

## Mio Cid, Noble Warrior Lord

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### Abstract

In the epic tradition the notion of sacrifice to a higher goal often predominates in the plot. In the case of *Mio Cid* the reader is left to wonder why the hero remains loyal to the king who banishes him unjustly. The warrior retains the posture of persecuted victim, even as he grows powerful by conquest. The Cid patiently sues for redress, and accepts a reconciliatory marriage between his daughters and the nobility to implement the royal pardon. The cruel betrayal by the grooms, who beat their innocent brides, augments the indignity of his suffering.

We explain in our study how the Cid exhibits qualities of René Girard's scapegoat; the noble warrior lord does not give in to vengeance and, instead, seeks retribution without displaying mimetic reciprocity. The difference between the Cid and his envious enemies outlines social injustice. While the nobility is debased by greed, the heroic dimension of the loyal Cid is magnified by humility. Our conclusion shows that self-sacrifice in the epic of *Mio Cid* projects an image of Christian resignation.

**Keywords:** affront at Corpes, exile, *infantes de Carrión*, mimetic reciprocity, Mio Cid, morality, René Girard, scapegoat

The plot of the Spanish epic of *Mio Cid* revolves around the personality of the protagonist. We view Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar as a figure of history and literature. (Menéndez Pidal, 1991, p. 29). Although the Spanish epic may lack the Holy War theme prevalent in *The Song of Roland*, Ramón Menéndez Pidal maintains that the Cid exemplifies loyalty and patriotism, not the selfish attainment of wealth and glory (De Chasca, 1967, p. 149).<sup>1</sup> Cesáreo Bandera Gómez (1969) affirms that there is a religious tone in the *Poema*, different from the conventional role of Crusader, which overcomes the notion of a Cid motivated by self-aggrandizement (p. 49).<sup>2</sup> We shall explore the moral character of the Spanish hero.

The central issue supporting the notion of the Cid as champion of noble ideals is the fact that the hero foregoes the right, granted to him by statute, to wage war against the king who banishes him unjustly (De Chasca, 1967, p. 151).<sup>3</sup> As he grows increasingly powerful by conquest, the poetic Cid sues for redress in three consecutive embassies (Hamilton and Perry, 1984, p. 225).<sup>4</sup> Showing religious zeal, the historic Cid establishes a cathedral in the conquered city of Valencia, his preferred citadel (Hamilton and Perry, 1984, p.228). Edmund De Chasca, along with Menéndez Pidal, believe that Mio Cid remains loyal to the king, his persecutor, in history and in the epic, because a personal pardon represents national unification (De Chasca, 1967, p. 149). We lean on this perspective to view the Cid as a victim in need of respect and consideration (De Chasca, 1967, p. 151). Since public image of the legendary figure is fostered mainly by the epic poem,

<sup>1</sup> Gerald Brenan considers the Cid a mercenary. George Tyler Northup accounts for a weak religious motif because the Moors at the time were admired in Spain, and not feared (De Chasca, 1967, p. 148, p. 156).

<sup>2</sup> Bandera Gómez (1969) declares that the notion of a materialistic Cid is outmoded and useless (p. 49).

<sup>3</sup> De Chasca quotes from the *Fuero Viejo de Castilla* and *Las Partidas*, cited by Menéndez Pidal, stating that the banished had a right to battle the king, and, moreover, that those vassals serving under an exiled lord had the duty to aid him in armed rebellion (De Chasca, 1967, p. 151). For a contrast between the historical figure who fed the legend, and the poetic hero, we rely on the works of Ramón Menéndez Pidal, considered a foremost authority on the particular epoch in which the Cid lived (De Chasca, 1967, p. 154). Although the Cid of history was banished twice, and was not pardoned the second time, the Cid of the epic is exiled once; only to be gloriously vindicated by a monarch whose character undergoes a gradual change toward benevolence, which probably never occurred in reality. The austere severity of the historical Cid gives way to the magnanimity and loyalty of the poetic Cid (De Chasca, 1967, pp. 145-146).

<sup>4</sup> The Cid sends the king thirty horses in the first embassy [816], then one hundred [1274], and, finally, two hundred horses in the third embassy [1813] (Michael, 1976, p. 135, p. 168, p. 202).

we concentrate our primary exploration of the hero's character on the views expressed in the poem. We cannot neglect, however, significant overlaps between poetry and history which cement the cultural conception of the Cid's identity as a heroic figure. We intend to explain why the general fascination persists through the ages.

