

CORDEL AND CANÇÃO IN TODAY'S BRAZIL*

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In the open-air markets of Northeast Brazil, folk poets still sell the stories in verse called *folhetos* or *literatura de cordel*, which came to Brazil from Portugal almost five centuries ago.¹ Until only about a hundred years ago, most cordel stories found in the Northeast originated either in Portugal or Rio de Janeiro. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, however, Northeastern poets began publishing large numbers of booklets with a distinctly regional flavor. These authors would then suspend their verses along strings for display in local marketplaces, chanting one or another story out loud in an effort to attract potential customers. Although the tales were known to rich and poor alike, the great majority of the poet's customers were always associated with subsistence agriculture. These persons, who were often illiterate, might choose a story on the basis of the poet's oral presentation or an appealing cover illustration. They would then take home their purchases to a friend or relative who would read aloud the tale for the group.

In order to appeal to the increasingly heterogeneous audience of today, authors have had to diversify their offerings. As a result, these vendors often sell broadsides in verse, known as "songs" or *canções*; thus, the *canção*, which is no newcomer to the open-air market, has become an increasingly important part of the cordel-vendor's trade.

This genre has received scant attention, in spite of growing interest in cordel literature on the part of many educated observers. The *canção*'s limited appeal to scholars is not difficult to understand. Unlike cordel stories, the most famous of which go through decades of reeditions, the *canção* tends to be of passing interest. Although a limited number of the best-known songs go through multiple printings, the majority are novelties, which sell well at first and are then quickly forgotten. Moreover, partly because of its dependence on musical accompaniment, the song is not a highly developed literary form. Finally, the *canção*'s links with the mass media are probably responsible for a certain degree of standardization. Unlike cordel stories, which tend to appeal to

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a very specific constituency, most canções are originally written for an anonymous radio public and only subsequently printed as broadsides. The face-to-face performance that has traditionally been part of the folheto experience is thus not a primary factor in the canção. Furthermore, although one or another cordel vendor may hum a few stanzas of a given song, he is far more apt to read aloud sections of a new or well-known story.

And yet, if the canção form lacks the range and complexity of the cordel story, it is still worth studying because the canção is considerably more complicated than may appear at first glance, and its special relationship to the cordel makes it of particular concern to persons interested in contemporary Brazilian culture. This paper offers a brief comparison of the cordel and canção before focusing on their distinguishing qualities. Special attention is devoted to the two most common varieties of canção—love songs and cowboy songs—contrasting both of these with the cordel story. These two types of canções appear simply to represent two different modes of composition: one lyric, the other narrative. However, the division between the two is more profound than initially appears.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Unlike the cordel story, which has roots in medieval European narrative, the canção is a new genre designed to be sung rather than read. Although incorporating a large number of elements associated with regional folk poetry, the canção derives from a number of other, non-Northeastern sources, most notably the *modinha*, a type of love song reminiscent of the eighteenth-century French vocal romance.² The canção became known in the Northeast thanks in large part to Catulo da Paixão Cearense, who, in the first part of the twentieth century, composed a number of highly popular modinhas, *trovas* and various other types of poems.³

Cordel authors have long made use of both songs and short poems written by themselves or others as filler for chapbooks lacking the requisite number of pages. (As these booklets are constructed by folding and refolding one or more large sheets of paper, most have eight, sixteen, thirty-two, or sixty-four pages.) The first great cordel author, Leandro Gomes de Barros, frequently added song-like texts to the end of his stories.⁴ Musical notations other than the customary “to be sung to the tune of” would have been not only incomprehensible, but also superfluous, because the melodies were already well known.

Today, canções are more closely associated with the mass media than they were in the past.⁵ Radio programs dedicated to regional music,

which first became popular in the 1940s, carried the *canção* to listeners throughout the Northeast. At present, the great majority of broadsides sold in open air marketplaces were written for radio broadcast. A percentage of these are then printed on single sheets by cordel publishers who may either enter into a contractual agreement with the author or else simply pirate his work.⁶ Although the great majority of songs are the work of singer-improvisers, known as *cantadores*, a significant minority are written by cordel authors.⁷ These compositions may be written to a well-known melody or else billed as "poems," a term used interchangeably with "canções" by most songwriters.⁸

CANÇÕES AND CORDEL STORIES

Canções and cordel stories are not only written by the same kind of persons, printed on the same presses, and sold by a common vendor to more or less the same public; they also reveal a number of textual similarities. Songs and stories customarily utilize the same verse forms, most of which come directly from the cantador tradition. They favor many of the same subjects (news events, love stories, social criticism) and characters (bumpkins, cowmen, prostitutes, young lovers) and both draw on a common colloquial language. Each makes use of literary tropes such as the invocation of the muses or the enumerative farewell, known as the *despedida*. Nevertheless, there are significant differences between the *canção* and the traditional cordel story; they also occur, to a lesser degree, within the *canção* genre itself.

Aside from obvious differences of length and relationship to music, the *canção* and the cordel reveal important dissimilarities in both structure and content. Chief among these is the fact that many canções are lyrical, first-person accounts. Although the cordel story may include a first-person beginning and end, the poet, unlike the *canção* persona (to whom I shall hereafter refer as the singer), shows no interest in autobiographical detail.⁹ Instead, his comments simply serve to make the message of the third-person story clearer to the reader primarily interested in information or entertainment.

Partly because of its brevity, the *canção* is less apt to develop any sort of recognizable plot. What action there is tends to be limited to two persons who often, though not always, are a male and a female of more or less equal social status. The cordel story, on the other hand, tends to present a relationship involving two persons of unequal social status whose obligations toward each other are different in kind if not degree, i.e., kings owe servants protection; servants owe kings faithful service.

Furthermore, the singer of love songs and his sweetheart constitute a universe apart from the everyday world, which is often seen as

unattractive and threatening. Unlike the cordel story, in which the two partners to the underlying asymmetrical contract inevitably function in a larger arena, the love song shows disinterest in, if not actual hostility to, the surrounding community.¹⁰

The *canção's* tendency toward extended lament is not characteristic of the cordel story, which can almost always be seen as a series of trials. Whereas "destiny" is simply another word for "bad luck" in many songs, it is a common narrative device in cordel stories. Faced with the problem of why the good man should suffer, the cordel author can blame this seeming injustice on capricious Fate.

Finally, most songs reveal no specific moral. Although one might conclude that "life is sad" or "women are fickle" from many *canções*, the song does not rely on a series of causes and effects. It is thus unlike the cordel story which sets out to demonstrate a moral proposition through the creation of an exemplary fiction.

INDIVÍDUO VERSUS PESSOA

The dissimilarities between the cordel and *canção* are in no way superficial. Even a casual glance at the differences summarized below should suggest that the song and the story are not simply two separate forms but rather two, sometimes contradictory, visions of the world. Whereas the *canção* tends to celebrate an autonomous being set apart from others by particular feelings and experiences, the cordel story is more apt to champion the person in his capacity as a member of a group. This division corresponds to a larger opposition between the *indivíduo* (individual) and the *pessoa* (person), which has been outlined in general terms by a number of social scientists and specifically adapted to the Brazilian case by Roberto da Matta.¹¹ According to Matta, the *indivíduo* is defined by his existence within a self-created social space, his recognized right to his own choices and feelings, and his insistence on making the rules of the world in which he lives. The *pessoa* stands in contrast to the *indivíduo* in his dependence on the group for his own identity, his inability to make his own choices, and his unquestioning loyalty to rules formulated by others.

