# Transcending the Ages of Men: Rodrigo as the Male Exemplar of the of the *Mocedades de Rodrigo*

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**ABSTRACT**

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For a long time, scholars regarded *Mocedade*'s Rodrigo as a roguish youth, a far cry from the exemplary behavior embodied by the Cid of the *Cantar*. However, of late some studies have focused on *Mocedades* as embodying the typical rite of passage a young man must undertake from one age to another. Medieval writers thought that a man's life naturally divides into separate stages of development, with each stage having an appropriate mode of behavior. The hero, however, is a special individual that at times transcends the limitations of his age and can achieve some of the qualities of older ages as a child. The goal of this study is to examine the characterization of the Rodrigo of *Mocedades* from the vantage point of what was considered age appropriate behavior in the Middle Ages for each stage of life in order to determine if and how its underlying characterization of the hero differs from it and from the *Cantar*.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

The attitudes and practices of past cultures that determine when and how one becomes a man are not always easily perceived, because maleness is not the same thing as "becoming a man." The former is linked to biology while the latter is shaped by actions that are always culturally determined. This is the reason why the literary texts of medieval Castile, if rightly interpreted, can provide a clearer understanding of the traits that were then considered ideal for men (Mirrer 169), and explain why the Middle Ages valued violence and physical prowess most (Bloch 293).

During the Reconquest, although violence was increasingly channeled by institutions controlled by the state or Church (Keen),[1] men organized themselves for combat either against invaders or amongst themselves (Lourie 54), making fighting the dominant trait associated with the masculine virtues of society for very practical reasons: it enabled men to gain and defend territory while protecting their own or that of their lord. In order to perform well, men had to be strong and aggressive, able to ride over rugged landscape for long periods of time (Fletcher 110), possess skill in the use of weapons such as the sword and lance, and, above all, had to be courageous (Bloch 294). It is no wonder, therefore, that Castile, in the midst of the Reconquest, comforted itself with memories of past successes in

[1] However, as Karras explains, once knighthood developed in the twelfth century, this admiration was institutionalized, because it "epitomized one set of medieval ideals about masculinity…the knight competed with other men through physical aggression. Physical prowess and military success were always an important part of what medieval people admired in their leaders…" (20-21).

battle or that its literary heroes expressed the crucial value of violence for the culture (Braudy xv).[2] Combat, whether by a single person or group, stimulated and developed the martial virtues above all other male characteristics (Braudy 30). The best known hero in Medieval Spanish literature, Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar, has these qualities.

Rodrigo is celebrated in many texts. Two of these in particular, the *Cantar de mio Cid* and *Mocedades de Rodrigo*, present the Cid as characters who win the interest and admiration of others by the manner in which they face certain ordeals (Bowra 4).[3] However, while the Cid's characterization as a model hero in the *Cantar* appears to be secure in the eyes of critics, the characterization of Rodrigo in *Mocedades* has led them to question the exemplarity of the hero of that poem.

For a long time, scholars regarded *Mocedades*'s Rodrigo as a roguish youth. Deyermond, for example, notes that he "adopts a rebellious attitude… and although he fights triumphantly for Castile and his king, there is no connection between his victories and his attitude" (22). He also explains the deterioration in Rodrigo's character as a result of its being written at the very end of Spanish epic tradition (52). Other scholars have agreed. Armistead notes that often he is quite defiant of royal authority (1963, 340); Montgomery says that his character is considered "by most readers to be brash, violent, and overbearing" (1983, 122); and, Funes considers that much of this criticism is due to the heterogeneous structure of the poem, which impedes its interpretation as a complete story, and makes it an

[2] Bloch notes that in Castile, minstrels did not copy foreign models but instead took advantage of recent examples to follow, namely the Cid (101).

[3] Bowra states that if heroic poetry has a central principle "it is that the great man must pass through an ordeal to prove his worth" (48).

episodic exaltation of rebelliousness and confrontation with authority (2004, l).[4] However, of late some studies have begun to take a different approach by examining *Mocedades* as embodying the typical rite of passage from one age to another that is not as evident in the *Cantar* for reasons of the age of the Cid.

Lacarra sees *Mocedades*'s Rodrigo as a youth absorbed in the trials necessary to obtain maturity (1999, 469), while at the same time providing the poem's later audience with information about the early years of a popular hero; Bailey points out that those trials present "a compelling story with mythic resonances that transcend the particular deeds of Rodrigo's youth" (2007, 9), thus portraying a more universal hero; and Victorio, who acknowledges that Rodrigo is reproached by critics for his audacity, responds by characterizing the youth's behavior as intrinsic to epic heroes (xiv-xv).[5] These later critics (Lacarra, Bailey, and Victorio) view *Mocedades*'s Rodrigo as a unique, yet important version of the hero within the Cidian cycle, but the question of why this is so still needs to be addressed. This paper looks at the characterization of the Rodrigo of *Mocedades* from the vantage point of what was considered appropriate behavior in the Middle Ages for each stage of life, from birth to death, in order to determine if and how its underlying characterization of the hero differs from it and from the *Cantar*.

Medieval writers thought that a man's life naturally divides into separate stages of development that begin with birth and childhood and end with maturity, old age and death.

[4] "En suma, no es posible reconocer progresión alguna en la relación del héroe con su rey, como tampoco en las hazañas que cumple Rodrigo…cada episodio delinea con trazos particulares la envergadura de la hazaña heroica y la relación con el rey" (xlviii).