The conquests of an exile, loyal to the king who banishes him, form a basis for the conceptual progression of *Mio Cid*. To penetrate the poetic symbolism implied in the quest for pardon means to recapture the original experience of the Spanish epic. To condemn the Cid as cruel warrior lord is inappropriate because the historical figure that fed the legend lived at a time when the political and economic progress helpful to national security depended on territorial conquest and proper government. Attaining victories against the Arab invaders, the exiled *infanzón* merits better treatment from the monarch; but the nobility of long standing impede such progress through their slander and calumny of the heroic Cid. In the *Poema*, King Alfonso, eventually persuaded by the Cid's continuous conquests, intends to get the warrior back to the fold; consequently, he engineers a matrimonial alliance with two local nobles. The unfortunate beating of the Cid's daughters by the undeserving grooms, shortly after the unsuccessful reconciliatory marriage, is the climax that brings legal scruple to bear on the difference between the hero and his enemies. As De Chasca (1967) states: "The Cid's refusal to rebel against the king, persistently seeking justice for the outrage against his daughters through legal proceedings, never resorting to unruly personal vengeance, is the best argument to defend his claim to glory" (p. 150).<sup>5</sup>

From the *Poema* we may extract the conceptual essence of morality; for the moral character does what he must, regardless of whether he gets a reward or not. Lack of recognition, even suffering, does not perturb performance of duty. The epic tradition in the Western World embraces this essential concept of morality as endurance in the wake of loss. In the *Iliad* Achilles loses Patroclus and returns to the fighting (Lattimore, 1961, p. 353, p. 411). Enduring shipwreck and the loss of his men, Odysseus returns to Ithaca and slays the suitors of Penelope in the Homeric epic.<sup>6</sup> Neither the Platonic Socrates, nor the Biblical Christ, shun duty at the prospect of loss, rather nourishing by their paradigmatic life, whole systems of thought and feeling (Jaspers, 1962, p. 95). Charlemagne suffers the loss of his nephew in *The Song of Roland*, and steps over into legend through future conquest (Short, 1990, p. 259). *Mio Cid* suffers exile and the beating of his daughters by the hypocritical grooms, yet remains loyal to the monarch, an *exemplum* of the moral warrior who fuels through sacrifice the drive onward with the Reconquista.<sup>7</sup>

The noblemen who behave ignominiously, distrusting the Cid, forfeit their noble heritage, which remains a prize to be obtained by the truly noble, an outcome to be decided in the course of the epic. The role of *infanzón* makes the Cid liable to be targeted; his social rank places him below the nobility of long standing. The ranks of the Spanish nobility were basically three: in descending order, "*ricos omnes* (consisting of *condes* and *podestales*), *yfan çones*, and the *fijos d'algo*, which included *caballeros* and even *escuderos*, and more widely, all men of good lineage" (Hamilton and Perry, 1984, p. 231). Not being in the lowest rank, the Cid combines the marginality of the outsider with the marginality of the insider. The exiled Cid must establish his superior worth as an *infanzón* whose noble character far exceeds any conduct displayed by the false nobility. The king gradually realizes how different the Cid is from himself:

"I sent the good Campeador into exile, and  
he has been doing great things on my behalf,  
while I treated him badly..."<sup>8</sup>

*'Yo eché de tierra al buen Campeador,  
e faziendo yo a él mal e él a mí grand pro...' [1890-1891]*<sup>9</sup>

Throughout the narrative, in word and deed, the hero maintains his attained differentiation in order to restore social order.

By remaining loyal to the king who banishes him unjustly, the Cid reveals in his character qualities of the *scapegoat*. By giving in to vengeance the Cid would lose his differentiation as victim, descending in heroic status to become like his

<sup>5</sup> This translated paraphrase is mine.

<sup>6</sup> Lattimore's *Odyssey*, Book 22.

<sup>7</sup> Bandera Gómez (1969) explains that "the Cid is not an idealized model, but rather a historical exemplum on how to become a true model in reality" (p. 48). In this light the *Poema* has a theme less fabulous than *La Chanson de Roland*; the French hero appears more epic and mythical than the Cid (Bandera Gómez, 1969, pp. 71-73).

<sup>8</sup> Hamilton and Perry, 1984, p. 121. Translations are from this edition, unless specified otherwise.

<sup>9</sup> Michael, 1976, p. 206. Direct quotes from the text are from this edition.

envious enemies at court through mimetic reciprocity. Bandera Gómez (2019) exclaims that the Cid “fought like a regular medieval warrior, but never out of vengeful rivalry” (p. 199). For the sake of proper literary interpretation, we must again note that the most prominent overlap between the historic and the poetic Cid is the reluctance of the leader to turn against the king who exiled him. Ramón Menéndez Pidal (1970) explains that the Cid renounces the right, granted to him as petty noble, to battle the lord who slighted him (p. 227); the historian (1929) insists that the old poem contains a Cidian line expressing historical truth: “I should not like to fight against my lord, King Alfonso” [538] (p. 37).<sup>10</sup> Edmund De Chasca (1967) believes that this line expresses the most important of all moral victories (p. 124). The Cid stubbornly refuses to give in to mimetic reciprocity.