<i>Song</i>	<i>Cordel Story</i>
First-person (<i>persona</i>), lyrical, extended lament which may contain autobiographical elements	Third-person narrative (protagonist); may include first-person frame, but makes few if any autobiographical references
Majority reveal underlying symmetrical contract, most	Great majority of stories reveal underlying asymmetrical contract

commonly between a man and a woman of equal or near-equal status	between persons of nonequal social status
Action limited to two persons whose personal universe is often at odds with the larger, workaday world	Action inevitably includes the entire community
No discernible plot structure; "destiny" synonymous with bad luck; no specific moral	Story can be seen as a series of trials in which Destiny is both explanation and narrative device; actions also point to specific moral

The relationship between *indivíduo* and *pessoa* is, of course, essentially dialectical in nature. Furthermore, the two concepts may be of more or less equal weight. While Matta notes that most societies tend to favor one or the other idea, he suggests that the two notions actually operate simultaneously within most Mediterranean cultures. In the case of Brazil, says the author, "everything suggests that we are dealing with a situation in which the individual functions as a modern idea superimposed on a powerful system of personalized relationships."¹²

Matta's study has numerous implications for this discussion of the *canção* and *cordel* story as it is difficult not to see new developments within these two forms, as well as shifts in the interplay between them, as indicators, no matter how indirect, of larger transformations in their authors' and buyers' way of life. These persons' perceptions of the song and story will be dealt with below. However, it is worth emphasizing here that the relationship between *indivíduo* and *pessoa* has long been complementary. Because of this continuing interplay between the *canção* and the *cordel* it would be a mistake to see the two forms as totally antagonistic, particularly since both are currently responding to many of the same influences. Furthermore, neither genre is monolithic: although love songs and cowboy songs are both examples of the *canção* form, the two reveal dissimilarities reminiscent of the larger differences between the *canção* and the *cordel* genre.

LOVE SONGS AND COWBOY SONGS

Unlike the *cordel* story, *canções* deal with a limited number of subjects. In fact, the great majority of songs fit one of a half-dozen thematic categories: love, cowboy themes, the necessity of leaving the Northeast for São Paulo, social criticism, current events, and autobiography. Although the song's purposely ephemeral nature makes quantitative analysis difficult, interviews with song writers as well as an examination

of representative samples suggest that love songs and cowboy songs are by far the most common types of canções. Of 197 texts that I collected in Recife's São José Market during the first six months of 1978, for instance, there were 79 love songs, 63 cowboy songs, 15 songs of social criticism, 13 songs about current events, 13 songs about São Paulo, and 6 autobiographies. Only 8 of the 197 texts did not fit any of these categories.¹³

In addition, songs about subjects other than love or cowmen can be subdivided into two categories: compositions dealing with personal feelings and relationships (songs about family members, São Paulo, and autobiographical themes), and songs that attempt to tell a story with a recognizable moral (songs devoted to social criticism and current events). As one might suspect, the first group is closely related to the love song, whereas the second reveals numerous similarities to the cowboy song. Thus, although only the two most common categories of canções will be discussed here, most of the following comments could apply to other representatives of the general group.

Song writers themselves typically distinguish between love songs and songs about cowboys. "Love songs," explains cantador and sometime cordel author João Alexandre Sobrinho, "make one think about something that one has lived. They do not necessarily have to be about a man's feelings for a particular woman. Instead, they can draw on the singer's love for the place where he was born or the hardships which he has managed to overcome. Cowboy songs are different because they are inventions. To write one, the poet must first imagine that he himself is a cowman and then tell a story which has a beginning, a middle, and an end."¹⁴ In looking further at the similarities and differences of love song and cowboy song, it is useful to discuss some of the general differences already mentioned between the canção and the cordel: lyric versus narrative, underlying contract, larger context, and the role of destiny.

Lyrical versus Narrative Modes

Almost every love song is a first-person lament. Although the lament may come in response to a particular event, for example the return of love letters, the fact is less important than the feelings that it generates. The lament is, in more specific terms, a reaction either to impersonal forces that have separated the singer from the object of his affections or to the loved one's capricious rejection of her faithful admirer. Only in rare cases does the singer (persona) acknowledge any responsibility for his own unhappy state.¹⁵ The overriding theme of the love song is indisputably *saudade*, a characteristically Portuguese term that is usually translated as "nostalgia" or "longing." In love songs, this emotion fo-

cuses on a particular individual. As a result, the singer experiences an acute sense of anguish and loss that frequently leads him to idealize a golden past or shining future that was, or will be, happier in all respects than the present. Although the singer never fails to suffer in the love song, his suffering is necessarily proof of his love. Thus, he customarily flaunts his anguish, conspicuously shedding tears of either grief or rage at their separation or her deceit:

<p>Tu não sabes meu Benzinho o quanto tenho sofrido desde que você partiu a minha vida tem sido chorando por tua Volta mas é um tempo perdido.</p>	<p>You don't know, my love just how much I have suffered. Since you left, my life has been an unbroken crying for your return but all in vain.</p>
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João Alexandre Sobrinho¹⁶
"Carta de Amor" [Love letter]

Compositions about cowmen are considerably more varied than those about love. Thus, while the protagonist may bid a sorrowful farewell to the ranch on which he has worked all his life, he may also celebrate the pleasures of life on the range, or describe a particular round-up (*vaquejada*) in which he has participated.¹⁷ Although a small number of cowboy songs are, like love songs, first-person monologues, the majority are third-person accounts with some kind of plot. The fact that something happens in a large number of cowboy songs does not, however, mean that they eschew the lament. This longing, to be sure, tends to be directed at an entire way of life rather than toward any one individual, as often the protagonist finds himself forced to retire from a life of adventure on account of advancing age, natural disaster (a drought or cattle plague), or the actions of an ungrateful boss.

Given the diminishing role of the historical cowman (*vaqueiro*) in the Northeast today, the sense of decline, if not imminent disaster, that characterizes a number of cowboy songs is not surprising.¹⁸ In some canções, such as "A Morte do Vaqueiro Genival na Fazenda Laranjeira" [The death of the cowman Genival on the Orange Tree Ranch], by José Luiz, the protagonist actually dies. In other cases, however, he merely mourns the passing of his way of life:

<p>Fui um vaqueiro afamado mas estou velho e cansado e a minha luta de gado vou entregar ao patrão sem fugir do evangelho porque o vaqueiro velho não tem mais disposição.</p>	<p>I was a celebrated cowman but I am now old and tired and I am going to turn over my struggle with the cattle to my boss without losing my faith because the old cowman can no longer do the job.</p>
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Panajeiro

“Vaqueiro Desprezado” [Rejected cowhand]

However, not every cowboy song is sorrowful. Some are decidedly cheerful catalogs of the joys of life on the range. Others speak glowingly of the present and of the benefits of progress. Thus, in a song about the Santa Rita Ranch (“Fazenda Santa Rita de São Bento do Una”), the anonymous singer describes the improvements made possible by technology, with no hint of nostalgia for the past:

Santa Rita é reformada
hoje bem iluminada
casa de abelhas queimada
tem radio e televisão.

