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The Moor's Last Sigh: National Loss and Imperial Triumph in Lope de Vega's *The Last Goth*

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Abstract
This essay examines the intertextual relationship that exists between the cycle of popular Spanish ballads that narrate the fall of the Iberian Peninsula's last Visigothic King, Rodrigo, in the year 711 CE and Lope de Vega's play *El último godo* (*The Last Goth*) (1618), which is partially based on this ballad cycle, and which stages this crucial moment of Spanish history for an early modern audience at the height of its own imperial power. Through an examination of various residual echoes that connect Lope's play to a number of *romances fronterizos* (the "frontier ballads" of the medieval borderlands between Christian and Islamic Spain), this essay argues that *The Last Goth* obliquely sings the praises of a very successful (and already completed) Christian "Reconquest" of the Iberian Peninsula at the very same moment that it overtly stages what was considered by Lope and his contemporaries to be the greatest tragedy in Spain's national history.

Keywords
Lope de Vega, *El último godo*, Miguel de Luna, *Historia verdadera del rey Don Rodrigo*, Visigoths, Al-Andalus, Moriscos, La Cava/Florinda, Pelayo, Hercules, *Poema de mío Cid*, orality, *Romancero*, *Reconquista*

The Moorish invasion of Visigothic Spain in the year 711 CE, supposedly resulting from Count Julian's revenge on King Rodrigo for having raped his daughter, Florinda (also known as La Cava), precipitated the nearly 800-year Christian *Reconquista* of the Iberian Peninsula and remains one of the most enduring historical episodes

in Spanish collective memory.[1] As such, this "national tragedy" has inspired a number of historical treatises on the topic, including Miguel de Luna's deceptively fictitious *Historia verdadera del rey Don Rodrigo* (*The True History of King Rodrigo*) (1574), a cycle of popular ballads, and several fictional recapitulations.[2] Lope de Vega's *El último godo* (*The Last Goth*) (1618)—which is largely based on both Luna's text and the ballad cycle—marks the intersection of these three axes. As a matter of fact, the first two acts so closely follow the *Romancero* (i.e., the complete corpus of Spanish ballads) that for almost every *romance* in the cycle the play offers spectators a corresponding scene.[3]

For those unfamiliar with this play, a very brief plot summary is in order. Act 1 recaps Visigothic history and sets up the internal political crisis created by Rodrigo's ascension to the Visigothic throne. It introduces the Muslim characters, Abembúcar and Zara, the latter of whom is the daughter of the King of Algeria and who marries Rodrigo, converting to Christianity in the process. And it stages Rodrigo's growing lust for Florinda, before culminating with the suggestion of Florinda's violation. Act 2 establishes the alliance between the aggrieved Julian and the North African Berbers. It

[1]The term *Reconquista* (literally, Reconquest) refers to the military campaign of Iberia's Christian kingdoms to "reconquer" the Peninsula following the Islamic invasion of 711 CE. The *Reconquista* came to its military and political fruition in January of 1492 when the "Catholic Monarchs," Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile, finally subdued the Kingdom of Granada, the last Islamic polity remaining of the once glorious Al-Andalus (as medieval Islamic Spain is known).

[2]The legend of Florinda's rape by Rodrigo and of Julian's revenge upon him is just that. Luna's supposed "true" history (which he claims to have translated from an Arabic source) is a work of fiction. The actual geopolitical history of Islam's medieval expansion into the Iberian Peninsula is much more complex than Luna's text (or any of the other literary representations of this history) implies.

[3]Like so many of the several hundred plays written by Lope de Vega, *The Last Goth* does not currently exist in English translation. Nor do many of the *romances* I analyze here. I cite these texts in their original Spanish precisely because I am interested in teasing out discursive echoes that may not be so apparent in translation. Still, I provide English translations of all quoted material. Unless otherwise noted, all translations in this essay are mine.

presents the subsequent Moorish invasion and its aftermath. And it culminates with Florinda's suicide; followed by Rodrigo's own death in a mountainous cave where, as part of his penance, he is fatally bitten on the penis by a poisonous snake. In this way, the story of the "last Goth" has, by the end of the second act, been fully told. Thus, having virtually exhausted the narrative components of the ballad cycle, Lope's play swerves considerably in act 3 and focuses instead on the Christian resistance to the Moorish invasion. This final act depicts the marriage of Abembúcar and Zara (now widowed) along with their subsequent execution at the hands of Tarife for having converted to Christianity. It demonstrates Pelayo's valor in the emerging *Reconquista*. And it ends with the marriage of Pelayo's sister Solmira to Ilderigo, a new Christian king who promises better days to his Iberian subjects similar to the fresh start portended by Fortinbras in the final scene of *Hamlet*.

Incidentally, what is most interesting about the culminating moments of the first two acts of this *comedia* is that they are conspicuously absent from the text.[4] Both Florinda's rape and Rodrigo's death—which are precisely the high points of the ballad cycle—actually occur between the acts of Lope's play. Act 1 ends with Rodrigo chasing Florinda off stage; act 2 begins with the delivery of a letter from Florinda to Julian, describing for her father her fallen state. Act 2 ends with a deposed Rodrigo begging for food from a poor peasant; act 3 begins with a conversation between Zara and Abembúcar in which Rodrigo's widow announces his death. One way of accounting for these lacunae is to suggest that Lope deliberately chose not to stage these culminating scenes because he knew that he could rely on his audience—most of whom were amateur performers of these missing ballads at one time or another—to complete his text by filling in its gaps from memory. My own theory, however, as I argue in *Radical Theatricality*, is that the original *entremeses* (entr'acte entertainments) for this play might actually have consisted of performances of these very ballads, which would then have functioned as a kind of

[4]The term *comedia*, of course, is a false cognate with the English word 'comedy' and does not necessarily imply the notion of the comedic (although it does not rule it out either). *Comedia* is simply the generic term for describing any early modern Spanish three-act play written in verse.

performative bridge between the acts (163).

In any event, the third act of *The Last Goth* seems like a completely different play. Several scholars—particularly Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo and Ramón Menéndez Pidal—have commented on this overt change of direction and tone, and have argued that such a transformation unfortunately diminishes the aesthetic integrity of the play.[5] Responding to critics who fault the play for its lack of "unity," Susan Niehoff McCrary argues that what appears to be a superficial disjuncture between the first two acts and the third disappears when we understand that the play is not simply a historical reenactment, "but rather the drama of a much greater cosmological epic having to do with the Fall of Man and the Christian themes of temptation, transgression, atonement, salvation and regeneration" ("Unity" 261-262). McCrary suggests that, on a deep allegorical level, *The Last Goth* is something like an *auto-sacramental* in which Rodrigo functions as an Adamic figure who falls from grace through his disobedience, while Pelayo functions as a Christ figure who comes to redeem mankind (262-263).[6] Carol Bingham Kirby, for her part, points out that the play's change in direction is not an artistic weakness, but rather is the inevitable result of the very history Lope is staging. Were Lope to have focused exclusively on Rodrigo, she argues, he would have to have ended his play with the fall of Spain to the Moors (334). Needless to say, we can hardly blame Lope for offering his audience a more "inspiring" ending than what a strict adherence to the discourse of his title would promise, any more than we can blame numerous 20th-century American filmmakers for not creating World War II films that culminate with the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Lope has constructed his *comedia* in such a way as to

[5]Menéndez Pelayo characterizes *The Last Goth* as a kind of "trilogy" unto itself, in which each act stands nearly alone (19). Menéndez Pidal, while mocking neoclassical critics who fault the play's lack of "unity of action," nevertheless calls it more of a "draft" or "summary" than a "finished" work, and dismissively compares its montage of scenes to the cinematic melodrama of his own day (*Floresta* lx-lxi).

