral' (2002: 45). Thirty years ago Deyermond discussed the survival of epic tales in other formats, such as ballads or theatre, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (1987: 102-03), although the point he makes is not so much about co-existent cultures as about continued interest in epic subject matter. The conclusion that can be drawn from Mercedes Vaqueros's study (2014) of the *Poema de Fernán González (PFG)* is a different one. She argues both that the epic tale originated from an earlier *cantar de gesta* but that ballads continued to circulate independently of the *PFG* in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (205), revealing how a strong oral tradition continued to flourish. The literary text was not the end point of evolution but just one version among many.

Goody's anthropological methodology has assisted in rediscovering what oral composition might have been like in a medieval Hispanic world where the possibility of making a recording of oral poets is impossible and all that remains of any such oral culture is the written poetry clerics set down. Yet, here, Joseph Falaky Nagy's study of Irish narrative techniques provides a timely warning. He argues that medieval Irish poets moved readily

between written and oral forms and that the story-tellers of the past were lettered (1986: 274). Has oral theory then become a blunt instrument for study of early Hispanic poetry?

What has been subsequently constructed as Goody's promotion of the influence of writing culture on thought was never intended to be quite so polarized (Chinca and Young 2005: 1) and has become known as the 'Goody Myth' (Cole and Cole 2013). Education is a case in point, for in medieval and early modern education, oral exposition and listening to the master rather than reading from texts continued to pre-dominate. Indeed, students' notes from their master's lectures often form the only known version of such expositions of methods of learning. A similar feature occurs with sermons.

As Walter Ong asserts, most literary texts held in manuscript form up to the eighteenth century, and beyond, were for oral delivery in one form or another, as he terms it these texts were 'marginally oral' (1982: 154). Silent reading was uncommon. Reading aloud in family groups, or recitation of literary works, sometimes by the author, remained frequent practice. This means that texts thought of as literary today would have been far closer to the oral than seems possible to a modern reader. Joyce Coleman (1995, 1996) has led the development of 'aurality', a culture where the spoken word, was the principal way of promulgation even of written texts. Coleman argues the idea that medieval and Renaissance readers read silently is a construct of modern critics. Yet in much of the study of Hispanic literatures of the past, little account is taken of how and where texts were to be read aloud. Many are the cancionero pieces with evidence of dialogue, many with two or more voiced parts, yet their contribution to the oral world of the court requires further exposition. Ian Macpherson's study of *invenciones y letras* quietly contributes to understanding of oral practices at court: verbal jousting, although this is not his primary aim. The dynamics between oral and written, learned and popular, performance, and individual or group reading prove nuanced and subtle. For instance, Chad M. Gasta (2010) recently wrote a persuasive

article on poetry and orality in *Don Quijote*, where he explains how Cervantes intended both learned sonnets and traditional *romances* or ballads, embedded in his novel, to be read aloud and performed, both by the characters and by the implied readers. It is essential to note how the Middle Ages has been re-conceptualized as a period when the oral and the written operated in a seamless symbiosis and this was recently marked in the Crítica history of Spanish literature, where the volume on the Middle Ages is subtitled: *Entre oralidad y escritura* (Lacarra and Cacho Blecua 2012).

A History of Orality in Hispanic Letters

This volume builds on one of the most prolific debates in the history of both language and literary studies in Hispanism: the polemic between individualists and traditionalists. This is a good moment to remember one of Ramón Menéndez Pidal's many reformulations of what traditionalists believed:

> Los tradicionalistas oponemos que los orígenes de las literaturas románicas son muy anteriores a los textos hoy subsistentes, y que estos no pueden ser explicados sin contar con una tradición de textos perdidos en la que lentamente se han ido modelando la forma y el fondo habituales en los diversos géneros; sujeto poco o mucho a estos moldes, el individuo más genial no puede escribir guiado solo por su genialidad, sino encauzado y limitado por la tradición cultural en que él se ha formado y a la cual sirve (1956: 63).

Nineteenth-century post-Romantic scholarship had already established the role that the *juglares* had played in the cultural life of Spanish courts in the late medieval and early

modern periods. Twentieth-century studies, such as Roger Boase's *Troubadour Revival* (1977) cleverly framed the vogue of this hybrid cultural manifestations in the Christian courts of the fifteenth century, with their undeniable oral component. Menéndez Pidal became the pivotal figure in the discussion of how this literature came into being, was produced, and evolved. The core of the polemic lay in the intersection between oral poetry, both lyric and epic, and the written versions surviving today (Cohen and Twomey 2015: 3–4). Determining the role of clerics, scribes, and learned authors in this chain of production particularly tested literary criticism (Menéndez Pidal 1957) and has not so far been fully understood.