[5] "Por otra parte, nuestro joven tiene un comportamiento absolutamente 'normal' en el género épico con respecto a los démas personajes. Nunca es cruel, sino más bien generoso, como lo comprueban sus múltiples batallas, en las cuales hay, evidentemente, víctimas, pero sólo las necesarias: después del combate, se inclina más por el perdón que por la venganza" (xv).

This continuum has a fulcrum point (generally equivalent of *iuventus*) for the attainment of the full maturity. St. Isidore, for example, divides the ages of man into six stages: *Infantia* (0-7 years), *Pueritia* (8-14 years), *Adulescentia* (15-28 years), *Iuventus* (29-49 years), *Gravitas* (50-70 years), *Senectus* (71-death ) (Burrow 201).[6] Each stage has an appropriate mode of behavior, but is tempered by the idea that the hero is a special individual that at times transcends the limitations of his age and can achieve some of the qualities of older ages as a child. While *Mocedades*'s Rodrigo would be in the equivalent of *pueritia* in St. Isidore's scheme, and the *Cantar*'s Rodrigo has probably entered the stage he calls *gravitas*, the characterization of the hero in both poems reflects this transcendent nature. This paper will begin with *Mocedades* and conclude with the *Cantar* in order to determine whether or not the chronological development of its hero is consistent with Medieval ideas of age-appropriate development and heroic characterization.[7]

[6] The "ages of man" vary in number from 4 to 7 according to the author treating the subject. For example, the Venerable Bede in his *De Temporum Ratione* discusses the four ages of man as they relate to the four seasons of a year.

[7] Although the *Cantar* appears chronologically before *Mocedades*, for the purposes of this study it seems appropriate to examine the hero in the order of his life, with the youthful version first followed by the older version.

## CHAPTER 2

*Mocedades de Rodrigo*

Although *Mocedades* was created nearly two centuries after the *Cantar* to provide the hero with an adequate introduction to better known versions of that epic song, like all *enfances*, it contains a detailed (albeit fictional) lineage of Rodrigo's heroic ancestors that quickly reveals he is a twelve-year old and still be bound to familial service.[8] He is neither a knight nor a bondsman to any lord, and has yet to claim the title of 'Cid Campeador.'[9]

The *Mocedades*'s young hero exhibits many characteristics assigned to the *pueritia* stage: He is active, swift-footed, bold, irritable (Burrow 13), and does not have much to do with women.[10] A young person in this stage of life would presumably lack standing within his society and therefore possess a greater appetite for adventure than would a more mature, settled knight in the service of a lord. In the case of Rodrigo, his oath to win five battles before marrying Jimena expresses this appetite and delays their marriage. It also somewhat structures the seemingly sporadic battles of *Mocedades* around an objective (Armistead 1963, 338; Deyermond 1968, 161)[11] and clouds the contrast between the accepted weakness of

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[8] *Mocedades*'s follows a development typical of epic cycles, whose early poems present the hero at the apex of his heroic career and only in later works is attention given to the hero's birth and youthful experiences (Deyermond 9).

[9] For this reason, I will refer to the Cid as Rodrigo when discussing the *Mocedades*.

[10] These characteristics pertain to the Physical and Physiological Fours that, as Burrow notes, furnished medieval scholars both with a satisfying scientific explanation of how these theoretical qualities related the human microcosm to a larger macrocosmic order (13).

[11] This study is not a structural analysis of the text, but it should be noted here that Funes (2004) disagrees with Armistead (1963) and Deyermond (1968) regarding the oath as the organizational mark of the poem. Funes states "se hace evidente que el voto de las cinco lides no puede tener el carácter de principio estructurador que la mayor parte de la crítica le ha asignado" (xliv).

youth and the fortitude characteristic of an older person. Like certain faithful young men—usually saints or heroes—Rodrigo appears endowed with virtues of each age (Burrow 95).[12]

A boy belonging to a warrior clan would have spent his youth in training for the moment he would engage in combat, thus signaling his passage from one life stage into another (Burrow 125), but Rodrigo's early success instead foreshadows his capabilities as a grown man.[13] He first appears in the poem on the eve of a battle between his family and Count Don Gómez. This battle is a "textual sign [of an] initiation" (Montgomery 1998, 32), because anytime a young man pits himself against an older man of proven strength and military proficiency, he has the opportunity to establish his own masculinity and gain social standing (Karras 11, 21). But, even though Rodrigo is excited to fight, his father appears apprehensive by his presence in the ranks, because he will have to fight alongside (and against) established men who are physically more developed and battle-tested:[14]

> Doze años avía por cuenta e aún los treze non son,
> nunca se viera en lit, ya quebrávale el coraçon.
> Cuéntasse en los çien lidiadores, que quiso el padre o que non,
> en los primeros golpes suyos e del conde don Gómez son. (371-74)

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[12] According to Burrow, age transcendence had to be unique as a result of grace within the temporal order in order to avoid a collapse within the system. However, eternal beings would possess all age virtues by right (102-03).

[13] It is evident that a man's first blows in battle represent an important demonstration of his masculinity, valued by others associated with him as well, as this spectacle appears in other Castilian texts. For example, in "Cuento XXIV" of *El conde lucanor*, a king must choose an heir between three infantes, and he chooses the youngest because he shows himself to be battle-ready as well as prudent.