[6]Like the *comedia*, the *auto-sacramental* is a uniquely Spanish theatrical form. Responding to the threat posed by the Reformation, Counter-Reformation dramatists in Spain wrote hundreds of these allegorical plays to teach Catholic doctrine and to exalt the Eucharist.

provide for his audience's natural desire to leave the theater remembering not the biggest tragedy in the nation's history, but the heroic determination of the *cristianos viejos* (Old Christians) in the face of such a catastrophe.[7] Pelayo functions as an emblem of the nascent *Reconquista*, which—from its huddled exile in the northern mountains—will eventually "take back" the entire Peninsula.

But Pelayo's thematic resistance is not the only allusion to the *Reconquista* in this *comedia*. *The Last Goth* is possibly the most densely influenced of Lope's so-called *romancero* plays, and literally spills over with the residual echoes of numerous ballads, many of which seem entirely unrelated to its titular theme.[8] A close reading of this work, then, with an attentive ear for how these residual echoes function in performance, demonstrates that the play is not simply a rehashing of the fall of Christian Spain to Islam, with the vague and implicit promise of a future "re-conquest" in the heroic figure of Pelayo. Because many of the play's ballad echoes emanate from several *romances fronterizos* (frontier ballads), the *Reconquista* itself—as a future *fait accompli*—becomes an explicit leitmotif that envelopes and colors the representation of what are, strictly speaking, eighth-century historical events.[9] The play thus inscribes at one and the same time both the earlier "conquest" of Visigothic Spain by the Moors and the later "re-conquest" of Al-Andalus by the Catholic Monarchs.

Before proceeding with my analysis in this regard, a couple of comments are in order. First, tracing all the various *romancero* echoes in this play would require a detailed side-by-side comparison of dozens of complete ballads and scenes. Because

[7]Within the context of Spain's infamous early modern "blood purity" laws, the *cristianos viejos* were those who could supposedly trace their lineage back to a time before the Moorish invasion. Such pedigrees—which more often than not were works of pure fiction—allowed these "Old Christians" to argue that they remained "untainted" by either Moorish or Jewish blood.

[8]One of the reasons for Lope's frequent incorporation of various *romances* within his drama is that, like most early modern Spanish dramatists, he frequently employed the *romance* form (i.e., eight-syllable lines with assonant rhyme) as part of his system of versification.

[9]The *romances fronterizos* are a subgenre of ballads related to the ongoing conflict (and sometime cooperation) between Christians and Muslims in the borderlands of medieval Iberia.

such a thorough analysis of all the echoing intertextualities that exist between the *Romancero* and *The Last Goth* would be far too ambitious for this essay, I will limit my discussion to the most important of these ballad echoes. Second, I am not really interested here in traditional notions of "source study," in which I might cite some tangible document and then declare that Lope "took" his material from this particular "source" (although there are certainly instances where this kind of direct citation occurs in the play). Rather, I am interested in tracing the more ephemeral connections that exist between Lope's *comedia* and the entire oral tradition, especially those intertextualities that result from the (perhaps) unintended consequences of performative transmission and reception in a primarily oral culture.

The influence of the oral tradition and the *Romancero* on the theater of Lope de Vega—both as a metrical model and as a source for poetic material—has been well documented.[10] Much of the research in this area, however, exhibits a distinct artifactual prejudice, relying as it frequently does on a side-by-side comparison of the *romances* and the *comedias* in search of verbatim textual co-incidence. What many of these "source studies" tacitly assume is that Lope somehow consulted the published *cancioneros* (songbooks) of his day before sitting down to write his *comedias*, and that he then adapted the published *romancero* texts for his own dramatic purposes. Yet, as should be obvious, since the published *cancioneros* of the sixteenth century were themselves transcriptions of oral texts that had circulated for perhaps hundreds of years, Lope did not need to limit himself to these printed collections in order to find *romancero* material for his *comedias*. Like nearly everyone else in his culture, Lope surely had reverberating inside his head the echoes of numerous *romances* from which he could easily draw inspiration. And because the formulaic structure of the oral tradition ensures that linguistic and thematic echoes resound throughout the *Romancero* itself, thus tying one (often seemingly unrelated) ballad to another, Lope's cerebral "*cancionero*" undoubtedly provided a much more fertile ground for his ideas than any single printed text. What I mean by the "formulaic structure" of the *Romancero* is that—as Albert Lord notes in *The*

[10]See Araluce; Díez de Revenga; McCrary; Moore; Pérez Pisonero; Silverman; Swislocki; and Umpierre.

Singer of Tales, where he brilliantly uncovers the way in which primarily oral texts are essentially "stitched together" from bits and pieces of pre-existing formulaic discourse (30-67)—the Spanish ballad tradition is full of oft-repeated phrases that recur in numerous *romances*. Thus, all the ballads that begin with a variant of the phrase, "A cazar iba Don Pedro" ("A hunting went Don Pedro") (Díaz Roig 275), are all inevitably connected to each other in the collective imagination through this formulaic opening line.[11] As John Hollander points out in his book, *The Figure of Echo*: "A single word or phrase, [whether] amplified or not by a phonetic scheme, may easily carry rumors of its resounding cave. So, too, can those schemes and patterns themselves if given originally a charge of significance" (95). Miguel de Cervantes demonstrates just such an awareness of performative intertextuality in *Don Quixote* when he has Altisidora sing a ballad to the mad knight: "And as she said this Don Quixote heard the gentle tones of a harp. He marvelled, because in that instant his memory was crowded with the infinite number of similar adventures" (2.44: 782). What both Hollander and Cervantes articulate, of course, is the same theory of cognitive networking recently described by Drew Westen in his book *The Political Brain*:

> In one study, scientists presented subjects with word pairs to learn, including the pair, *ocean-moon*. Later, when asked to name the first laundry detergent that came to mind, subjects previously exposed to *ocean-moon* were more likely to generate the name *Tide*. […] Why? *Ocean* and *moon* are part of a network of associations that includes *tide*. *Tide* is also part of another network, of laundry detergents. By priming the first network, the researchers spread activation unconsciously to the word *tide*, which was then doubly activated, and hence readily recalled, when subjects were asked to name a laundry detergent.
>
> (84)[12]

[11] I refer to a series of ballads that begin: "A cazar va Don Rodrigo" (Díaz Roig 133); "A cazar va el caballero" (Díaz Roig 260); and "A caza iban, a caza" (Díaz Roig 237); among others.

[12] For more on cognitive theory and the *comedia*, see Connor.