When discussing the production of the *Cantar de mio Cid (CMC)* in the version known today, Deyermond concluded that its unknown author was intimately familiar with a set of materials developed in an oral tradition, which he refined, matured, and harmonized. It is therefore unsurprising that Deyermond began his work on lost literature with the epic and the ballads (1995). The role of a corpus of lost literature, much of it oral, was thus formalized and continues to enrich Hispanic studies. One example, studied by Jesús Antonio Cid, is the presumably lost medieval ballad (*romance noticiero*) about the fall of Álvaro de Luna, now preserved only among the Sephardic community of Morocco 'por tradicionalización ininterrumpida' (1996: 28). Sephardic sources of dialogic orality are covered here in Rachel Peled Cuartas's article with its suggestive evocation of long-forgotten, lost orality, both from Jewish and Islamic sources. Many others trace epic ballads to lost epics (see for example, Vaquero 2009). María Jesús Lacarra and Juan Manuel Cacho Blecua open their study of literature of the Middle Ages with the chasm between lost literature and the canon of written works (2012: 25–66).

The realm of script revealed a vast undertow of oral cultures, and this was done through what Deyermond called 'transitional texts' (1987, 1991, 1995). The term was used also by Zumthor (1991) and Masera (2012). This concept was coined to designate the texts

generated between the oral and written traditions, perhaps in less durable materials than 'finalized' versions, and plausibly linked to the phenomenon of the *literatura de cordel*, especially in the case of the transmission of the epic. Despite its helpful re-positioning of the debate, Deyermond's theory, almost unwittingly, still accepts that the written was the perfect endgame and that oral 'literature' was in the process of being superseded. This concept is accepted by many scholars but challenged in a recent polemic between Carreira and Frenk (2013), where Frenk argues that the many reproductions of literary works in *pliegos sueltos* make it impossible to promote any single version as the canonical one.

Contributor to this special edition, Matthew Bailey (2010), reopened this prolific scholarly subject of study, making a broad transnational comparison between medieval Spanish epic and epic verse being produced, in apparently similar contexts, in the Balkans. Bailey, engaging with critical tradition on the epic, pioneered by Parry (1971), and Lord (1987, 1995, and 2000), concluded that Spanish clerical works were far superior in their literary sophistication to those produced in the Balkans. For Bailey, it was clear that the process of composition resembled an exercise in dictation: 'producing a text in the Middle Ages involved speaking'. Social and political influence belonged to the sphere of orality, wherever it occurred worldwide (Bailey 2010: 36). Equally, other authors have recently attempted to expand and illustrate knowledge of the role of the troubadour or *juglar* in Iberian courts. Antonio Sánchez Jiménez (2004), Joseph J. Duggan (2005), and Juan Carlos Bayo (2005) have focused on both the courtly and the epic genres and contexts, contributing to a richer understanding of what literary and cultural production entailed throughout the medieval period. Carlos Conde Solares (2009: 47–48) also identified the existence of certain 'juglares de voz' working for major poets in the context of the Navarrese courts of the fifteenth century.

This late medieval and early modern period will see the chroniclers of the New World establish a new set of expressive coordinates that need to communicate an overwhelming sense of immediate wonder: one, perhaps, that was better suited to the emotional sincerity of the oral account. Yet in order to do just that, the learned writer could rely on a deep-rooted tradition of oral lyric and epic, of collective authorship or appropriation, of popular wisdom, of folk culture, from the romancero to the ballads and lamentations of Sepharad, from the jarcha to the courtly debates and the playful exchange of questions and answers, including debate poetry (Chas Aguión 2002), in fifteenth-century Iberian courts.

This period also saw a renaissance in the art of oral rhetoric and vocal persuasion: for instance, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the political and religious elites were concerned with the tasks of conversion and evangelization of those outside the Christian faith. From St Vincent Ferrer (1350–1419), Hernando de Talavera (1430? –1507), and Jiménez de Cisneros (1436–1517) in the Iberian Peninsula, to the likes of Bartolomé de las Casas (1474–1566) and Bernardino de Sahagún (1499–1590) in the New World, talking, convincing, reasoning with, and bending others' collective and individual wills in a pre-determined direction became major political, social, and anthropological goals for the elites. Print materials were no more than aids in the enterprise of influencing large swathes of the population, their core purpose being to serve as mental props for the preacher. An archetypal case would be that of the Lead Books of Sacromonte (García Arenal 2009; see also Kimmel 2015), devised to enhance the prospects of educating Moriscos on the officially sanctioned rite of passage to the Christian faith.