Santa Rita has been transformed
and is today well lighted.
The bees have been smoked out
and there is radio and television.

Muito capim no cercado
souto de silo plantado
foi quebrado o cadeado
que marcava a izolação.

Plenty of grass in the pasture,
a whole forest of grain silos,
the lock which marked the ranch’s
isolation has been broken.

Going yet another step further, the author of “O Vaqueiro e o Motorista” [The cowman and the cab driver], Louro Branco, compares the two figures with clear good humor. It should be obvious from the following stanza that cowboy songs may actually contain witty observations of the changes affecting an older way of life:

O carro é do motorista
o cavalo é do vaqueiro
o motorista ama a filha
do bancário e engenheiro
e vaqueiro sempre sofre
por filha de fazendeiro.

The car belongs to the cab driver,
the horse belongs to the cowman.
The cab driver loves the daughter
of the bank teller and the engineer
while the cowman always yearns for
the rancher’s daughter.

Underlying Contract

The singer of love songs insists that he suffers more than anyone else in the world. This suffering is designed not only to impress his sweetheart but also to distinguish himself from the rest of mankind. Because his love for a particular woman is so fundamental to his own identity, it is imperative that this passion surpass all others, even that which the woman feels for him:

Nas costas deste retrato
vai o meu novo endereço
tu dizes a mim que padeces
confirmo mas reconheço

My new address is on the back
of my photograph.
You tell me that you are suffering
and I believe you, but still know

que não padeces um quarto that you could not be feeling a quarter
da solidão que pedaço. of the loneliness that I feel.

Pedro Bandeira

"Resposta à Última Carta" [Reply to your last letter]

Nevertheless, although the singer is content to exceed his sweetheart in degree of passion, it is imperative that she reciprocate his feelings in kind. Thus, love itself becomes not only a measurable but an expendable quantity which may be won, lost, or frittered away.¹⁹

Virtually all love songs rely on an underlying contract involving a man and a woman of more or less equal social status who are committed to an emotional exchange. Thus in the song "Canção Amor Fiel" [Song of faithful love], singer José Bonifácio invokes divine recognition of the couple's two-way obligation:

Peço a Deus meu Jesus me der sorte	I ask God that Jesus give me
que você também seja fiel	the good fortune
que fiel eu serei toda vida	that you remain faithful to me
e espero o mesmo papel.	because I will be faithful to you
	my whole life long
	and expect the same of you.

This concern, if not obsession, with reciprocity can be found as well within the literatura de cordel. In the love song, however, the two individuals live exclusively for each other:

Eu nasci para você	I was born for you
e você nasceu para mim	just as you were born for me.
seus olhos são vagalumes	Your eyes are fireflies
que brilham no meu jardim	which flash in my garden.
você me quer eu lhe quero	You love me, I love you
a nossa amizade é sem fim.	and our love is boundless.

Pedro Bandeira

"Nossa História, Nosso Amor" [Our story, our love]

This exclusivity guarantees the gravity of any breach of contract between the two lovers. In the majority of instances, this response is limited to sad or angry words. On occasion, however, the singer goes beyond mere statements of hurt or anger:²⁰

Eu mato quem não me ama	I will kill the person who doesn't
mato quem não me quer bem	love me.
escrevo carta pra ela	I will kill whoever doesn't feel
e cartas para mim não vem	for me
eu mato ela e me mato	I write letters to her

que é o jeito que tem
pois ela não quer ser minha
não vai ser mais de ninguém.

but no letters arrive for me.
I will kill her and then kill myself
because that is the only solution.
Since she doesn't want to be mine
then she isn't going to be anyone's.

José Barrinha

'Cartinha Mineira' [Note from Minas]

The cowboy song, like the love song, also tends to rely on a two-person contract. This agreement, however, is more likely to be between two males of unequal social status—the cowboy and his rancher boss. Although there are cowboy love songs in which the cowman seeks the rancher's daughter in marriage, this woman is inevitably of higher social status. Most cowboy songs, like cordel stories, reveal an underlying asymmetrical contract. Nevertheless, there is considerable variation in the way in which this contract is played out. Unlike the singer in love songs, who is almost never at fault, the cowman may be either the injured party or the villain.

In the most frequent motif, the cowman-singer has been wronged by his superior. The *canção* thus becomes a specific protest, not a general lament, aimed at shaming the rancher into correcting his errant ways:

Não presto mais para o mato
trabalhei muito barato
meu patrão não seja ingrato
queira fazer-me um pedido
não me mande pra cidade
me deixe aqui por bondade
na sua propriedade
pelo senhor protegido.

I am no longer any good for the
sagebrush.
I have worked for very little money
so, boss, don't be ungrateful.
Hear my plea and don't
pack me off to the city.
Be kind and let me stay here
on your property
under your protection.

Panajeiro

'Vaqueiro Desprezado' [Rejected cowhand]

In this particular song, the cowman ends by simply appealing to other authority figures, such as the local sheriff and an engineer, to join with him in persuading the rancher to respect his obligations. Other songs end less ambiguously with the rancher's sudden repentance:

O patrão arrependido
de ter posto para fora
seu vaqueiro bom de gado
que tanto serviu outrora

The rancher, now sorry
about having thrown off his ranch
the faithful cowboy
who had served him so well in the past,

mandou logo um portador sent a messenger after him
 chamá-lo na mesma hora. at that very moment.

Francisco Pedra

"A Volta do Vaqueiro" [The cowman's return]

Still other songs may be seen as more general responses to the questions raised by the asymmetrical contract. In "Aniversário do Vaqueiro" [The cowboy's birthday], by Luiz Amorim, for instance, the rancher plans a birthday party for his trusty helpmate:²¹

Cinqüenta e seis fazendeiros	Fifty-six other ranchers
foram pra aquele cenário	attended on that occasion,
cada um tinha no peito	each wearing a lettered shield
um grande escudo lendário	on his chest which read:
escrito: Viva o vaqueiro	"Long live the cowman
no dia do aniversário.	today on his birthday."

In those instances in which the rancher repents of his bad behavior toward the cowman, everything ends happily, just as it would in a cordel story. Nevertheless, in those cases in which the boss persists in ignoring his responsibilities to his loyal cowman, he is severely punished by "the hand of nature":

No decorrer de seis meses	In the course of six months,
morreram trezentas reses	three hundred cattle died.
fugiram todos freguêses	All the rancher's customers fled
o armazém pegou fogo	and the warehouse caught fire.
morreu seu burro baixeiro	His faithful saddle mule died
e o resto do dinheiro	and the rancher's drunkard son
o seu filho cachaceiro	lost the rest of his money
rasgou na mesa do jogo.	on the playing table.

Pedro Bandeira

"Fazendeiro Castigado" [A rancher's punishment]

It is not always the rancher who is at fault in cowboy songs. Considerably less frequently, it is the cowman himself who is censured. Thus in "Vaqueiro Desastrado" [Disastrous cowman], Pedro Bandeira, the author of the preceding song, criticizing the hard-hearted rancher, now takes the boss' part. Berating the kind of irresponsible cowman who can think of nothing other than "love affairs, women, guns and knives," he now expresses his sympathy for the individual's unlucky employer:

A cortadeira sem tela	The spurs in disrepair,
os arreios velhos e quebrado	the harness old and broken,
é tudo água abaixo	Everything is on the road to ruin—

fazenda, carro e roçado
não ha patrão que suporte
um Vaqueiro Desastrado.

ranch, cart and fields.
There is no rancher who can tolerate
this kind of disastrous cowman.