All of which is to say, the ballad echoes that enter *The Last Goth*, especially those that occur due to the formulaic structure of the *Romancero* itself, serve to bring the fullness of the *Reconquista* to the forefront of the dramatic action (if only latently), even during those segments of the play that ostensibly treat events prior to the collapse of the Visigothic kingdom. Let me offer the following example, which—while not explicitly *fronterizo*—demonstrates nonetheless how different historical and narrative moments can become discursively intertwined within the *Romancero*, and thus within any text that alludes to one or the other ballad.

The fourth scene of act 2 (which occurs shortly after Florinda's violation) finds Rodrigo frantically entering the stage, having been awakened from his siesta by the sound of a barking dog. This motif of the barking dog, as we know from one of the several Rodrigan ballads that inform this scene, is an omen of the imminent Moorish invasion. Teodoro assures Rodrigo that there is no dog on the premises, after which a group of musicians enter and try to assuage Rodrigo's fears by (ironically) singing a song about Nero and the burning of Rome. Shortly thereafter, Count Julian arrives; learns of his daughter's misfortune; and almost immediately seeks out the Moorish commander, Tarife, in order to request his help in avenging Florinda's sullied honor. Although Lope has obviously modified several elements from the ballad tradition, this scene clearly evokes—and is indeed based on—a *romance* in which Rodrigo prophetically dreams of his own death only to awaken to the news that Julian's troops have arrived in force. The following is the complete text of this important ballad:[13]

> *Los vientos eran contrarios, — la luna estaba crecida*,
> los peces daban gemidos — por el mal tiempo que hacía,
> *cuando el buen rey don Rodrigo — junto a la Cava dormía*,
> dentro de una rica tienda — de oro bien guarnecida.
> Trecientas cuerdas de plata — que la tienda sostenían;
> dentro había cien doncellas — vestidas a maravilla:
> las cincuenta están tañendo — con muy extraña armonía,
> las cincuenta están cantando — con muy dulce melodía.

[13]When citing various ballads and scenes from the play, I will italicize particular words, phrases, and ideas in order to draw attention to the echoes at stake in these texts.

Allí habló una *doncella* — que *Fortuna* se decía:
—*Si duermes, rey don Rodrigo, — despierta por cortesía*,
y verás tus malos hados, — tu peor postrimería,
y verás tus gentes muertas, — y tu batalla rompida,
y tus villas y ciudades — destruidas en un día;
tus *castillos* fortalezas — otro señor los regía.
Si me pides quién lo ha hecho, — yo muy bien te lo diría:
ese conde don Julián — por amores de su hija,
porque se la deshonraste — y más de ella no tenía;
juramento viene echando — que te ha de *costar la vida.*
Despertó muy congojado — con aquella voz que oía,
con cara triste y penosa — de esta suerte respondía:
—Mercedes a ti, *Fortuna*, — de esta tu mensajería.
Estando en esto ha llegado — uno que nueva traía
cómo el conde don Julián — las tierras le destruía.
(Díaz Roig 114, my italics)[14]

Because of the formulaic structure of the *Romancero*, this particular Rodrigan ballad has a twin that, although different in many ways, serves to remind Lope's audience (if only unconsciously) that the world did not end in the year 711, but that there would be other kings and other conflicts yet to come. Here again is the complete

[14]"The winds were adverse — the moon on the rise, / the fish whimpered because of the bad weather, / when good King Rodrigo — slept alongside La Cava, / inside a luxurious tent — adorned all in gold. / Three hundred silver cords — held up the tent; / inside were one hundred damsels marvelously adorned: / fifty played instruments — in extraordinary harmony, / fifty sang / a very sweet melody. / There spoke a damsel — Fortune she was called: / 'If you are sleeping, King Rodrigo, — please wake up, / and you will behold your dark fate, / the worst times of your life. / You will see your people dead, — your battle broken, / your villages and cities — destroyed in a single day; / your fortress castles — governed by another lord. / If you ask me who has done this, / I will tell you quickly: / this Count Julian — for the love of his daughter, / because you dishonored her — and he has no other daughters; / he comes swearing an oath — that will surely cost you your life.' / The King awoke distraught with the voice that he had heard, / with his face all sad and contorted — he responded in this manner: / 'I thank you, Fortune, — for this your message.' / And as he spoke — the news arrived / how Count Julian — his lands destroyed."

text of a ballad that treats the late-medieval conflict between Aragon and Navarre:

> *Los aires andan contrarios, — el sol eclipse hacía*,
> la *luna* perdió su lumbre, — el norte no parecía,
> *cuando el triste rey don Juan — en la su cama yacía*,
> cercado de pensamientos, — que valer no se podía.
> —*¡Recuerda, buen rey, recuerda, — llorarás tu mancebía!*
> *¡Cierto no debe dormir — el que sin dicha nacía!*
> —¿Quién eres tú, la *doncella*? — dímelo *por cortesía*.
> —A mí me llaman *Fortuna*, — que busco tu compañía.
> —¡*Fortuna*, cuánto me sigues, — por la gran desdicha mía,
> apartado de los míos, — de los que yo más quería!
> ¿Qué es de ti, mi nuevo amor,— qué es de ti, triste hija
> mía?
> que en verdad hija tú tienes, — Estella, por nombradía.
> ¿Qué es de ti, Olite y Tafalla? — ¿qué es de mi genealogía?
> ¡Y ese *castillo* de Maya — que el duque me lo tenía!
> Pero si el rey no me ayuda, — *la vida me costaría*.
> (Díaz Roig 79; my italics)[15]

In pointing out this echoing parallelism, I do not mean to suggest that Lope deliberately intended his audience to associate this non-Rodrigan ballad with the play, or that his audience would have even consciously noticed it. Lope himself may not have been consciously aware of this significant echo. What I am suggesting,

[15]"'The air was at cross-purposes, — the sun became eclipsed, / the moon lost its luster, — the polestar refused to appear, / when sad King John — slept in his bed, / besieged by thoughts — he could not overcome. / 'Remember, good King, remember, — that you will come to mourn your youth! / Surely, he should not sleep — who under such an unlucky star was born!' / 'Who are you, damsel? — please tell me.' / 'They call me Fortune, — who comes to seek your company.' / 'Fortune, how persistently you follow me; — because of my great misfortune, / I am separated — from those I love most!' / 'What's become of you, my new love, — what's become of you, sad daughter of mine?' / 'For, in truth, a daughter you have, — Estella, by name.' / 'What's become of you, Olite and Tafalla? — What's become of my genealogy? / And of the Castle Maya — which the duke held in my name! / But if the King will not help me, — it will cost me my life.'"

rather, (along the same lines articulated by Cervantes, Hollander, and Westen), is that the semantic value of this scene is subtly enhanced by these types of intra-*Romancero* echoes, which inevitably spill into Lope's text, obliquely reminding his audience of other meaningful configurations.