It is now obvious that the debate has moved on from certain interlinked, mutually reinforcing ideologies inherent in Romanticism and nationalism. Much of the initial debate came to prominence through Alfred Jeanroy's desire (1925) to establish a French nucleus for an array of continental lyrical traditions, an endeavor famously contested by Menéndez Pidal.

In the present collection, despite its focus on the Hispanic world, authors have subsumed the most useful and prolific elements of transnational and comparative studies, and collectively attempted to find a voice, with its own unmistakable overtones and sharp individual identities. Like Menéndez Pidal, Zumthor (1975, 1986; 1990), Dámaso Alonso (1975), Antonio Sánchez Romeralo (1990), Frenk (1993), contributors to this volume have engaged with the nature of the oral within the written. Narrative versions of the oral lead some (Díaz Bravo in this volume) to the intuitive intricacies of conversational analysis, a branch of pragmatic sociolinguistics. It leads others to trace how language repeated orally, such as liturgy, can be traced into written texts (Giles, Twomey). Equally, the collection builds on the many useful observations and methodological approaches of those generally regarded as belonging to the individualist school, with works as influential and celebrated as those of Joseph Bédier (1913), Jeanroy (1925), Camilo Guerrieri Crocetti (1958), Silvio Pellegrini (1964), and, in a broader sense, Ernst Robert Curtius (1948), or Leo Spitzer (1962).

Folklore motifs and legend

Folklore, oral narratives rich in cultural wisdom, beliefs, and traditions, passed from generation to generation by word of mouth, is another field of orality much examined by Hispanists. Wardropper traces Hispanists' interest in 'primitive lyric' to Julio Cejador y Frauca's dedication to what he entitled the true lyric poetry of Spain, *La verdadera poesía castellana: floresta de la antigua lírica española* (1921–30). The tendentious title suggests that other, less true, poetry existed or had existed. Menéndez Pidal, treating the oral lyric, much as Goody was later to do the oral epic, wrote of it as 'primitive', indicating that a more formed lyric would emerge from it (1919; 1943) and, also, suggesting a path from primitive, oral lyric, to a perfected written lyric. This concept still permeates much reflection on the

oral. It is implied in Vicenç Beltran's magnificent study of the romancero (2016), subtitled, *De la oralidad al canon*.

Traditional lyric, like the epic, was captured in writing. This has been the approach of collectors of disappearing ballads preserved among Sephardic communities (see, for example Armistead). What is more, the traditional lyric, characterized by its recurrent symbolic imagery, echoes a forgotten past, this last an immediate marker of folk ownership. This is the prolific path followed by Costa Fontes in this volume. A whole industry of critical endeavor has gone into explaining and categorizing such traditional elements. Frenk addresses 'popular' lyric (2003). Women's laments, for example, had a place in epic verse as noted earlier (Vaquero 2009: 18), revealing much, as they did so, about the auditors of the epic, hardly the warrior class thought typical of the epic in other cultures (Deyermond 1976, 1988; Vaquero 2009). The idea that much traditional lyric might have been handed on as women's songs, cradle-songs, wedding songs, songs of parting, of deflowering, or of bereavement touches on histories and voices still in need of deeper investigation. This set of cultural traditions, rituals of birth, marriage, and death, provide access, or rather, partial access to women's voices and has become an important area of study in Hispanism.

If folklore is the archetypical oral genre, then legend must, by its very etymology, be irrevocably bound to the written. 'Legends' should be read but may also be stories told to build faith in the church, whether in sermons or in lives of saints: in this volume, Giovanni Maggioni explores the legendary and doctrinal spaces between text and orality by means of studying material primed for Dominican preaching in the thirteenth century.

Communication, preaching, and religious life

The communicative practices in medieval monasteries has been the subject of recent study (Vanderputter 2011), important for the evidence it provides of how oral and written knowledge was transmitted in thirteenth-century literate monastic circles. Some of the conclusions may have implications also for coetaneous clerical circles, where Gonzalo de Berceo (c.1197–c.1264) lived and worked. The deliberate placing of Latin texts in Berceo's vernacular narrative is discussed by Ryan D. Giles in this collection. Giles refers to what it reveals about the auditors of Berceo's miracle collections and whether these were clerics or lay pilgrims passing through the village where he officiated.

Sermon literature proves a fruitful area of study for the oral captured in written form, rarely considered in conjunction with poetry performed and recorded. Sermons had been collected in books to act as a training guide for preachers but, by the later Middle Ages, the purpose of sermon collections changed. They were considered improving literature for medieval women of all estates to read aloud and many collections of sermons are found in inventories of convents or even of queens or noblewomen. Yet when it comes to a female author constructing a sermons text, Lesley Twomey demonstrates how spoken sources unexpectedly predominate over written versions of the same narrative.