[14] Bloch explains that knights' bodies appeared in works of imagination as well as in chronicles to be very athletic, with large, developed frames (294), the type of body not present in a man until his later teenage years.

Rodrigo kills their main and older opponent, Count Gómez, and as a result, he is shown to transcend the limitations of his youth in his earliest appearance.[15] This establishes a pattern of development that will hold true throughout the remainder of the poem.[16]

Rodrigo's initial kill has far reaching consequences that ultimately subjects him to further trials. Jimena, Don Gómez's youngest daughter, reacts to her father's death by going before the king Don Fernando and asking for Rodrigo's hand in marriage as a solution to a potential rift between Leon and Castile. As a result, Don Fernando requests Rodrigo's appearance at court, but once there Rodrigo strikes fear in those with whom he locks eyes: "Quando Rodrigo bolvió los ojos, todos ivan derramando. / Avién muy grant pavor d'él, e muy grande espanto" (474-75). The onlookers' indignant response to the unknown youth is not out of character as they are better born,[17] but Rodrigo's eyes already reveal power that is akin to an episode of the *Cantar* where the Cid subdues a lion by merely looking at him.[18] Those present at the incident are amazed by his extraordinary act because they consider that it exceeds those of a normal man. However, the nobles in Fernando's court still see the youthful Rodrigo as a misfit, and compare his look to that of a devil ("pecado" 480) to be feared rather than admired because of its unusual and misunderstood nature. [19] Rodrigo,

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[15] Burrow notes that "equalization of ages" is characteristic of the heroic narrative and that transcendence of age appears in many epic medieval texts as well, like for example *Beowulf* and *La Chanson de Guillaume* (115).

[16] Montgomery (1998) points out that the myth of the hero initiation survived in medieval Spanish epics (3). His thorough study links the Cidian epic cycle to other indo-european epics by the way they approach the hero's initiation into manhood.

[17]Burrow offers the example of Lybeaus arriving at Arthur's court unknown and unproven, thereby shunned by a young damsel (113).

[18] Montgomery 1998, 43: "The Cid undergoes a transformation comparable to those seen in Cúchulainn and Rodrigo during their initiations when they subdued, respectively, a stag or a king's court with a preternatural look.

[19] This is what many critics interpret as a sign of textual deterioration. Armistead 1963, 340; Deyermond 1968, 19; Ruggieri 129 (quoted in Zaderenko 263); Chalon 386 (quoted in Zaderenko 263); Montgomery 1983, 122.

therefore, must face more trials that will reshape his perceived impudence and put his powers to good use as he matures.

Rodrigo's adventures after his betrothal to Jimena and his oath to win five battles before consummating the marriage have received much critical attention. Castro Lingl describes Jimena as a vindictive character whose motivation for marriage is to avenge her father's death, protect her family and destabilize Rodrigo's (81), and Deyermond approaches it from Fernando's perspective as a marriage intended to not only resolve a potential problem through forced kinship, but as an act to weaken the hero and thus tame him (178).[20] However, what is important is how Jimena's behavior affects Rodrigo's masculinity.

Rodrigo wins Jimena's hand by the killing of her father, Don Gómez. The betrothal, therefore, is not initiated by him but by Jimena. Lacarra characterizes her as a "mujer de acción" who behaves (within reason) like a man in court rather than a woman (1988, 19; 1999, 486),[21] and Bailey affirms that Rodrigo's bravura "masks insecurities about his social stature and the fear that he may not measure up to the king and counts of the court" (2007, 9). He therefore announces his displeasure with Fernando's decision, "Señor, vós me despossastes más a mi pessar que de grado" (492), acknowledging his un-readiness.

By orchestrating the betrothal, Jimena dominates Rodrigo in front of the king and his court and thus places him in a defensive position from which he must free himself in order to

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[20] Deyermond (1968, 178) explains that sexual intercourse was believed to have a weakening effect, a belief that is prevalent in other folklore and literature. He cites the example of Galahad in the Arthurian legend, whose chastity enables him to achieve the grail; also Brunhild in *Nibelungenlied*, who loses her supernatural strength upon being deflowered.

[21] Lacarra (1999, 486) points out that often women were encouraged to take on masculine characteristics as Jimena does in *Mocedades*, provided they did not pose a threat to society.

regain standing (Lacarra 1999, 486): "nin me vea con ella en yermo nin en poblado / fasta que venza çinco lides en buena lid en canpo" (494-95).[22]

Even though Rodrigo's original intention may have been to delay marrying a despised bride (Deyermond 161),[23] Lacarra believes that the oath and battles are part of a "learning process" in which certain tests "need to be passed to convert a biological male into a masculine male" (1999, 471). But the masculine development of a boy in the *pueritia* stage would be naturally focused on muscular development and physical dexterity instead of on forming mature familial relationships like marriage (Heard 135-36). In fact, his opening fight against Count Gómez does not initiate him into manhood, and his masculinity thus requires further testing (Wicks 12).[24] To bring about his ultimate transformation, Rodrigo "must face up to [his] insecurities and transcend the ties of his youth in order to become the king's most trusted warrior in the service of his country" (Bailey 9).