Accordingly, many of the *fronterizo* echoes that pervade the first two acts of Lope's *comedia* enter the text in association with a Morisco subplot that Lope has borrowed from Luna's *True History*.[16] But in borrowing this subplot, Lope did not simply incorporate it wholesale into his text; instead, he has made at least two crucial modifications. First, like nearly all orientalized Morisco protagonists, Abembúcar and Zara, end up falling in love with each other and converting to Christianity, taking the names Juan and María at baptism. Along the way, however, Zara—who actually converts much earlier than her eventual husband, and whose baptismal scene erotically echoes a voyeuristic *romance* that depicts Rodrigo's arousal upon seeing Florinda bathing—originally marries King Rodrigo and, in essence, becomes "the last Goth-ette" (if you will). After Rodrigo's death, Zara/María then marries the now-converted Abembúcar/Juan shortly before both are martyred by Tarife early in the third act. Second, and perhaps more importantly, "Mahometo Gilhair" (as Zara's Morisco lover is originally called in the *True History* [30]) becomes "Mahometo Abembúcar" (whose surname actually belongs to a different Luna character [108], and who is almost exclusively referred to as just "Abembúcar" throughout the course of Lope's play).[17]

Of course, we might ask ourselves why Lope implemented this

[16]One of the more popular narrative subgenres in early modern Spain was the "Morisco novel." The Morisco trope is an orientalist one revolving around Moorish characters inhabiting the borderlands between Christian and Muslim territory on the Iberian Peninsula. These Morisco characters are usually depicted as either proto- or crypto-Christians who are just looking for the right opportunity to overtly join the Christian side of the geo-political, ethno-cultural conflict.

[17]The name of this character is spelled "Abenbúcar" in Luna's text, but Lope's usage is inconsistent. It appears most frequently in the play as "Abembúcar," but occasionally as "Abenbúcar." Unless explicitly citing Lope (in which case I will maintain his inconsistencies), I will generally defer to the more frequent spelling: Abembúcar.

onomastic shift. After all, "Mahometo Gilhair," with its clear connection to Islam's central prophet, certainly sounds no less "Moorish" than "Abembúcar," and carries with it the prestige of being the "true" historical name. The answer to this question, I think, lies in the fact that, just as Zara/María functions as a spectral figure of La Cava/Florinda throughout the course of the first two acts, Abembúcar—whose name uncannily echoes that of "Abenámar" from the well-known, eponymous *romance* of the same name—also becomes a parallel specter. Rodrigo personifies the fall of Christian Spain to Islam; Abenámar symbolizes the fall of Islamic Spain to Christendom. The actual "Abenámar" ballad (which contains echoes of its own related to the previously discussed ballad of Rodrigo's nightmare and its twin) exists almost entirely as a dialogue between Abenámar and King John II of Castile, who proposes marriage to a personified Granada, offering her Cordoba and Seville as a dowry.

> —¡Abenámar, Abenámar, — moro de la morería,
> el día que tú naciste — grandes señales había!
> *Estaba la mar en calma*, — *la luna estaba crecida*,
> moro que en tal signo nace — no debe decir mentira.
> Allí respondiera el moro, — bien oiréis lo que diría:
> —Yo te la diré, señor, — aunque me cueste la vida,
> porque soy hijo de un moro — y una cristiana cautiva;
> siendo yo niño y muchacho — mi madre me lo decía
> que mentira no dijese, — que era grande villanía;
> por tanto pregunta, rey, — que la verdad te diría.
> —Yo te agradezco, Abenámar, — aquesa tu *cortesía*.
> ¿Qué castillos son aquéllos? — ¡Altos son y relucían!
> —El Alhambra era, señor, — y la otra la mezquita,
> los otros los Alixares, — *labrados a maravilla*.
> El moro que los labraba — cien doblas ganaba al día,
> y el día que no los labra, — otras tantas se perdía.
> El otro es Generalife, — huerta que par no tenía,
> el otro Torres Bermejas, — castillo de gran valía.
> Allí habló el rey don Juan, — bien oiréis lo que decía:
> —Si tú quisieses, Granada, — contigo me casaría;
> *daréte en arras y dote — a Córdoba y a Sevilla*.
> —Casada soy, rey don Juan, — casada soy, que no vuida;
> el moro que a mí me tiene — muy grande bien me quería.

(Díaz Roig 61; my italics)[18]

This *romance fronterizo* is very faintly echoed early in act 1 of *The Last Goth* when Rodrigo—having captured Abembúcar and Zara on the shores of Southern Spain—offers to marry Zara in a scene that creates an analogous triangular relationship between the characters:

> Yo estimo tus razones, Abenbúcar,
> y de tu libertad tendré cuidado;
> pero *si la hermosa Zara quiere*
> *dejar su ley*, que en fin no es ley, le ofrezco
> la salvación del alma, *y después de ella*
> *a España*, que es lo más que puedo dalla.
> (Lope 640)[19]

Unlike the "Granada" from "Abenámar," however, who rejects

[18]"Abenámar, Abenámar, — Moor of all Moordom, / on the day you were born — great signs were manifest! / The sea was calm, — the moon was on the rise, / a Moor born under such a sign — should not tell lies. / The Moor responded there, — well shall you hear what he said: / 'I will tell you the truth, my lord, — even if it costs me my life, / for I am the son of a Moor and of a captive Christian; / and in my youth — my mother would tell me / that I should never lie, — that lying was great villainy; / therefore, ask me, King, — and the truth I will tell you.' / 'I thank you, Abenámar, for this your courtesy. / What castles are those — so tall and glimmering?' / 'The Alhambra it is, my lord, — and the other one is the mosque, / and those are the Alixares, — of exceedingly fine workmanship. / The Moor who built them — earned one hundred *doblas* per day, / and on those days when he did not work, / he lost the very same salary. / The other is Generalife, — a garden peerless among gardens; / the other is Torres Bermejas, — a castle of great worth.' / There King John spoke, — well shall you hear what he said: / 'If you so wish it, Granada, — I would marry you; / giving you Cordoba and Seville — as a gift and dowry.' / 'I am already married, King John, — married I am, and not a widow; / the Moor to whom I belong — loves me oh so dearly.'"

[19]"I highly value your reasoning, Abenbúcar, / and will be mindful of your liberty; / but if the beautiful Zara would like / to leave aside her religious law, which in any event is not really valid, I can offer / salvation for her soul, and beyond that / all of Spain, which is the most I can give her."

King John's advances, preferring instead the Moor who loves her "oh so dearly," Zara leaves Abembúcar without giving him a second thought, and marries King Rodrigo before finally returning to Abembúcar after Rodrigo's death. More importantly, this same "Abenámar" courtship trope is echoed again in act 3 of *The Last Goth* when the traitorous Count Orpaz—acting on behalf of Tarife—attempts to convince Pelayo to surrender. The "Abenámar" verse "daréte en arras y dote — a Córdoba y a Sevilla" (Díaz Roig 61) seamlessly becomes in the play "Daréte, si te rindes, seis cuidades, cincuenta villas" ("I will give you, if you surrender, six cities, fifty villages") (Lope 662).[20] Needless to say, Pelayo, like the "Granada" of the ballad (and decidedly unlike Zara), refuses this sly proposal.