And yet, regardless of whether it is the cowman or the rancher who is held up for blame in the *canção*, the relationship underlying the song remains the same. In either case, the cowman owes the rancher faithful service while the rancher remains obligated to protect the cowboy in both sickness and health. In the cowboy song, as in the *cordel* story, should either party fail to live up to his end of the bargain, punishment of some sort is bound to ensue.

The Larger Context

Personal relationships are clearly the only things that make life worth living in love songs. In fact, the great majority of these *canções* suggest an opposition between the world of dreams—inhabited solely by the couple—and the larger, workaday world which threatens their existence. It is therefore not surprising to find the singer celebrating visions which have little to do with the realities of a humdrum life:

Sonhei dormindo em teus braços
nuns campos desconhecidos
no sonho as aves cantavam
nos cajueiros floridos
e o vento soprava as pontas
dos teus cabelos compridos.

Sonhei com você num lago
cercado de borboletas
seus olhos brilhavam mais
do que a luz dos planetas
que passam focalizando
os ramos das violetas.

I dreamt, asleep in your arms,
in some unknown fields.

In my dream, the birds sang
in the flowering cashew trees
and the wind gently lifted
the ends of your long hair.

I dreamt of you in a lake
surrounded by butterflies,
your eyes shone more brightly
than the light of the planets
which in passing illumine
branches of violets.

Anonymous

“Sonho de Amor” [Dream of love]

The singer’s sweetheart, who dominates and largely defines a small paradise full of singing birds and flowering fruit trees, is often described as a saint or angel. She is not, however, the embodiment of traditional, largely religious values found in *cordel* love stories, but an often explicitly sexual presence simply not found in such highly idealized tales of romance. Thus, despite the fact that the singer may begin by elevating the object of his affections, she seldom remains at arm’s length:

Quando vejo os teus cabelos
em teus ombros no luar,
é mesmo que está vendo
uma santa no altar,
um anjo no Paraíso
ou a sereia no mar.

Estes teus braços me prendem
o teu calor me esquenta
o teu sorriso me alegra
o teu colo me acalenta
o teu olhar me domina
o teu beijo me alimenta.

Guriatã do Norte

"Canção Teu Amor é Meu Viver [Song, your love is my life]

When I see your hair
on your shoulders in the moonlight,
it is just like seeing
a saint upon the altar,
an angel in paradise
or a mermaid among the waves.

Your arms hold me tight,
your own warmth warms me,
your smile makes me happy,
your bosom comforts me,
your eyes dominate me,
and your kiss nourishes me.

Then too, unlike the *cordel*, in which "every love story is the story of a marriage, and if it isn't, then it is some other kind of story," the love song reveals little concern for marriage and the standing within the community that this union implies.²² Instead, the singer simply longs to hold his love in an atemporal embrace.

This lack of definite, more broadly social goals is uncharacteristic of most cowboy songs which, like *cordel* stories, tend to be very concerned with the practical details of everyday life. In cowboy songs, as in the *literatura de cordel*, it is work, not individual feeling, that usually makes the protagonist's life worth living. Thus, a cowboy's actions are performed against a larger backdrop which includes concrete details such as horses, cattle, or an annual round-up.

In songs in which the cowboy falls in love with the rancher's daughter, he proceeds to prove himself to his sweetheart's father. In this case, both hero and heroine are embodiments of time-honored virtues such as courage, loyalty, and candor:

O vaqueiro por ser bom
e fiel o qual Dorgival
e o patrão vendo nele
coragem, força e moral
lhe ofertou Carmelita
que prêmio e belo casal.

The cowman, Dorgival,
because he was good and loyal,
was rewarded by the rancher
who recognized his courage,
strength and moral energy
and thus gave him Carmelita.
What a reward and what a lovely couple!

Anonymous

"Carmelita e o Vaqueiro" [Carmelita and the cowman]

As in cordel stories, the man who proves his mettle through faithful service lives not only happily, but comfortably, assured of his niche within the social hierarchy:

O vaqueiro por ser novo
disposto e ter muita dita
foi herdeiro da fazenda
casou-se com Carmelita
a filha do fazendeiro
moça educada e bonita.

The cowman inherited the ranch
because he was young and skilled
and because Fortune smiled on him.
He married Carmelita,
the rancher's daughter,
a beautiful and educated woman.

The Role of Destiny

The love song creates a division between the world of personal pleasures and a larger world in which the singer is often separated from the object of his affections through material necessity. Usually powerless against these larger forces, which threaten to disrupt his emotional haven, the singer is apt to blame a loosely-defined "destiny" for his unhappiness:

Não chore minha querida
que choro é ilusão
cada vez que você chora
aumenta a minha aflição
só o destino é culpado
da nossa separação.

Don't cry, my love,
because crying is an illusion.
Each time that you cry
my suffering increases.
Destiny alone is responsible
for our separation.

Severino José da Silva

"Meu Destino" [My unhappy fate]

Destiny, it should be clear, does not have the same connotations in the love song as it does in the literatura de cordel. In cordel stories, Destiny provides a near-mystical rationale for the twists and turns of human existence, a much-needed answer to the question of why the just men should suffer while the evil-hearted apparently go undeterred. In love songs, however, destiny can no longer be translated with a capital "D." More or less synonymous with bad luck, *destino* inspires irritation instead of humble resignation in the singer:

O destino é muito ingrato
e sempre chega na hora
com a dor da separação
até o coração chora
e às vezes separa o homem
da mulher que mais adora.

Destiny is very ungrateful
and always arrives too soon.
The heart itself weeps
with the pain of separation
and sometimes destiny separates a man
from the woman whom he most loves.

José Costa Leite

"Chorando e Pensando Nela" [Crying and thinking of her]

In addition, love songs have little concern for destiny as a narrative device. Because nothing *has* to happen in the song, destiny is less the source of needed opportunities to demonstrate courage than a catchword for everything that goes wrong:

O destino nos separa nem eu nem voce declara nossa amizade a ninguém só Deus é quem está sabendo nem eu nem você dizendo nosso amor viverá bem.	Destiny separates us, and neither you nor I say anything about our love to anyone so that it is only God who knows, and not you nor I who says our love will live.
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Raimundo Alves

“Um Destino entre Nós Dois” [The fate that keeps us apart]

Although cowboy songs do not necessarily present a series of trials, they are more apt to present a more cordel-like view of destiny as a test of character.²⁴ Underlying this concept, indirectly, is a broader religious vision of suffering as a sort of divine leveler: thus in “Martírio do Fazendeiro” [The rancher’s suffering], Pedro Bandeira takes care to point out all men’s uncertain fate in the face of larger, natural forces:

Primeiro é bom que eu avise que quando há uma crise não vejo quem indenize prejuízo de ninguém chora toda natureza lamenta toda pobreza o homem que tem riqueza sente desgosto também.	First, it is well that I warn you that when there is a crisis no one makes good on anyone else’s losses. All nature weeps, all poor people lament, and the rich man too feels similar distress.
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This vision of destiny coincides with the cowboy song’s tendency to conclude, like a cordel story, with a moral. Sometimes this message is simply tacked onto a rambling account of the joys of an adventurous life. On other occasions, it is a natural extension of the actions catalogued in the song. Thus, “The Rancher’s Suffering” ends with a message aimed not only at those who ride the range but also at a more generalized audience:

Não deve ser orgulhoso nem o poeta saudoso nem o homem poderoso morando em qualquer lugar seja no praça ou na serra da serra baixa pra terra na mesma terra se enterra para nunca mais voltar.	No one should be arrogant, neither the nostalgic poet nor the powerful man who lives in either city or countryside, because everyone ends up in the same earth, never more to return.
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THE CANÇÃO IN THE EYES OF CORDEL AUTHORS AND BUYERS

This brief, contrastive description of the love song and the cowboy song suggests the same kinds of tensions that surface in any comparison between the *canção* and the *cordel* story. Although these dissimilarities occur on a less regular basis within the *canção* genre, there is no question that we are dealing with the same kind of split between *indivíduo* and *pessoa*. The fact that these divisions occur within the *canção* suggests that the form is more complex than first appears. Even more important, the existence of noticeable rifts within the *canção* proper emphasizes the pitfalls inherent in equating differences between the *canção* and the *cordel* story to mere dissimilarities in literary type (short versus long, lyric versus narrative, musical versus literary, etc.). The comments of both *cordel* authors and their customers further support the contention that the differences between *canção* and *cordel* story are at least partially reflections of two largely complementary, but sometimes contradictory, views of the world and the individual's place within it.

Although virtually every *cordel* author has tried his hand at songwriting, only two or three compose songs on any regular basis. Moreover, while *cordel* authors are somewhat more likely to write cowboy songs than love songs, most of these individuals display limited enthusiasm for the *canção* in general.²⁵ It is possible, of course, to attribute the *cordel* author's coolness toward the *canção* to his lack of familiarity with the form. After all, songs demand some ability to deal with music as well as some experience with lyric, as opposed to narrative, composition. Because the *cordel* author is usually not a musician and because he is accustomed to longer, third-person accounts, a certain discomfort on his part would not be unusual.

This explanation, however, is partial at best. For one thing, it seriously underestimates the creative abilities of *cordel* writers, many of whom are capable of imitating a wide array of styles. For another, it overemphasizes the difficulties of dealing with music. Not only are a number of *cordel* authors amateur *cantadores*, but the *canção* itself may be written today, as in the past, to an already existing tune.²⁶ This evidence leads one to suspect the reason that *cordel* authors do not write a greater number of *canções* may be less a lack of ability than lack of interest on their part. "Não sei," says one *cordel* author in response to the question of why he does not write more songs, "não me nascem" ("I don't know; the songs just don't come to me of themselves [literally, "aren't born to me"]).²⁷

Cordel authors' objections to the *canção* tend to stress two major points. There is, first of all, a feeling that the *canção* is of inferior craftsmanship. There is also the suggestion that the *canção* is uninteresting, if not frivolous. "It doesn't teach anyone anything," one poet complains.²⁸

The ability to translate an idea into words has always been a source of pride among cordel authors. In the beginning of the century, these writers enjoyed considerable prestige because of their ability to read and to express themselves in writing. Although literacy itself is no longer the open-sesame it once was, members of the poet's public still admire his imaginative powers. "The poet is not like the carpenter," cordel author Olegário Fernandes explains, "because not everyone has the gift of inspiration. After that initial moment, the poet has to break his head to get the story down on paper and then published, but it is that flash of inspiration that makes the poet's work different from anyone else's."²⁹

Although many cordel authors have little or no formal education, a "striving for perfection" is not uncommon among them. Fame is considerably more important than fortune to the majority of these individuals, who take obvious pride in a best-selling story. "Tomorrow the poet's name may be known far and wide for a particularly beautiful stanza," says Manuel d'Almeida Filho, "so it is important to take one's time and not just scribble down any old thing."³⁰

Given this concern with craftsmanship, it would be a mistake to underestimate the gravity of cordel authors' complaints that the canção is "badly made." Although the poet himself may write songs, he is apt to denounce the canção form for flaws such as frequent repetitions, broken rhymes and conceptual flaws ("How could anyone cry a mountain of tears? Absolutely ridiculous!").³¹ José Souza de Campos insists that songwriters do not share the cordel author's concern for the finished product, but are "all half asleep when they write." According to the poet: "There are many great stories written in the past that people still remember today. Tales like *The Sorcerer Bull* or *The Mysterious Peacock* will never fall out of favor. But every canção is just like the next one and their writers are not true poets because they show no care, but just keep turning out one song after another."³²

The cordel author's attitude toward his work reflects not only a highly developed sense of artistry but a feeling of vocation. "The gift of poetry," says one of the better-known cordel writers, Manuel Camilo dos Santos, "is the gift of pleasing and instructing others, of giving form to the abstract. Writing a story means taking hold of something that did not exist and bringing it into being; it is concretizing an idea. The poet cheers, teaches, and creates, and it is for this reason that he is greater than the cantador. The wind does not carry off what he says and his work remains like a light in the darkness for all to see."³³ Camilo's point is reiterated in a somewhat more pragmatic vein by Antônio da Mulatinha, a poet who presently earns his living as a radio performer, song writer, and cordel author. Although he claims to sell twice as many songs as stories, he prefers the cordel type because "songs can be writ-

ten in a moment and require no thought. Stories take much longer, and you have to work much harder, but when you're through, you have something you can be proud of, and everybody says so."³⁴

Cordel authors' objections that the song is badly made are related to their complaints about its failure to teach. Clearly, both objections have a direct bearing on the poet's conception of his own role within the larger community. Although they do not use terms like "indivíduo" and "pessoa," authors fully recognize the fact that cordel heroes are different from the individuals who people the love song. "Look," one author says, "the *canção* is full of people whom you might meet in the middle of the street, and what's the interest? Everyone wants to be like the brave young hero in the cordel story, but no one wants to be a *Zé Ninguém* [Joe Nobody] who can only bellyache because his sweetheart left him."³⁵

Cordel authors also react sharply to the song's willingness to use autobiographical elements. Although a small number of cordel autobiographies have appeared within the last few years, these are inevitably vanity press efforts in which the author does not expect to break even.³⁶ The idea of recording one's own emotions continues to shock many poets. "Write about myself?" demands Olegário Fernandes. "No, the poet who depends on his poetry for a living isn't going to write for himself. He has to see what his public wants in order to write that way. . . . Poetry is not what the poet is feeling; it has to do with what the buyer wants to hear. It has to be full of jokes, fights, moral examples. The reader doesn't want to know about the poet's personal sufferings. Why should he? Hasn't he suffered too?"³⁷

As this quote suggests, the single biggest problem that most cordel authors have with *canções* is not their lyric or musical nature but their lack of an underlying message. The cordel story presents a series of trials which lead up to a climax in which good is rewarded and evil punished. The lack of such a frame, with its profound implications for social conduct, troubles the poet, who sees himself as, among other things, a counselor. Although the cordel author seeks to entertain and inform his reader, he also strives to bolster values accepted by the community at large. It is therefore not surprising that one cordel poet writes songs for the money but really does not like them, "because they teach you nothing and are really very silly. The cordel story helps people by showing them how they ought to act, but the song is about a young man whose heart is broken and that's all there is to that. Or it is about a cowman who sings to his cattle. Nothing happens. No one wins and no one loses."³⁸