The ensuing battles provide Rodrigo with a context to proceed with this transformation. Moors approach from Burgos, setting the stage for Rodrigo's first battle after proclaiming the oath. He chooses not to wake his sleeping father, and instead leads the men into battle. Bailey suggests that Rodrigo, by not waking his father, wants to face the enemy alone and ensure the battle counts among the five he must win to fulfill the oath (115). This explanation, however, seems unsatisfying since Rodrigo rarely makes reference to the

[22]Deyermond postulates that the poet felt impelled to use five battles due to his reliance on earlier epics which did the same (*Cantar de Sancho II* and *Cantar*). He notes that the number five had special significance in the Middle Ages, since it was the number of senses a person possessed and also the number of Christ's wounds. The number five is known to have been used in magic, often in the form of the pentacle. Therefore, it is possible that 'five battles' carried some sort of implication of a ritual order or test (162).

[23] Deyermond believes that the betrothal scene and subsequent oath, which appears in both the *Gesta* and *Mocedades*, is in fact an initiation test in the chronicle but not the poem. He notes as well that neither stance affects the structural importance the five battles have in both texts (161).

[24]Braudy points out that for a medieval man no single test would be definitive and he would have to continually prove himself if he is to be manly (52).

oath. A better explanation would be that Rodrigo's father is an older and well-established soldier in fiction as well as history,[25] and his presence in battle alongside Rodrigo would subordinate the younger man to himself by making it appear that he still depended on his older kin for protection. By fighting the Moors alone, Rodrigo is characterized as valiant: "lidió con los algareros, / que non con los que levavan el ganado" (523), and his ability to defeat them reveals that he behaves as a knight should, exercising force within the confines of the battle but already using his "mesura" to avoid injuring the cattle drivers, who must have been mixed in with the Moorish raiders on the battle field. His measuredness is an incipient mature trait that separates a knight from a madman (Cardini 81) and presents us with signs of wisdom beyond his years.

Rodrigo next defeats a Navarrese count in single combat and leads his troops against Moorish forces, in which battle his father and uncles are killed: "Desque vio el padre e los tíos muertos, ovo la color mudado. / Quisieran arramar los cristianos, Rodrigo ovo el escudo en braçado, / por tornar los cristianos, del padre non ovo cuidado" (734-36). However, the fact that he only briefly focuses on the death of his kin and is more concerned with rallying his troops in order to achieve the victory suggests that he has taken another step in maturity, because he places the common good above any personal duty to his kin. Nevertheless, Rodrigo's behavior continues to waver between that of an "uncouth and invincible adolescent" and a "very clever champion" (Montgomery 1983, 122). He decapitates the Navarrese count in single combat, returns to Castile after fighting the Moors "tan sañudo e tan irado, / toda la tierra tembrava con el castellano" (756-57), destroys Redecilla and burns Belorado, and drags the Count Don Jimeno Sánchez out of a church by his beard. This

[25] Fletcher: "Rodrigo's father, Diego Laínez, was a distinguished soldier who defeated the Navarrese in battle and recovered from them a number of places ceded by Fernando I to his brother García of Navare in 1037-8" (108).

behavior would appear to stand in direct contrast to the mature Cid of the *Cantar*. However, when juxtaposed with the behavior of other youths his age who appear in epic poetry, namely the *Cantar*'s Infantes of Carrion, Rodrigo's often brash and unruly behavior does not have the same undercurrent of cowardice.

The battles that test Rodrigo over the course of the poem actually function to mold his violent strength into a weapon that can be used for the good of Castile. He clearly possesses certain negative traits, and his encounters with authority are highlighted by his rebellious speech,[26] yet his actions lead to the defeat of Castile's enemies. Thus, he serves Fernando and the kingdom while living on the boundary between the social and the antisocial (Braudy 37). His characterization reveals that he possesses the necessary skill and courage to engage in initiatory battles that set the course for his "promotion [as a] hero who has already been tested" (Dumézil 114), but new trials will draw him further into the service of his king.

*Mocedades* contrasts a weak character with Rodrigo in the person of the young king Fernando.[27] The same age as Rodrigo, Fernando is also in his *pueritia* but, as king, he must function in a world about which he knows little: "yo del mundo non sé tanto" (321). He must therefore rely on vassals like Rodrigo's father and uncles, who aid in conquering the lands surrounding Castile, to maintain the stability of the kingdom. Familial loyalty and service thus indirectly bind Rodrigo to the king and, together, the two come to represent the normal relationship between a monarch and a vassal responsible for the well-being of the kingdom (Lacarra 1999, 476).

[26] Funes (2004) cites the examples of Rodrigo's encounters with King Fernando both at the betrothal and in France with the French King, German Emperor, and Pope (xlix).

[27] Lacarra (1999, 427) observes that Fernando portrayed quite differently from the young and inexperienced king of the *Mocedades*.

As king, Fernando must administer justice in order to resolve potentially hostile situations. In one example already mentioned, he betroths Rodrigo to Jimena to avoid a conflict between their families. Later, when the king of Aragon sends his champion to challenge Fernando, the king asks "¿Quién ge lo consejó? e ¿cómmo fue de ello ossado? / ¿Quál sería de mis reinos, amigo o pariente o vassallo" (590-91), to which none respond. Three days later, Rodrigo arrives to find Fernando in a state of great despair:

> A ti digo la mi coita, donde soy coitado.
> Enbióme desafiar el rey de Aragón e nunca ge lo ove buscado,
> enbióme decir quel' diesse a Calahorra, amidos o de grado,
> o quel' un justador de todo el mi regnado.
> Querelléme en mi corte a todos los fijos dalgo,
> non me respondió omne nado (602-07)

No vassal has yet to respond to Fernando's petition, leaving him seemingly out of options until Rodrigo agrees to fight with one condition: that he be given a grace period in order to go on pilgrimage to Santiago. This agreement makes two important points: It contrasts his willingness to fight to the reluctance of other nobles to serve and shows his growing signs of maturity by submitting to his king. It also reveals that his submission to the will of Fernando is still incomplete, because he stipulates conditions to his obedience.