These *fronterizo* echoes, which quietly permeate the first two acts of the play like a recurring melodic line subtly woven into the score of a grand opera, function as a kind of overture to the third act. Yet, even after the play fully embraces the theme of the nascent *Reconquista*, these echoes continue to play a significant role. As previously noted, scholars seeking to find some kind of "unity" between the first two acts and the third act have focused on Pelayo as the mechanism of the play's continuity. If we listen carefully to Lope's lingering *fronterizo* echoes, however, we will notice that it is not Pelayo, but Solmira, who acts as the focal point around which most of the *Reconquista* events revolve. (And it is no mere coincidence that Lope kills off both Abembúcar and Zara just prior to his introduction of Solmira into the play. As spectral echoes of Rodrigo and Florinda, these characters serve no real purpose once the Visigothic king and his unfortunate victim are both dead).

The first important ballad echo of act 3, then, comes from the "Romance de Sayavedra," ("Ballad of Sayavedra"), whose first two lines are: "Río Verde, río, Verde — más negro vas que la tinta. / Entre ti y Sierra Bermeja — murió gran caballería" ("Green River, river, Green — that flows blacker than ink. / Between you and Sierra Bermeja — died a multitude of knights") (Díaz Roig 75). This *fronterizo* ballad narrates the pursuit and capture of its title character behind enemy lines. Sayavedra is separated from Christian territory by the dark river evoked in the first verse, and

[20]As I hope is clear, these verses echo each other both thematically and poetically.

spends three terrifying and hungry days on the run before finally being apprehended and brought before the Muslim king. When this king shrewdly asks his prisoner what honor he would bestow upon him if the tables were turned—that is, if the Muslim king were a prisoner in Christian territory—Sayavedra defiantly answers that he would do him "great honor," but only if he would convert; otherwise, he would cut off his head. The Muslim king, taking his prisoner's advice, makes this same offer to Sayavedra, saying that if he will convert to Islam, he will give him great riches. And he makes this offer using a locution that once again clearly echoes "Abenámar": "darte he villas y castillos — y joyas de gran valía" ("I will give you villages and castles — and jewels of great worth") (Díaz Roig 75). Sayavedra defiantly replies that he would rather die than convert, and, unsheathing his sword, he single-handedly attacks the king's troops, whereupon he dies a hero's death.

The "Ballad of Sayavedra" is echoed in the fourth scene of act 3 of *The Last Goth* when Pelayo, disguised as a Moor (a visual figure, perhaps, of Sayavedra's potential "renegade" status) and Solmira awkwardly find themselves alone in Moorish territory.[21] They valiantly fight an army of Moorish soldiers, until Pelayo (who has lost contact with his sister) escapes into Christian territory by swimming across a river (and he actually enters his next scene dripping wet). As in the *romance*, the principal characters of this particular *comedia* scene flee from Moorish lands, closely followed by the pursuing troops, whose declamatory battle shouts, "¡Muera, muera!" ("Die, Die!") (Díaz Roig 75), resonate clearly in the dialogue of the play, which includes the phrase, "¡Mueran, mueran!" (Lope 660). And, again, as with the ballad, whose own "Río Verde" marks the frontier between Christian and Muslim territory, the play interposes a dark river of its own which must be crossed before Pelayo and Solmira can reach safe haven. Thus, when Solmira is stranded behind enemy lines, she functions much like the balladistic Sayavedra, who must defend himself and his

[21]The English word 'renegade' comes from the Spanish 'renegado,' which derives from the verb 'renegar' (to renege, to deny). While this word has acquired various supplemental meanings since the late Middle Ages, the term originally described a Christian who had converted to Islam (whether because of a true religious conversion or merely out of convenience).

faith against overwhelming odds. That Sayavedra actually dies in the ballad narrative only heightens the tension of the *comedia* scene by subtly suggesting that Solmira's safe reunion with Pelayo remains an open question. But defend herself she can, and, like Sayavedra, she single-handedly engages in combat with a host of Moorish soldiers. Unlike Sayavedra, however, she wins the day.

In many ways, Solmira functions as a post hoc prefiguration of Joan of Arc, and so it is fitting that she also functions as an echo of "La doncella guerrera" ("the damsel warrior"), a memorable character from the *romancero* cycle that treats the ongoing conflicts between Spain and France during the Middle Ages. This ballad—which, again for reasons of length, I will not cite here—narrates the story of a young girl who volunteers to fight in place of her aged father, and who arrives at the battlefield bearing the pseudonym "Don Martín el de Aragón" ("Sir Martin, he of Aragon"). During the two years in which she valiantly fights, no one suspects her of gender bending, except for a young prince who becomes strangely infatuated with "Don Martín," and who devises a number of tests designed to draw out this mysterious soldier's presumed "female" qualities. When the damsel warrior is eventually exposed, she mounts her horse, shouts that the king has been well served by "una doncella leal" ("a loyal damsel") and races home still in possession of her chastity, although hotly pursued by the prince up to her very doorstep (Menéndez Pidal, *Flor nueva* 198-202).

Solmira shares some important characteristics with this disguised female warrior, not the least of which is the fact that both are possessed with pronounced ocular qualities. Each time the ballad prince complains to his mother that he has been smitten by this suspiciously feminine warrior, he insists that he has been wounded unto death by "los ojos de Don Martín" ("the eyes of Sir Martin") (199-200). Though she is a potent soldier, the damsel warrior's most formidable weapon, it seems, are her eyes. Likewise, when Solmira—whose very name suggests the power to stare down the sun itself (*sol*=sun, *mira*=to look at)—single handedly defeats a battalion of Moorish soldiers, she taunts them by saying, "huid de mis ojos luego, / que este fuego deja ciego / a cualquiera que atropella" ("flee from my eyes, then / whose fire can blind / anyone it assaults") (Lope 662). And later, when she encounters Abraydo (who, like the *romancero* prince, is strangely attracted to Lope's damsel warrior), she exclaims, "Para matar mirar basta"

("To kill I need only to gaze upon") (Lope 663). Finally, like the damsel warrior of the ballad, whose main objective becomes crossing the river in order to get back to her father's castle with her virginity intact, Solmira must still follow in her brother's footsteps and cross her own divisive "dark river" if she is to maintain her own honor, and thus be in a position to marry Ilderigo in the end.

And this brings us to the concluding scene of *The Last Goth*, a scene that contains an essential—and indeed culminating—*romancero* echo of its own. This echo occurs in a speech delivered by Leocán, who tries to explain to Tarife the reasons for their failure to bring the beleaguered Christian armies under full Muslim control:

> *De las Asturias de Oviedo,*
> famoso alcaide Tarife,
> vengo huyendo por los montes,
> cual fiera que alarbes siguen.
> Aquel mancebo Pelayo,
> que ya del laurel *se ciñe*
> las vedijas del cabello
> *como otro español Alcides,*
> retirado en una cueva,
> a quien con varios matices
> jaspes y árboles esmalten,
> tus escuadrones resiste.
> (Lope 663; my italics)[22]

In a play brimming over with parallel characters, the key to this speech can be found in the metaphorical parallel drawn between Pelayo and Hercules (who was called "Alcides" in his youth), because this parallel brings the play around full circle to its beginnings.