The negative tenor of some of these comments prompts one to ask why the cordel author bothers to stock songs at all. The answer to this question is really twofold. On the one hand, there is economic

necessity: rising costs for publication and for itinerant travel, and decreased demand due to changes in the traditional market system, competition from the mass media, and changing tastes within the poet's traditional public. This financial pressure has led cordel vendors to supplement their usual offerings not only with canções but often calendars and almanacs, secondhand paperbacks, samba lyrics transcribed from records, school supplies, herbal medicines, and sundries such as socks and handkerchiefs.³⁹ On the other hand, as already suggested, the popular poet always seeks to give his customer what he and not the poet wants, as a matter of professional pride. "The best poet," one author says succinctly, "is the one who knows what the people want before they themselves do."⁴⁰ Because a significant number of the vendor's customers like canções, the vendor characteristically seeks to satisfy their desires.

Buyers themselves reveal mixed reactions to the canção. Although further quantitative research would be needed, on-site observation suggests that a liking for songs and enjoyment of cordel stories are not mutually exclusive. Nevertheless, just as not all cordel buyers like songs, so all song buyers do not necessarily show an interest in cordel stories. In the Recife market, for instance, an estimated two-thirds of all song buyers also purchase cordel stories, while perhaps a fifth of all cordel customers also buy at least a small number of songs.⁴¹

People who like songs generally find them appealingly "modern," a judgment fully in accord with the previous comments about the individuo. According to one twenty-three-year-old coffee vendor in the city of Juazeiro do Norte, "songs are more in line with what people like and how they think today." This individual finds cordel stories both "too long" and "too expensive." He would rather "buy something which I have heard on the radio because I know that it is good."⁴²

The great majority of song buyers are under the age of thirty. The fact that these individuals often make a distinction between themselves and an older, supposedly more credulous, generation further bolsters the argument that the canção and cordel story present two quite separate perceptions of the world. Thus a twenty-eight-year-old truck driver from Recife notes that "those old cordel stories were written for people who believed in kings and witches, and me, I don't believe in anything like that."

Time and again, song buyers use the word *matuto* ("hillbilly," "bumpkin," "yokel") in reference to the literatura de cordel.⁴³ Their comments, though not necessarily derogatory, stress their conception of themselves as different from their parents and as somehow more worldly. "I still like those lovely old stories," says a twenty-year-old waiter in the market town of Caruaru: "but they were written for matutos and I guess that there are hardly any matutos left here in Brazil

anymore. Me, I grew up in the countryside and when I was a kid I could recite at least a half-dozen of those stories from beginning to end. . . . But today those days are gone and no one reads those stories except on Sunday when there's nothing to watch on TV."

In the words of one on-the-spot (*lambe-lambe*) photographer (age 47) in the Recife market, cordel stories "were written at a time when people believed in things in which they have lost faith."⁴⁴ According to him, the world "was simpler in the past but today things are much different and the old beliefs have fallen by the way." When pressed as to what specifically has changed, this individual cites sexual mores ("You wouldn't believe what eleven-year-old girls know today!"), and the faith that all will turn out well "if you just keep praying."

Some buyers favor the *canção* not only because it seems more up to date but because it may recount experiences with which they themselves can identify. "I like songs," says a nineteen-year-old truck driver in Campina Grande, "because my brother went off to São Paulo and I know that he must have felt just like that song, "Despedida Triste" [Sad farewell]. It is very hard to leave your family and all your friends behind, and so every time I hear that song, I think of him."

Still other respondents find that the *canção* fits into their lives better than the cordel story. Thus a sixteen-year-old high school girl in Juazeiro do Norte explains that she actually likes stories better than songs but that her friends "think that [the cordel heroes] John Cricket and the Princess of the Isle of Diamonds are silly, and since those stories are only good when they are read aloud in a group, I hardly ever buy them." Another young buyer in Juazeiro do Norte, a twenty-year-old hotel worker, expresses a similar sentiment when he asserts that he would rather buy a love song than a story "because I don't know anything about those things that happened a long time ago, and besides, songs are easier to memorize and to sing with your friends."

Not everyone, however, prefers the *canção* to the cordel story. Even those buyers who purchase both songs and stories frequently emphasize the latter's perennial quality. "I must have bought twenty copies of the story of *The Mysterious Peacock*," an eighty-two-year-old woman in the small town of Bezerros says. "A song, no. I'll buy one or two every so often, but I never buy the same song twice; it would be a waste of money." The woman's thirteen-year-old granddaughter makes a similar point when she claims that, while she likes songs, "they are still not like those old stories that go back to the beginning of the world, or at least a hundred years."

Customers in the open-air market may echo cordel authors in affirming that the cordel is more serious than the *canção*. "Cordel stories tell about things that really happened long ago," a thirty-one-year-old house painter in the Recife market insists. "That is, the poet may exag-

gerate here and there for the sake of rhyme but he always builds on something real." Insisting that the story is more important than the song "because it tells us many true things," this individual comes near to the concept of the *peessoa* when he points out that the story "always tells about something that happens to more than one person."

A number of persons prefer the story to the song because its characters strike them as either more appealing or more accessible. Buyers may find the valiant hero not only more exciting but somehow closer, despite his fictional nature, to their own thoughts and feelings. "I don't know how to explain this," an eighteen-year-old carpenter in Recife says, "but the people in cordel stories are somehow easier to understand." Like cordel authors, many buyers express a certain lack of enthusiasm for the song's principal actors. Thus a twenty-three-year-old buyer in Campina Grande explains that the trouble with songs "is that they are all the same. In cordel stories you know that the hero will marry the rancher's daughter but you don't know how he will do it until you get to the very end."

In general then, most buyers appear aware of many of the differences between songs and cordel stories. Regardless of whether they like both forms, or favor one over the other, the great majority are capable of articulating the differences presented here in more abstract terms. The comments of one seventy-six-year-old farmer from Crato, Ceará, sum up the present situation nicely:

Those old authors were very great and the stories which they wrote will last forever. But times change and today we have the radio. . . . Do I like songs better than stories? No, I didn't say that! I still have a pile of stories lying in a drawer. I haven't read them in a long time because my eyesight is getting bad but I get angry with my wife when she says that I ought to throw them away. Throw them away indeed! 'They are poetry!' I tell her. . . . Are songs poetry? Well, yes, I guess so. But not in the same way.

Finally, although I have sought to make the *indivíduo-peessoa* split within *canções* and cordel stories more obvious through the use of comments by actual authors and buyers, it is worth re-emphasizing that the *canção* and cordel genres are not necessarily diametrically opposed. On the contrary, as already suggested, throughout their history the two have served complementary functions. Thus, even though the radio has undoubtedly given the *canção* a boost in popularity, it does not follow that the cordel is going to disappear. Rather, it is far more likely that internal change will continue along with interchanges between the two forms. There is no doubt, for instance, that the cordel story in general is becoming shorter and more open to secular themes and influences. It is equally true, however, that many *canções* rework time-honored themes and values.