After defeating the Aragonese champion, Rodrigo must next defend the kingdom against France and Germany, who seek to subdue Castile. As with the Aragonese threat, King Fernando flounders in self-pity and irresolution, and thus is contrasted to the hero who is more assertive and wants to invade France:

> Aún non vos envía pedir tributo, mas enbíavos dar algo,

mostrarvos he yo aqueste aver ganarlo.

Apellidat vuestros regnos, desde los puertos de Aspa fasta en Santiago,

sobre lo suyo lo ayamos, lo nuestro esté quedado,

Si non llego fasta París, non debía ser nado. (839-43)

Although the moment to do battle arrives, and Fernando performs his kingly duty by delivering an harangue to his men, again no vassal responds: "A ninguna destas querellas ninguno non le respondió. / El rey con la malenconía, por el corazón quería quebrar" (910-11). The older 'fijodalgos' maintain their defiance of the young king,[28] even though Fernando is naturally their lord. Rodrigo, however, again shows his increasing maturity by assuming command in place of those higher-ranking vassals.

This willingness to place Fernando's benefit before Rodrigo's own is evident in the second appearance of a woman in *Mocedades*. Women were commonly taken as spoils of war, along with arms and horses, because they were important vessels for nobles to establish and continue their bloodlines (Lacarra 1988, 9). Rodrigo's attack and capture of the Count of Savoy results in his offer of his daughter in marriage to Rodrigo in exchange for his life. Rodrigo refuses to accept her for himself—"que non cassaría con ella por quanto yo valgo" (1029)—but instead offers her to Fernando. Rodrigo, who in previous battles distributed the booty however *he* wanted to, now behaves as a mature vassal by offering her to his king and encouraging him to dishonor her in order to insult France:

Essas oras dixo Rodrigo, 'Señor, fazedlo privado.

¡Enbarraganad a Françia!, sí a Dios ayades pagado

Suya será la dessonra, irlos hemos denostando,

[28] Martín states: "Pero los altos hombres que le rodean tampoco le prestan gran auxilio. Unos, vendiendo el reino a los moros, le traicionan. Los más constituyen un grupo ora indiferente ora cobarde con el que no se puede contar" (261).

así volveremos con ellos la lid en el campo' (1044-47)

As Lacarra points out, the trading of Count's daughter dishonors the enemy, and is not to be condemned, because "moral evaluation is made to depend on the agents rather than on their acts or their victims. If the victimizers are Castilians they are applauded; their acts are portrayed as rational politics" (1999, 479). But, the episode is also a vehicle to demonstrate the superiority of Rodrigo (1988, 17) and does not cast a negative light on the hero, but rather continue the development of his characterization into an exemplary vassal.

While Rodrigo prepares his men for the last battle, the Count of Savoy's daughter gives birth to Fernando's son in camp. This birth provides the necessary leverage to arrange a truce and unite Castile with the other the kingdoms through kinship:

Allí parió un fijo varón, el papa fue tomarlo,
ante que el rey lo sopiesse, fue el infante cristiano.
Padrino fue el rey de Françia e el enperador alemano,
padrino fue un patriarca e un cardenal onrado.
En las manos del papa el infante fue cristiano. (1200-05)

By accepting terms, Fernando once again dissolves a conflict through kinship as he did earlier in the poem with the betrothal of Rodrigo; however, our hero is adamant that Fernando not make terms with the enemy unless a full surrender is agreed to—"Sol non sea pensado, salvo si es entrega" (1215)—and takes exception with Fernando's decision, because it can be seen as weak and unaggressive, and also because it breaks Rodrigo's earlier promise to fight his way into Paris and show the enemy that Castile is mightier than expected. Rodrigo's proven leadership and proficiency in battle has made Fernando give him command of nine-hundred knights, and the hero responds to the king's generosity by expressing his

desire to continue to threaten Castile's adversaries,[29] and pledges he will not stop until he confronts the emperor and king of France: "que fasta que me vea con ellos, non sería folgado" (1071).

The hero of *Mocedades*, who descends from lower-ranking "infanzones," calls into question the value placed on an older nobility dependent on bloodlines as opposed to a new nobility rooted in service (Martín 265): "…non só rico ni poderoso fidalgo. / Mas só un escudero, non cavallero armado / fijo de un mercadero, nieto de un çibdadano" (971-73). This contrast between the higher and lower-ranking nobility is particularly evident in the battle between Rodrigo and the Count of Savoy, who makes repeated comments about the hero's low lineage and skill: "que omne que así lida non devía ser villano" (1002). But, Rodrigo is a character who transcends age and social class, and who furthers his exemplarity and his scope of influence with each trial realized. He is portrayed as the type of young warrior needed to advance the Reconquest and the growth of Castile, and is more valiant than those who belong to the high nobility yet ignore the king's call to action (Zaderenko 269; Montgomery 1983, 126).[30] Fernando, therefore, must always turn to Rodrigo.