In many ways, Hercules has been something of a ghost,

[22]"From Asturias in Oviedo, / famous commander, Tarife, / I come fleeing through the mountains / from that fierce woman the Arabs pursue. / And that young man Pelayo, / who has already crowned himself with the laurel wreath / like some new Spanish Alcides, / has retreated into a cave / shaded by several jaspers and trees, / where he defies your squadrons."

haunting this play from the very first act when Rodrigo breaks into the "Cave of Hercules" looking for riches, but finds nothing more than an inscription that tautologically prophesies his downfall for having broken into the cave in the first place. This scene, although clearly drawn from Luna's *True History*, differs from its "source" text in many ways, the most important of which lies in the configuration of the omens Rodrigo finds inside the cave. In the Luna version, Rodrigo and his men discover a most unusual and gigantic bronze statue that suddenly begins to beat the ground with a mace upon their arrival (24). A fearful Rodrigo promises the statue to leave immediately without doing any harm, but says that, before doing so, he would just like to see what treasures the cave holds. With this promise, the statue stops beating the ground, whereupon the King and his men carefully examine its base, upon the four sides of which they discover a series of cryptic inscriptions that tell the king that because of his penetration into the cave he will lose his kingdom to Arab invaders. After Rodrigo and his men have literally "read the writing on the wall," the statue once again begins pounding the ground, and the king's men beat a hasty retreat from the cave, sealing it up once more, although by now it is far too late. In Lope's play, however, Rodrigo's men—instead of finding the elaborate inscriptions of the Luna account—encounter a kind of pictorial warning of Spain's impending doom in the form of several ominous paintings of a well-armed cavalry made up of "hombres tostados" ("dark men") dressed in exotic and colorful uniforms (Lope 639).

Lope's transformation of Luna's inscriptions into paintings is not some kind of pure invention, but rather comes into the play by way of the "Romance del rey don Rodrigo, como entro en Toledo en la casa de Hercules" ("Ballad of King Rodrigo, How He Entered the House of Hercules in Toledo") (Sepúlveda 278-79). In this *romance*, Rodrigo—breaking with the age-old tradition of commemorating his ascension to the Visigothic throne by placing yet another padlock on the door to the ancient "Casa de Hercules"—instead smashes the existing padlocks and defiantly enters the edifice, hoping to find treasure. What he finds instead is an inscription that reads "que el rey que esta casa abriere / a España tiene de quemar" ("the king who this house opens / will see Spain burn") (Sepúlveda 279). And instead of finding a chest full of gold and jewels, he finds banners that depict "figuras de

espantar / Alaraues de cauallo" ("frightful figures, / Arabs on horseback") (Sepúlveda 279). Rodrigo hastily burns the entire palace to the ground (hoping, no doubt, to completely erase both the inscription and the paintings), upon which he sends a pre-emptive strike force into Africa. But this strike force is completely routed, and Rodrigo loses two hundred ships in the battle.

As with the other instances of ballad echoing that occur in *The Last Goth*, the interaction between these two variant narrations creates a stronger reading of the Rodrigo legend than either "source" standing on its own, because Lope's merger of these narratives provides two particularly important elements for his play: 1) the tie to Hercules (from the *romance*), which creates a historical linkage between pre-Arabic and post-Arabic Spain, and which will have important semantic ramifications for the end of the *comedia*; and 2) the conversion of the balladistic "casa" (house) into Luna's "cueva" (cave), which creates a linguistic linkage between the violation/penetration of the cave and that of "La Cava" (Florinda). Moreover, as several of Lope's chronicle sources take pains to stress, the Rock of Gibraltar was previously known as one of the "Pillars of Hercules" prior to the Moorish invasion. It was only later renamed Gibraltar (derived from "Jabal al Tariq" ["Mountain of Tariq"]) in honor of the invading Moorish commander; all of which is to say, the name "Hercules" represents at least one reminder of the Iberian Peninsula's pre-Islamic status.[23] And thus when Leocán compares Pelayo to Hercules in the final scene of the play, he converts this beleaguered Visigothic warrior into Spain's once and future hero.

But even more important than the conceptual comparison between Pelayo and Hercules, is the locution Lope uses to make this discursive connection. Whether intentional or not, by designating Pelayo as "another Spanish *Alcides*," Lope subtly suggests—through an onomastic echoing not unlike that between "Abembúcar" and "Abenámar"—that Pelayo is a prefiguration of that most famous of all *reconquista* warriors: "El Cid" (whose real name was Rodrigo de Vivar). And Lope prepares his audience to hear this final and crucial echo by beginning Leocán's speech with an echo drawn from one of the best-known ballads in the Cid

[23]The name Tariq appears as "Tarif" in Luna's *True History* and as "Tarife" in *The Last Goth*.

cycle. The following is a segment of a much longer text:

> —Villanos te maten, Alfonso, — villanos, que no
> hidalgos,
> *de las Asturias de Oviedo*, — que no sean castillanos;
> mátente con aguijadas, — no con lanzas ni con dardos;
> con cuchillos cachicuernos, — no con puñales dorados;
> abarcas traigan calzadas, — que no zapatos con lazo;
> capas traigan aguaderas, — no de contray ni frisado;
> con camisones de estopa, — no de holanda ni labrados;
> caballeros vengan en burras, — que no en mulas ni en
> caballos;
> frenos traigan de cordel, — que no cueros fogueados.
> Mátente por las aradas, — que no en villas ni en poblado,
> sáquente el corazón — por el siniestro costado,
> si no dijeres la verdad — de lo que te fuere preguntado,
> si fuiste, o consentiste — en la muerte de tu hermano.
> (Díaz Roig 148-149; my italics)[24]

Thus, not only does Lope create a figurative round, linking the old Hercules with the new (Pelayo), he also creates a historical circularity that connects one Rodrigo (the "last Goth," the one who lost Spain to the Moors) with another Rodrigo ("the Cid," the one who will take back so much of the ground lost by his predecessor).[25] And it is in this light that we can begin to detect a

[24]"May peasants kill you, Alfonso, — peasants, not men of worth; / from Asturias in Oviedo, — not men who are Castilians; / may they kill you with goads, — not with lances or with arrows; / with horn-handled knives, — not with gold-handled daggers; / may they come wearing sandals, — not shoes with laces; / may their cloaks be rustic, — not of fine wool or silk; / with burlap shirts, — neither from Holland nor embroidered; / may they come riding on she-asses, — neither on mules nor on horseback; / may their bits be made of rope, — not of seasoned leather. / May they kill you in the grain fields, — not in towns or villages. / May they cut out your heart — from your left side, / if you do not tell the truth — regarding whatever you may be asked: if you were involved in, or did consent to — the death of your brother."

[25]As I have argued elsewhere, this is not the only *comedia* in which Lope connects a beleaguered hero to the Cid through an echoing allusion to this ballad ("Insidious Echoes" 73-78). But this is also why Lope

number of other crucial echoes from the Cid cycle that inform the final scene of Lope's *comedia*.