By the later Middle Ages, however, sermons might be written down when they were preached and this was the case for sermons by Ferrer. His preaching is an example of oral delivery, transcribed in written form, for notes were made as the saint preached (Losada 2015: 209). All that is now known of the oral delivery of St Vincent's sermons must be gleaned from all that remains of the word spoken, its written record (Thompson 2002: 15–17). Yet the written records are too short to account for an event known to last for two hours or more (Ferrer 1993: 12). Pedro M. Cátedra provides not only an edition of hitherto unknown sermons in the vernacular but also insight into how the written text was annotated (2002: 22), a practice which hints at the purpose of the written text of the sermon, despite its

initial mode of delivery. Cátedra hesitates between whether the amendments constitute preacher's notes and the amendments at the hand of the preacher or whether instead they are evidence of a *reportatio*, or written copy, made when the sermon was delivered to the public, and later amended and annotated (22). The corrections might indeed indicate that more than one *reportator* worked on the note-taking and that their efforts were subsequently combined. The process of marginal annotation and correction also hints at subsequent use of the sermon material by unknown others who may have wished to use the sermon material to inform their own preaching style.

Further, in a study of Cistercian *exempla,* Marie-Anne Polo de Beaulieu demonstrates how these written *exempla* collections go beyond their original intention. They were written down in the first instance to enable the teaching of novices, consolation of dying monks, as well as preaching within the confines of the abbey, but when they fall into the hands of mendicant preachers, they are carried by these friars far away their original setting. In the same way in this collection, Marinela Garcia Sempere demonstrates the power of hagiography to override the original intention of the compiler as material for preachers and to attract the attention of laymen and women, who used them for very different purposes. Most specialists in hagiography acknowledge there have been prior oral sources for hagiographical accounts, although, as Edina Bozoky (2005: 183–84) argues, few discuss them. Also in this volume, Andrew Beresford engages with the intersections and interactions between preaching, hagiography, orality and mysticism, as illustrated in the varying accounts of the life of St Antony, edited for the first time in this collection.

Orality and its place within Hispanic studies

What is particularly striking is that within all the debate about the axis orality-literacy/letters, there is little or no reference to Hispanic literatures and their place within a global canon. Much of the interdisciplinary debate about orality takes account of Anglo-Saxon, Middle English, ancient Greek, German and French literatures, but reference to Spain and its cultures often passes unnoticed. This is not to say that orality is not discussed within Hispanic literature, quite the contrary, but that little attention is paid to Hispanic literatures within the major works on the subject.[4]

The purpose of this study is to begin the path towards redressing the balance. In its small number of articles on how the oral can be traced within written texts, beginning with the earliest Hispanic literatures, the epic and the *Milagros de Nuestra Señora*, the collection does not confine itself to these areas of study but widens understanding of the oral to include linguistic study of a sixteenth-century novel, a comparative study of preaching in a late fifteenth-century prose text written by a female author – whose words provide the opportunity to discover and trace women's voice, and aspects of the oral discernible within written texts for delivery in early sixteenth-century convents as dramatic performance. One of the aims of authors in this collection has been to detach themselves from any reliance on what is regarded as textual evidence and to pay more attention to the spirit of the letters, to the traces of voice embedded within, whether these are an echo of the words of the street or reflections of expected norms for performance. Reading is essential for there is no other method of access, but there is also a need to *listen* to what is written, training that sixth sense to recognize a fellow human seeking to reach out to an audience in a language that goes beyond isolated words and takes account of nuances of dialogue, of collective celebration, of discussion, of memory, of song, of argument. Covering a wider variety of subjects and including ones often left beyond the scope of previous critical trends in orality, contributors have approached the subject from multiple perspectives, seeking to elucidate how the oral

might be preserved within the written. Orality provides a broad umbrella to take in oral traditions and textuality, linguistic analysis of the oral in the written, approaches to performance of written texts, voice, and aurality.

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[1] Citing St Augustine's *Confessions* X, 8.14.43-45. She emphasizes 'the things I have forgotten to mark the difference between modern concepts of memory and earlier concepts which value forgetting as part of creating space to remember other things.

[2] This was one author's experience at the University of Manchester in the 1970s.

[3] See, for example, Eiximenis (1986–2005) and Vives (1996–98).

[4] For example, Amodio (2004) confines his study to Anglo-Saxon and Middle English. Vanderputten's edited volume (2011) covers Latin texts, as well as German, Italian, and French ones.