[29] 'Cavalguen vuestros reinos e non sean en tardarlo / yo iré en la delantera con estos noveçientos que yo trayo. / Señor, lleguemos a París, que así lo avré otorgado, / ca aý es el rey de Françia e el emperador alemano, / ý es el patriarca e el papa romano, / que nos están esperando a que les diésemos el tributo, / e nós queremos ge lo dar privado (1064-70). Rodrigo's speech reflects another form of aggressive behavior favorable to men in the middle ages: threatening language (Mirrer 169).

[30] According to Zaderenko, "Rodrigo y su linaje representan la intransigencia de los aguerridos castellanos que llevaron adelante la Reconquista y el engrandecimiento de Castilla, en la tradición de las hazañas de Fernán González" (279).

## CHAPTER 3

*Cantar de mio Cid*

The seemingly more historical *Cantar* looks at a chronologically older hero with a family and dependants, who is loyal to his lord, directs his *mesnada* with justice, and who, above all, is a consummate warrior.[31] Unlike the *Mocedades*, the *Cantar* begins *in medias res*, when the Cid has entered or is near the *gravitas* stage of life. He represents *fortitudo* and *sapientia* in his actions, being sufficiently strong and wise to shoulder the burdens of leadership (Burrow 119-20). Nevertheless, the hero's honor has been called into question by his exile at the hands of King Alfonso.

Honor, besides being a heavily-gendered concept in the Middle Ages, depends on what others think of one's reputation (Karras 60), since a dishonored man is also likely to be considered unmanly in the general opinion. This is the main consequence of exile, and something that an exemplary character must overcome.

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[31] This aspect of the Cid's characterization antedates the *Cantar*. The *Historia Roderici*, for example, a Latin chronicle of unknown authorship dated around the middle of the twelfth century,already has no fewer than forty-one chapters dealing with battle or the use of physical force in some form that show the Cid as possessing both courage and physical abilities while depicting his enemies as lacking these virtues. For instance, over the course of a long battle in chapter 23, Rodrigo defeats King Sancho of Aragón and Al-Hayib, whose actions before the pursuing hero ("dieron la espalda") are presented as dishonorable and "unmanly."According to Smith (57), " [*Historia*'s] origin and date are uncertain. Dozy thought it composed about 1150, Lang put it at about 1170, but Menéndez Pidal, as usual at the opposite extreme, firmly indicated 1110. The best recent discussion is that of Ubieto, who holds that it was written probably between 1144 and 1147." In the *Historia*, Rodrigo becomes a part of King Sancho's army, but his actions in battle distinguish him as a knight: "En todos los combates que el rey Sancho hizo con el rey Alfonso en Llantada y golpejera, venciéndolo, Rodrigo Díaz portó el estandarte del rey Sancho y prevaleció y fue mejor que todos los soldados del ejército real" (5. 104). Later in the same chapter, Rodrigo faces and overcomes the challenge of fighting fifteen soldiers alone and, with the help of his "ánimo decidido," is able to defeat them all. Therefore, courage, a necessary military and masculine virtue (Hadley 85), yields an exemplary warrior when paired with demonstrated physical ability.

The fact that the Cid does not suffer all the consequences of exile is important for his characterization. From the moment of his banishment, his actions are motivated by the aim of regaining that lost honor and property, and the battles he fights set the stage for the poem's denouement. As Braudy explains, "if one does not defend one's honor with action and usually with force, then one is not a man" (52).

After securing funds from the money lenders and swearing to Jimena and his daughters that he will marry them well, the Cid promises restoration of property to those who choose to follow him into exile and forfeit all they have:

> Yo ruego a Dios e al Padre spiritual,
> vos, que por mi dexades casas y heredades,
> enantes que yo muera algún bien vos pueda far,
> lo que perdedes doblado vos lo cobrar.' (300-3)

At this point the Cid has nothing but his word with which to fulfill this promise. The men who choose to follow him into exile do so based on the hero's reputation as a warrior and on his potential for gains in battle, but the validity of his oath remains in question until he can prove himself.

Two battles in particular, Castejón and Alcocer, illustrate the hero's talents for employing the ruse and bluff, tactics essential to all great commanders (Smith 1983, 153).[32] These battles exhibit the Cid's courage and skill, and magnify his reputation as a formidable warrior. He proves trustworthy by keeping his word to his vassals and by rewarding them for their sacrifices, and he demonstrates loyalty to his lord Alfonso by sending him a portion of

[32] For detailed studies related to battle tactics in the *Cantar*, see Baldwin and Hendrix.

the booty. All of these characteristics show a person who in his *gravitas* is mature and wise, and thus present the Cid as a male exemplar.

The Infantes of Carrión's dishonorable behavior contrasts with the Cid. They are young, and thus are in a testing period of time during which they must prove themselves as deserving of being betrothed to his daughters.[33] Instead, they scheme to acquire more wealth through marriage rather than in combat and, therefore, they seek to better themselves at the expense rather than in the service of others, including the Cid himself. As characters, they invert and corrupt the initiatory period into manhood and their actions mark them as models of what not to do (Montgomery 1998, 42), as they miss opportunities to prove themselves (47).