CONCLUSION

The preceding discussion should suggest any number of future research directions. The larger questions that scholars must address concern the relationship of folk and popular art forms not only to each other but to larger transformations within their immediate social context. In order to deal effectively with these problems, further textual studies are needed, both of evolution within individual genres and of shifts in the interplay between two or more forms.

In the future it will be interesting to see if any category of canções shows a sudden increase or decline. Will cowboy songs continue to portray a series of asymmetrical relationships or will they gradually shift their focus to persons of more equal social status? Will cordel stories continue to grow progressively shorter while songs grow longer, thereby blurring the line of demarcation between the two? Will cordel authors continue to look somewhat askance at songs or will they begin to turn out growing numbers of canções? And would such growing numbers reflect increasingly difficult economic conditions or more profound changes within these authors' visions of themselves? Finally, will many buyers continue to purchase both songs and stories or will increasingly marked divisions emerge between those who favor one type and those who prefer the other? What role will the mass media play in any such polarization? More attention must also be devoted to contextual problems. How can one, for instance, characterize canção and cordel buyers in more objective terms? Who buys what, from whom, under what conditions, and what relationship does this purchase bear to larger behavioral patterns?

Although of limited artistic interest to the educated observer, the canção is nevertheless an excellent example of the value of a minor literary form in identifying larger trends and problems. It is particularly rewarding as an oblique, and for that reason more valuable, reflection of popular culture in present-day Brazil.

NOTES

1. Although many scholars refer to Iberian stories in verse as *literatura de cordel*, I have followed a number of Brazilian writers in my use of "the" before the noun. This is because I am referring to the cordel tradition rather than the actual pamphlets.

There is an extensive bibliography on the Brazilian pamphlet literature. For a general introduction, see Átila de Almeida and José Alves Sobrinho, *Dicionário Bio-Bibliográfico de Repentistas e Poetas de Bancada*, 2 vols. (João Pessoa/Campina Grande: Editora Universitária/Centro de Ciências e Tecnologia, 1978); Sebastião Nunes Batista, *Antologia da Literatura de Cordel* (Natal: Fundação José Augusto, 1977); Luís da Câmara Cascudo, *Vaqueiros e Cantadores* (Porto Alegre: Editorial Globo, 1939); Mark J. Curran, *Literatura de Cordel* (Recife: Universidade Federal de Pernambuco, 1973); Manuel Florentino Duarte et al., *Literatura de Cordel: Antologia*, 2 vols. (São Paulo: Global, 1976); *Literatura Popular em Verso: Antologia*, 1–4, *Catálogo, Estudos* (Rio de

- Janeiro: MEC/Fundação Casa de Rui Barbosa et al., 1962–1977); and Liêdo Maranhão de Souza, *Classificação Popular da Literatura de Cordel* (Petrópolis: Vozes, 1976). An overview in English is provided by Candace Slater, *Stories on a String: The Brazilian Literatura de Cordel* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981).
2. For a definition of the modinha and further bibliographical indications see Gerard Béhague, *The Beginnings of Musical Nationalism in Brazil* (Detroit: Information Coordinators, 1971), pp. 32–33.
 3. For a useful introduction to the work of Catulo da Paixão Cearense see Eno Theodoro Wanke, *A Trova Popular: Folclore da Quadra Setessilábica, Sua Descoberta, História e Penetração nos Povos de Línguas Ibéricas* (Rio de Janeiro: Pongetti, 1974), pp. 224–26. See also the bibliographical summary in Ary Vasoncelos, *Panorama da Música Popular Brasileira* (São Paulo: Martins, 1964), pp. 119–21.
 4. At least a half-dozen different sorts of short verse compositions are evident in the pamphlet stories by Leandro Gomes de Barros reproduced in *Literatura Popular em Verso: Antologia*, vol. 2 (Rio de Janeiro and Campina Grande: MEC/Fundação Casa de Rui Barbosa/Fundação Universidade Regional do Nordeste, 1976).
 5. Today, almost every radio station in the Northeast offers at least one daily cantador radio program. In Campina Grande, Paraíba, for instance, Radio Borborema/Cariri broadcasts two half-hour radio programs, “Cariri” and “Retalho do Sertão,” every day except Sunday. The station’s competitor, Radio Caturité, broadcasts “Os Bambas da Viola” from 5:30 to 6:00 a.m. Tuesday through Saturday. Cantadores, who may or may not be paid for their services, vie for broadcast contracts because the publicity that these shows generate proves invaluable to their careers. The programs’ listeners are generally subsistence farmers and blue-collar workers who send in a stream of requests for their favorite songs as well as for improvised verse.
 6. It is common to find six or seven versions of the same song, all slightly different. This phenomenon reflects not only peculiarities in the songwriting process but also widespread pirating on the part of cordel publishers.
 7. The relationship between cantadores and cordel authors is extremely complex. It has not been adequately treated to date and deserves a full-length study. It is worth simply noting at this point that cordel literature, like canções, owes a great deal to oral, improvisational poetry. Many now-classic works on the cordel deal with both cordel authors and cantadores. See, for instance, Cascudo’s *Vaqueiros e Cantadores*, and Francisco das Chagas Batista, *Cantadores e Poetas Populares* (João Pessoa: F. C. Batista Irmãos, 1929).
 8. It is difficult to discern any major difference between a “poem” and a “song.” There are, for instance, a large number of both “songs” and “poems” devoted to love and cowboy themes. Because the majority of these compositions are written in the standard six-line stanzas called *sextilhas*, found both in cordel stories and in cantador poetry, it is usually impossible to tell whether a given text is a “song” or a “poem,” unless it is so labeled. Songwriters themselves customarily use the term “canção” to refer to both types of composition.
 9. There is a difference, to be sure, between the actual cantador (singer) who is the author of the song, and the first-person voice or persona who speaks within the text. I will refer to the persona as the singer, and the actual singer/author as the cantador.
 10. These asymmetrical, or patron-client, relationships are discussed in detail by a number of social scientists. For a general view, see *Structure and Process in Latin America: Patronage, Clientage and Power Systems*, ed. Arnold Strickon and Sidney Greenfield (Albuquerque, N.M.: University of New Mexico Press, 1972). For a discussion of both horizontal and vertical contract relationships within a specifically Brazilian context, see Shepard Forman, *The Brazilian Peasantry* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975) and Allen Johnson, *Sharecroppers of the Sertão* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1972).
 11. Roberto da Matta, “Você Sabe com Quem Está Falando?: Um Ensaio sobre a Distinção entre Indivíduo e Pessoa no Brasil,” in *Carnavais, Malandros e Heróis: Para uma Sociologia do Dilema Brasileiro* (Rio de Janeiro: Zahar, 1979), pp. 139–93.
 12. Matta, “Você Sabe,” p. 175. The author cites related work by Dumont, Mauss, Vi-veiros de Castro and Benzaquém de Araújo.