The name "Solmira," it should be pointed out (even more so than "Abembúcar"), is purely an invention of Lope's imagination, since her name appears nowhere in the source material. And Lope's choice of name—echoing, as we have said, the magnificent ocular qualities of the "damsel warrior"—also establishes an echoing tie to the Cid. For, just as Rodrigo de Vivar gives his daughters, Doña *Sol* and Doña *Elvira*, in marriage to the royal houses of Aragon and Navarre, thus making it possible for the jongleuresque narrator of the *Poem of the Cid* to exclaim, "Oy los reyes d'España sos parientes son" ("today the Kings of Spain his kinsmen are") (214; my translation), Pelayo gives his sister *Sol-mira* to *Ilderigo* (the latter a coincidental echoing specter, perhaps, of both *Rodrigos*), saying "Vamos a la iglesia ansí; / Solmira, dame la mano; / que un Príncipe castellano / hoy le ha de emplear en ti" ("Let's go to the church then; / Solmira, give me your hand; / for, a Castilian Prince will marry you today") (Lope 665). This last phrase is extremely important because, by giving his sister to a *Castilian* prince, Pelayo rhetorically announces the cultural shift from Visigothic to Castilian society; for, it is the *Castilian* military aristocracy that will largely complete the *Reconquista* Pelayo initiates here. Still, this designation of Ilderigo as "Castilian" seems rather abrupt (and not just a little bit arbitrary) given the fact that only moments earlier Pelayo had referred to him as "valiente *godo* Ilderigo" ("valiant *Goth* Ilderigo") (Lope 664; my italics). But, if we take into account that this play has been obliquely singing the praises of a very Castilian *Reconquista* all along, Ilderigo's sudden metamorphosis of nationality comes as no surprise. Furthermore, his fecund marriage to Solmira—with its reverberating connection to the Cid legend—not only focuses the audience's attention on the

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stipulates here that Pelayo crowns himself with a laurel wreath using the particular verb 'ceñir' ('to gird'). Formulaic variants of the phrase "ceñirse espada" ('to gird oneself with a sword,' but also 'to be knighted') are an integral part of the Cid's identifying epithet: "¡Ya Campeador, en buen ora cinxiestes espada!" ("Campeador, you who were knighted in a good hour"); "Mio Cid Rruy Díaz, el que en buen ora cinxo espada" ("My Cid Ruy Díaz, he who was knighted in a good hour") (*Poem of the Cid* 24; my translation).

fronterizo echoes that have reverberated from the play's very beginnings, but also serves to remind them that they, themselves, are Ilderigo's cultural progeny. Indeed, as several critics recently argue, Lope wrote *The Last Goth* within the deliberate context of Spain's imperial status during the reign of the Habsburg Kings, Phillip II and Phillip III.[26]

I mentioned at the beginning of this essay that the two culminating ballads of the Rodrigan cycle are actually absent from Lope's play, and that I thought it entirely possible that the *entremeses* associated with this *comedia* just might have consisted of a performance of these missing *romances*. When we get to this final scene, however, especially if we have been attuned to the play's *fronterizo* echoes, it becomes clear that there is at least one more *romance* conspicuously absent from Lope's text:

> Paseábase el rey moro — por la cuidad de Granada
> desde la puerta de Elvira — hasta la de Vivarambla
> —*¡Ay de mi Alhama!*—
> Cartas le fueron venidas — que Alhama era ganada.
> Las cartas echó en el fuego, — y al mensajero matara.
> —*¡Ay de mi Alhama!*—
> Descabalga de una mula — y en un caballo cabalga;
> por el Zacatín arriba — subido se había al Alhambra.
> —*¡Ay de mi Alhama!*—
> Como en el Alhambra estuvo, — al mismo punto mandaba
> que se toquen sus trompetas, — sus añafiles de plata.
> —*¡Ay de mi Alhama!*—
> Y que las cajas de guerra — apriesa toquen el arma,
> porque lo oigan sus moros, — los de la vega y Granada.
> —*¡Ay de mi Alhama!*—
> Los moros, que el son oyeron — que al sangriento Marte llama,
> uno a uno y dos a dos — juntado se ha gran batalla.
> —*¡Ay de mi Alhama!*—
> Allí habló un moro viejo, — de esta manera hablara:
> —¿Para qué nos llamas, rey? — ¿Para qué es esta llamada?

[26]See Atienza; Carreño-Rodríguez; Ryjik; and Sánchez Jiménez.

—*¡Ay de mi Alhama!*—
—Habéis de saber, amigos, — una nueva desdichada:
que cristianos de braveza — ya nos han ganado Alhama.
—*¡Ay de mi Alhama!*—
Allí habló un alfaquí, — de barba crecida y cana:
—¡Bien se te emplea, buen rey, — buen rey, bien se te empleara!
—*¡Ay de mi Alhama!*—
Mataste los Bencerrajes, — que eran la flor de Granada,
cogiste los tornadizos — de Córdoba la nombrada.
—*¡Ay de mi Alhama!*—
Por eso mereces, rey, — una pena muy doblada:
que te pierdas tú y el reino, — y aquí se pierda Granada.
—*¡Ay de mi Alhama!*—
(Díaz Roig 68-69; original italics)[27]

This very familiar ballad—second only, perhaps, to "Abenámar" among all the *romances fronterizos* (and certainly well-known enough

[27]"The Moorish King was riding — through the city of Granada / from the gate of Elvira — to that of Vivarambla / 'Oh, my Alhama!' / Letters arrived — telling him that Alhama had been taken. / The letters he threw in the fire, — the messenger he killed. / 'Oh, my Alhama!' / He dismounted his mule — and mounted his steed; / up by way of the Zacatín — he rode to the Alhambra. / 'Oh, my Alhama!' / Once inside the Alhambra, — he immediately commanded / that the trumpets be sounded, — along with the silver fifes. / 'Oh, my Alhama!' / And that the drummers — quickly sound the alarm, / so that his Moors will hear it, — on the plain and in Granada. / 'Oh, my Alhama!' / The Moors, who heard the call — to bloody Mars, / one by one and two by two — joined together in the great battle. / 'Oh, my Alhama!' / There spoke an old Moor, — and this is what he said: 'Why do you call us, King? — To what end is this call to arms?' / 'Oh, my Alhama!' / 'You must know, my friends, — the dreadful news: / Brave Christians — have won from us Alhama.' / 'Oh, my Alhama!' / There spoke another wise old Moor, — long of beard and gray of hair: 'It serves you right, good King, — good King, it serves you right! / 'Oh, my Alhama!' / 'You killed the Bencerrajes, — the flower of all Granada, / you received the traitors — of Cordoba, so named.' / 'Oh, my Alhama!' / 'For this reason, you deserve, oh King, — a punishment doubly painful: / that you lose yourself and your kingdom, — and here is lost Granada.' / 'Oh, my Alhama!'"

to have been translated by Lord Byron, and to have partly inspired the title of Salman Rushdie's 1995 novel *The Moor's Last Sigh*)—sets up one final parallel in a play full of parallels by providing the thematic twin to what is arguably the best known of all the Rodrigan ballads.[28] The following is a mere segment of a much longer text:

> —*Ayer era rey de España, — hoy no lo soy de una villa*;
> *ayer villas y castillos, — hoy ninguno poseía*;
> ayer tenía criados — y gente que me servía,
> hoy no tengo una almena — que pueda decir que es mía.
> ¡*Desdichada fue la hora, — desdichado fue aquel día*
> *en que nací* y heredé — la tan grande señoría,
> pues lo había de perder — todo junto y en un día!
> *¡Oh muerte!, ¿por qué no vienes* — y llevas esta alma mía
> de aqueste cuerpo mezquino, — *pues se te agradecería*?
> (Díaz Roig 115; my italics)[29]

[28]Given the phonetic similarity between 'Alhama' (a town located in the province of Granada) and the 'Alhambra' (the Nasrid palace famously located in the city of Granada), the "¡Ay de mi Alhama!" ballad contains within it *fronterizo* echoes of its own. Thus, the allusion to the "loss" of Granada in the final line simply completes the lingering association established between the fall of Alhama in 1482 and the surrender of the Alhambra (along with Granada itself) ten years later. As María Rosa Menocal elegantly describes the scene: "The well-known expression 'the Moor's last sigh' refers to Boabdil's own grief on leaving Granada, city of the Nasrids for nearly three centuries. The little anecdote recounted over the years finds Boabdil sighing with regret on his way out of Granada, only to be chastised by his mother, who observes tartly that he should not cry like a woman for a place he would not defend like a man" (245-246)

[29]"Yesterday I was King of Spain; — today I am not even King of a village. / Yesterday, villages and castles; — today I possess not one. / Yesterday I had servants — and people who waited upon me; / today I have not one battlement — that I can call my own. / Unlucky was the hour, — unlucky was the day / in which I was born and inherited — such a great kingdom, / since I am destined to lose it — and everything else in a single day! / Oh, death! Why don't you come — and carry off this soul of mine / from this my miserable body? — For, I would certainly be grateful."

Like so many other Rodrigan *romances*, Lope consciously incorporates the discourse of this ballad into his play. In the first scene of act 2, in which Julian is clearly shown conspiring with the Moors to overthrow Rodrigo, Julian says to Muza, "Ayer mi desdicha fue" ("Yesterday was the day of my misfortune) (Lope 647), a locution that combines the two ballad lines of "Ayer era rey de España" and "¡Desdichada fue la hora, — desdichado fue aquel día" into a single lament. In the scene that follows, Rodrigo tries to placate Florinda, despite having raped her, by saying, "En todo quiero agradarte; / que ayer fui Rey en forzarte, / y hoy soy esclavo en servirte" ("I want to make you happy in everything; / because yesterday I was King in forcing myself upon you, / and today I am your slave in serving you") (Lope 649). But it is in the final scene of act 2 where Lope makes his most obvious allusion to this well-known ballad. In this final scene, Rodrigo enters the stage bloody and disarmed and says:

> ¡Oh guerra,
> *oh muerte, mis ojos cierra*!
> *ayer era Rey de España*,
> *hoy, por mi desdicha extraña,*
> *no tengo un palmo de tierra.*
> Del cielo ha sido el castigo;
> sin remedio y sin amigo,
> de polvo y sangre cuajado
> de las batallas cansado
> se sale el Rey Don Rodrigo.
> Acaba mi vida, acaba,
> como arrojado entre cieno,
> del cuerpo sepulcro y cava.
> (Lope 655; my italics).[30]

[30]"Oh war, / oh death, come close my eyes! / Yesterday I was King of Spain, / today, because of my strange misfortune, / I don't have even an inch of land. / From heaven has come this punishment; / without recourse and without friends, / caked in dirt and blood, / exhausted from the battles / King Rodrigo makes his exit. / Here ends my life; it ends as one thrown into the slime / of a sepulcher dug out for the body."

With its embedded puns that clearly echo Florinda's nickname, La Cava ("Acaba mi vida, acaba, como arrojado entre cieno, del cuerpo sepulcro y cava"), this speech is rhetorically tied to the suicidal lament Florinda delivers just prior to throwing herself off a tower.[31] It thus functions as an internal echo within Lope's *comedia*. Furthermore, because the play elides the moment of Rodrigo's death (along with the ballad dialogue associated with it), this speech represents (nearly) the final words the audience hears Rodrigo say on stage.[32] In other words, this ballad-inflected speech is as much Rodrigo's valediction as Florinda's lament is hers.[33] More importantly, because Lope's audience would have probably been anxiously awaiting this famous speech, especially since they would have already heard its first line echoed twice before in this same act, the "Ayer era Rey de España" ballad stands out as the play's last word on the "loss of Spain," even though this "last word" comes only two-thirds of the way through the play.[34] But it is precisely for this reason that the "¡Ay de mi Alhama!" ballad exists as the final *fronterizo* echo that reverberates at the very end of *The Last Goth*. Rodrigo's final speech in act 2 points backward to

[31]The letters 'b' and 'v' are essentially indistinguishable in spoken Spanish. Thus, "La Cava" and "Acaba" are pronounced as virtual homophones. Moreover, the verb 'arrojar' (which Lope embeds inside Rodrigo's series of Cava/Acaba puns) is the same verb one would associate with Florinda's act of "throwing herself" off the tower.

[32]Rodrigo has a few more scattered lines among the last twenty lines of the act, including a final six-line farewell consisting of his rumination on the cruelty of fate and the fugacity of life, but the "Ayer era Rey de España" represents his last extended speech.

[33]For more on the relationship between Florinda's lament and the Spanish ballad tradition, see Burningham, "Suicide and the Ethics of Refusal."

[34]An indication of just how well known this ballad was during the Spain of Lope de Vega can be found, again, in *Don Quixote*. After the mad knight has attacked Maese Pedro's puppet show (having mistaken the puppets for the real thing), the puppeteer laments the destruction of his puppets by citing the first three lines of the "Ayer era rey de España" ballad (2.26: 667). In other words, not only did this famous *romance* come to mind as Cervantes was writing his novel, but he also assumed that his readers would immediately understand the context of its connection to Maese Pedro's "loss" of his small kingdom.

Florinda's medieval *planctus* as she leaps to her death in 711, while at the same time pointing forward to Boabdil's early modern "last sigh" as he turns over the keys to the Alhambra to the Catholic Monarchs in 1492 and then rides off into a North African exile.

Of course, I am not suggesting here that the original production of *The Last Goth* somehow ended with a performance of "¡Ay de mi Alhama!," because to do so would be to suggest that Lope and his collaborators wanted to overtly direct the audience's attention toward these *fronterizo* echoes. As I stipulate at the outset of this essay, many of these echoes are the fortuitous product of the formulaic structure of the ballad tradition itself, and thus I do not ascribe to Lope (necessarily) a conscious attempt to draw out these echoing parallels. Still, were I to stage this *comedia* today, not only would I insert performances of the two missing Rodrigan ballads as *entremeses* between the acts, but I would also include an epilogue that consisted of a performance of "¡Ay de mi Alhama!" (perhaps delivered by the same actor who played Tarife). Because, for an early modern Spanish audience celebrating its own greatness at the height of its imperial "Golden Age," for an audience whose cognitive network of *romancero* associations has been thoroughly "primed" (Westen 84), this *fronterizo*—and imperially triumphant—"last sigh" is clearly the subtext of a play about the "loss" of Spain.

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