Their first chance to prove their valor comes at the beginning of the third "Cantar," when a lion escapes from its cage while the Cid is asleep. The Cid's loyal men rush to protect him, whereas the Infantes are terror striken and run for cover:

> Ferran Gonçalez non vio alli dos alçasse, nin camara abierta nin torre,
> metios so'l escaño tanto ovo el pavor,
> Diego Gonçalez por la puerta salió
> diciendo de la boca: '¡Non vere Carrion!'
> Tras una viga lagar metios con grant pavor,
> el manto y el brial todo suzio lo saco. (2286-91)

After Diego's shameful loss of bodily control, the Cid wakes up, assesses a situation that his new sons-in-law are clearly incapable of resolving, and reaffirms his dominance over the lion

[33] Hart points out that the Cid distrusts the Infantes from the beginning, and that he repeatedly insists that the responsibility for marrying his daughters lies completely with the king (18).

and his court by his mere presence (Montgomery 1998, 43), a feat that is described by the poet as "A maravilla lo han quantos qui i son" (2302).[34]

This episode is the principal reason for the Infantes' shame.[35] However, they have a chance to redeem themselves in the eyes of the same *mesnada* that jeers them after their disgrace. The infante Fernán González asks to have the honor of delivering the first blows in battle against the invading Moroccan army. However, González flees from his Moorish opponent on the field and thus fails his duty in battle, leaving one of the Cid's vassals—Pedro Bermúdez—to kill the invader. This behavior is so cowardly that Bermúdez must attribute his own heroic actions to the Infante in order to avoid bringing shame on the Cid being by having such dishonorable relatives.[36] The Infantes' behavior continues to be shameful until they are overcome with self-pity and choose to leave Valencia with their brides, whom they dishonor and beat on the road to Carrión. Their behavior therefore stands in unmistakable contrast to the exemplary behavior of the Cid.

In both the *Mocedades* and the *Cantar*, the nobility is characterized through the actions of their representatives. The *infanzones*, or lower nobles, are always more favorably presented and their actions applauded as superior. The Cid dominates others in face-to-face combat and then judiciously distributes the collected booty while the Infantes rely on trickery and duplicity to amass and keep wealth. Social rank, and not manly prowess, affords the Infantes the opportunity to marry the Cid's daughters, a proposal they accept from Alfonso

[34] Hook points out that the Cid, as the epic hero of the poem, is the only real solution to the problem at hand. Therefore, his *mesnada* does not attempt to subdue the beast, but rather takes up a defensive position in order to protect the hero, who thus will resolve the situation (556-57).

[35] Olson calls attention to Leo Spitzers observation that the Infantes' mention the lion episode four times after the fact in the poem, clearly pointing to an obsessive preoccupation with the humiliation that resulted (500).

[36] Fifty lines of the original poem are missing, but Menéndez Pidal has filled this gap using text from the chronicles.

only because the hero's honor has grown significantly from his conquests: "las nuevas del Çid mucho van adelant; / demandemos sus fijas pora con ellas casar; / creçremos en nuestra ondra e iremos adelant" (1881-83). Ultimately, their lack of manliness causes them to flee Valencia and to dishonor their brides and the Cid. The poem makes clear that social rank has little to do with one's masculinity. The masculine virtues essential to the Reconquest reside in the Cid rather than the Infantes, who can do nothing to help the kingdom fight the Moors.

As in the later *Mocedades*, masculine development in the *Cantar* is not always dependant on men. Women too serve as external signs of worth by adding to men's honor through the exchange of dowry and sometimes function as tools for men to assert their dominance, but this is only part of their role.[37]

According to Tuchman, the presence of women serves to heighten the role of the hero by showing "[the knight] more valiant, more *preux*" (67), as is happens when the Cid's wife and daughters arrive in Valencia, and their presence inspires the hero to flaunt himself by dressing in fine clothing and exhibiting his equestrian skills:

> mio Çid salio sobre'el e armas de fuste tomava;
>
> vistios el sobregonel; luenga trahe la barba;
>
> por nombre el cavallo Bavieca cavalga;
>
> fizo una corrida; esta fue tan estraña
>
> quando ovo corrido todos se maravillavan (1586-90)

The Cid's fellow knights, too, are emboldened to outwardly express their delight at the arrival of the women: "Todas las sus mesnadas en grant deleit estavan / armas teniendo e

[37] The Infantes of Carrion, on the other hand, represent the unfit men in the poem who are incapable of dominating other males. Instead, they resort to dominating women in order to avenge their shameful behavior before the lion and the Moors in battle. The Infantes' behavior is clearly portrayed as a desperate and unmanly attempt to regain lost honor at the expense of the Cid. In comparison, the Cid's behavior with women and his quest to regain honor are both portrayed as exemplary.

tablados quebrantado" (1601-02) and, later, when the king of Morocco lays siege to Valencia, the Cid is again excited by the presence of his women who at last will witness his prowess in battle (Lawrance 53): "creçem el coraçon por que estades delant" (1655).

This female presence underscores the fact that masculinity is constantly subject to external view (Wicks 12). Women may not be part of the masculine world of the Cid and his men, but they act as a vantage point from which to assess their masculine construction. As the Moors approach with beating drums, the women, unaccustomed to this spectacle, are shown naturally frightened. In contrast, the Cid is galvanized by their sound and explains to Jimena and his daughters how they should view the upcoming battle: "'Non ayades miedo ca todo es vuestra pro; / antes destos .xv. días si plogiere al Criador /aquelos atamores a vos los pondrán delant e veredes quanles son" (1664-66). The women must "learn from the men to view war as a window of opportunity" and "not to fear the Muslims, but to dominate them" (Mirrer 181), but the lesson is for other men to hear.