13. The reader should note that the number of titles in each category does not necessarily represent that category's popularity. Some vendors, for instance, may sell more cowboy songs than love songs, even though they carry a large assortment of the latter. Furthermore, although I counted only thirteen songs about São Paulo and thirteen about current events, the small number of existing titles tend to sell extremely well. Songs about São Paulo are particularly interesting given the real problem of internal migration, which they document in sentimental fashion. Although essentially enumerative farewells or despedidas, these compositions often contain elements of a rudimentary plot and are imbued, unlike the traditional despedida, with an unmistakable air of protest. For a discussion of this type of song, see Candace Slater, "Setting Out for São Paulo: Internal Migration as a Theme in Brazilian Popular Literature," *New Scholar* (in press).
14. João Alexandre Sobrinho; interview, Juazeiro do Norte, Ceará; 9 April 1978.
15. Only one of the 79 love songs collected in the Recife market contains self-recriminations. It is "Canção Menina de 12 Anos" [Song about the twelve-year-old girl] by Raimundo Alves. In this song the singer berates himself for snubbing a now-beautiful young woman when she was younger.
16. Only the author and title are given for each of the following. This is because no other information is available for most canções. Songs, unlike cordel stories, seldom if ever make reference to a publisher or date of publication. This text and the others cited in this paper have been reproduced without introducing changes in grammar or spelling. All English translations are my own.
17. For a discussion of the vaquejada see Luís da Câmara Cascudo, *A Vaquejada Nordestina e Sua Origem* (Recife: Imprensa Universitária, 1966).
18. The cowman's diminishing role may of course have the opposite effect of causing the author to romanticize a passing way of life. As in the case of the Texas cowboy, the Northeastern vaqueiro may become a symbol of a supposedly idyllic past.
19. This concept of love is related to a wider concept of "limited good," generally associated with peasant societies. See George Foster, "Peasant Society and the Image of Limited Good," *American Anthropologist* 67 (1965):293–315.
20. This sort of physical violence is, of course, not limited to literature, but can be found in the crime pages of virtually any Brazilian newspaper. For an understanding of the sexual roles underlying these crimes of passion, see *Female and Male in Latin America: Essays*, ed. Ann Pescatello (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1973).
21. This song is particularly interesting because although the concept of the birthday party is decidedly modern—many backlands inhabitants remain ignorant of the year, let alone the day, in which they were born—the song contains a number of highly traditional elements. The lettered shields worn by the ranchers is, for instance, a medieval device frequently found in cordel literature. Then, too, the author has chosen to name his protagonist João da França, thereby recalling an Iberian ballad of the same name.
22. The words are those of cordel author Joel Borges (interview: Bezerras, Pernambuco; 20 January 1978).
23. Although the text "Carmelita e o Vaqueiro" has no indication of author, the song is actually an expanded version of another song by João Alexandre Sobrinho entitled "Vaquejada no Sertão" [Backlands roundup]. The anonymous author has inserted this original description of a roundup into a cordel-like frame. (João Alexandre Sobrinho, personal letter: Juazeiro do Norte, Ceará; 2 December 1979.)
24. See Alice Mitika Koshiyama, *Análise de Conteúdo da Literatura de Cordel: Presença de Valores Religiosos* (São Paulo: Universidade de São Paulo, Escola de Comunicações e Artes, 1972).
25. Of sixty-two cordel authors interviewed during 1977–78, I did not find a single one who actually liked the canção as much as the cordel story. Only a half-dozen writers, however, had not experimented at some time with the form. Cantadores who regularly author both canções and cordel stories include Guriatã do Norte, João Alexandre Sobrinho, and Pedro Bandeira. As for cordel authors who turn out canções with a fair degree of regularity, one might mention José Francisco Borges, José Costa Leite, and José Francisco Soares.

26. For instance, virtually all of the cordel songs by cordel author José Costa Leite utilize tunes well known to radio listeners. See, for instance, his "Dicionário do Beijo, Música: Última Carta" [Dictionary of the kiss, to be sung to the tune of "The Last Letter"]; "Saudades do Meu Amor, Música: Partida Saudosa" [Longing for my love, to be sung to the tune of "Sad Farewell"]; and "Estou Longe de Você, Música: Longe de Ti" [I am far from you, to be sung to the tune of "Far from You"].
27. Francisco de Souza Campos, interview: São Lourenço da Mata, Pernambuco; 1 March 1978.
28. Joel Borges, interview: Sítio Cruzeiro, Pernambuco; 4 April 1978.
29. Olegário Fernandes, interview: Caruaru, Pernambuco; 17 March 1978.
30. Manuel d'Almeida Filho, interview: Aracaju, Sergipe; 7 June 1978.
31. Manuel d'Almeida.
32. José de Souza Campos, interview: Condado, Pernambuco; 18 February 1978.
33. Manuel Camilo dos Santos, interview: Campina Grande, Paraíba; 6 March 1978.
34. Antônio da Mulatinha, interview: Campina Grande, Paraíba; 9 March 1978. The poet's sales record (twice as many songs as stories) is not typical. It is worth noting that although he has written some thirty cordel stories, fellow writers tend to regard him more as a cantador than as a cordel author.
35. José Costa Leite, interview: Condado, Pernambuco; 18 February 1978.
36. Manuel Camilo dos Santos explains that autobiographies are "something that the poet writes because he feels like it, without hope of people buying; in fact, I usually give away a copy free when I sell another story."
37. Olegário Fernandes, interview: Caruaru, Pernambuco; 14 January 1978.
38. Antônio Caetano de Souza, interview: Recife, Pernambuco; 27 February 1978.
39. The association between cordel literature, astrological almanacs, and herbal medicines is traditional and can be found as well in medieval Europe. All three products are designed to counsel and/or to cure. The addition of other sundries is a recent innovation.
40. Antonio Curió, interview: Rio de Janeiro; 17 December 1978.
41. Quantifiable data regarding Northeastern cordel and canção buyers is not easy to obtain. In Rio de Janeiro, I was able to interview two hundred cordel buyers in the São Cristóvão Fair and the Largo do Machado, using a more or less standard list of questions and a tape recorder. (See Slater, "Joe Bumpkin in the Wilds of Rio de Janeiro," *Journal of Latin American Lore* 6, 1 (1980):5–53.) The questionnaire approach, however, proved impossible in Northeastern marketplaces. This was partly because changes in the traditional market structure have made the weekly fair less important, with the result that customers are less apt to congregate at one time and one place. Even more important, however, I found that people were either intimidated, or else fascinated, by the tape recorder to the point that they forgot all else. Furthermore, whereas the somewhat more sophisticated Rio buyer assumed that I must be "another one of those reporters," and therefore had the kindness to humor what they perceived as my eccentricities, Northeasterners were simply not interested in answering a list of questions. Although I talked at length to several hundred individuals in Northeastern marketplaces, I found that I had to rely on extended conversations which I later summarized on paper. This approach, while cumbersome, yielded great quantities of information which proved invaluable to my study of the literatura de cordel. In Recife I was actually able to assist in the sale of cordel stories, thanks to the good will of poet José de Souza Campos.
42. All speakers, unless otherwise noted, are male.
43. For a discussion of the term "matuto" see Slater, "Joe Bumpkin," pp. 7–10.
44. For photographs of lambe-lambe photographers and other personages who frequent the Recife market see Liêdo Maranhão de Souza, *O Mercado, Sua Praça e a Cultura Popular do Nordeste* (Recife: Prefeitura Municipal do Recife, Secretaria de Educação e Cultura, 1977).