At this point the Cid has established his position in Valencia and no longer behaves like an exiled vassal but rather like a king, and therefore his words and actions must be viewed as a lesson. The Cid intends to defeat the Moorish army in combat, take their belongings, and hence enhance his wealth and the security of Castile.

## CHAPTER 4

### Conclusion

The objective of this paper has been to study the characterization of Rodrigo in *Mocedades* from the perspective of what was considered appropriate behavior by the Medieval concepts of the ages of man to determine if its underlying characterization of the hero differs from the *Cantar*, as many critics believe. I have found that, although some characteristics follow the standards of different ages of men studied by Burrow, the exemplarity of the hero demands a somewhat different treatment of Rodrigo's characterization that is consistent in both poems.

The ideals of heroic poetry either separate martial skills from wisdom or allows wisdom to coexist with warrior abilities (Curtius 170-73),[38] but the Medieval epic hero generally possesses both traits, although in unequal measures, because these characters are "men who by their wisdom and courage are worthy of heaven" (Isidore of Seville, qtd. in Curtius 175).

For common people, the limitations of youth naturally control male behavior, and the maturity that characterizes their transition from *pueritia* to *gravitas* takes many years to develop (Burrow 117). However, in heroes, the process is accelerated through divine

[38] Curtius 171: The Homeric heroes appearing in the *Iliad* often do not strike a balance between *fortitudo* and *sapientia*. For example, Achilles is a great warrior but suffers a tragic end due not only to fate but also his uncontrolled emotions. Hector, too, proves skilled in battle but not fit for counsel. Only in Odysseus do wisdom, proficiency in battle and heroism exist in equilibrium.

grace.[39] The characterization of Rodrigo follows this pattern. *Mocedades*'s Rodrigo naturally possess the strength of a grown man as a child and often disregards certain standards of conduct prevalent in youth, but he needs to transcend his chronological age in order to become a vessel for *sapientia.*

The *Cantar*'s hero is a mature man , older and wiser, and the poem does not concern itself with his transformation from one age to another. Instead, it shows someone in whom *fortitudo* and *sapientia* coexist and can overcome the trauma implicit in the loss of standing in Castile's hierarchical social structure.

The intervention of Heaven is a constant in both epic poems. During his pilgrimage to Santiago, *Mocedades*'s Rodrigo has a supernatural sign from heaven in the form of a leper who alerts the hero to the fact that his martial abilities will be sufficient to accomplish anything he wants whenever he feels a fever—"que quando esta calentura ovieres, que te sea menbrado, / quantas cosas comenzares, arrematarl' ás con tu mano" (650-51). The "furia guerrera" (Armistead 2000, 75)[40] brought about by the divine fever, which at this stage Rodrigo cannot fully control,[41] causes a metamorphosis within the hero ("que ted é un resollo en las espaldas, que en calenture seas entrado," 649) and gives him the ability to defeat the older Navarrese champion: "un golpe le fue dar que le abatió del cavallo, / en ante que el conde se levantase, deçendió a degollarlo" (690-91). His natural and youthful desire to fight is forged by Heaven's intervention into a character that is consistent with that of the *Cantar.*

[39] In the lives of Classical heroes, Christ and the saints for example, ordinary rules of development do not apply (Burrows 135-36).

[40] Armistead explains that the hero Cú Chulainn of the Irish epic *Táin Bó Cúailnge* also experiences physical changes as a result of battle fury (2000, 74-75).

[41] Montgomery echoes that the warrior's state of fury is brought on by combat and thus is not within his control (13).

Although the Cid does not catch a "fever", his exemplarity is enhanced by a dream he has when he is about to leave Castile,[42] in which the Archangel Gabriel promises success: "Cavalgad, Çid, el buen Campeador, / ca nunqua en tan buen punto cavalgo varon; / mientra que visquieredes bien se fara lo to" (407-09). Signs such as these present the medieval public with a more profound reality (Bloch 83) that connects Rodrigo's early tasks of late exile with God's aim of advancing the Reconquest.[43]

In *Mocedades*, Rodrigo begins in the service of his father and family, but by the end he has become the king's standard bearer and champion of all of Castile against foreign aggression. In the *Cantar*, his loyalty is unshakable and serves to correct the behavior of the king. Both poems signal the need to inspire a new type of nobility, one where service is valued most (Lacarra 1999, 473; Martín 265), and which originates in the lower-ranking *infanzones*. Both heroes, according to Amador de los Rios, exude "igual grandeza de alma, igual lealtad é igual esplendidez y desprendimiento" (79); they both possess *fortitudo* and *sapientia*; show concern for others (but not at the expense of the greater good); and are both worthy of the support of Heaven. The characterization of Rodrigo in *Mocedades* is therefore consistent with the *Cantar*.

[42] According to Bloch, people's minds during the Middle Ages were fixated on all manner of supernatural manifestations, including dreams (73).

[43] Pidal points out that the Cid served as an exemplar after his time, and not only for soldiers but for the general populace as well who could appreciate his motivating spirit (654).

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