Once excluded from society, the differences between the victim and the persecutors are defined by what René Girard (1986) calls the “scapegoat mechanism” (p. 174). Such perspective provides a suitable treatment for interpreting the Spanish epic of *Mio Cid*. In *Leviticus* 16:8 Aaron casts lots upon two goats; one is sacrificed to the Lord as a sin offering; the other is presented alive and released into the wilderness to serve as atonement for the sins of the people.<sup>11</sup> Girard (1986) strongly criticizes the use of the term *scapegoat* in the ritual sense only (p. 120). He advocates instead the concept of the *scapegoat* as “a structural principle that is absent from the text it structures” (Girard, 1986, p.121). Recognizing that unjust accusation leads to persecution is the scapegoat theme. “Persecute” is our word for fomenting unjust accusation. In the context of *Mio Cid* we should ponder over the unfair accusation, which results in banishment of the hero, as a means to interpret the text of the epic.

Identifying vulnerability of the lowly, or the physically diseased, is the first step in selecting the victim and initiating Girard’s *scapegoat mechanism* (Girard, 1986, p. 18). The victim includes in his innocence the collective polarization in opposition to him (Girard, 1986, p. 39). Along with Bandera Gómez (1969), we may consider that the Cid displays the role of an innocent victim almost incompatible with the courageous dimension expected of an epic hero (p.182). Contagion between the victim and the persecutors is the second stage of the scapegoat mechanism. In this light St. Peter’s denial of Christ is not only excused, but expected (Girard, 1986, p. 105). In our discussion we see how the king becomes more noble in the course of the epic, and his courtiers less so; while the Cid acquires a true noble dimension. The final stage is the violence which may be repeated to become an integral cultural phenomenon. This last stage of the *scapegoat mechanism*, exemplified by the Crucifixion, brings redemption (Girard, 1986, p. 111). Viewing history, the author of *The Scapegoat* insists that the sentiment is not necessarily Christian, although it is proper to Jesus Christ. The critic (1986) considers Jesus Christ incomparable, since He does not succumb to the perspective of the persecutor; neither in a positive way, by agreeing with the executioner, nor in a negative way, by taking a position of strict vengeance (p.126). Bandera Gómez (2019) explains that Christ, “instead of calling a legion of angels to destroy the culture of Satan, gives himself over into the hands of the people; he becomes the victim” (p. 204).<sup>12</sup> The tormented Christ does not give in to mimetic reciprocity.

The paradox of weakness and strength is evidenced at times by a change of status in history. For instance, early in our contemporary era, when the Christian movement was weak, Christians suffered persecution; but as time went on, and Christianity became strong, under Constantine, Christians eventually became persecutors themselves (Girard, 1986, p. 204). Jesus Christ is different from Christians. Divine power should not aim at destruction or exclusion, it should not expel anyone through, or by, persecution. Satan’s power is destructive; whereas Jesus Christ brings the world a stubborn peace (Girard, 1986, pp. 191-192). Evidence for this last stage in the *scapegoat mechanism*, when it occurs, is difficult to recognize as necessary to resolve a sacrificial crisis, since immediacy blurs the long range revelation of the process, or, as Girard (1986) states: “transcendent qualities are replaced by the justification of social utility” (p.113). The cultural anthropologist explains (1986) further that: “the political reason is always contested by its victims and denounced as persecution even by those who would unwittingly resort to it should they find themselves in a position similar to Caiaphas” (p.113). In the *New Testament* the High Priest arrives at the decision to put Jesus to death since “it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people and that the whole nation perish not” [John 11:50].<sup>13</sup> A savior represents the community, and does not concede victimization; nor are the persecutors willing to accept their role. Violence provides resolution to this tense denial. Bigomil Straczek considers the Caiaphas principle central to the *scapegoat mechanism* because the community is subjected to the belief that there is life in death, “sacred hierophany”

<sup>10</sup> ‘con Alfonso mio señor non querria lidiar’ [538]. All quotes from the prose works of Menéndez Pidal are my translations.

<sup>11</sup> *Leviticus* 16:10-22 (Bullinger, 2000, p. 155).

<sup>12</sup> We owe to A. Erickson’s relatively recent interview with Bandera Gómez (2019) revelation of the critic’s more advanced Girardian views (p. 204).

<sup>13</sup> Bullinger, 2000, p. 1548.

(Straczek, 2014, pp. 51-52).

The Cid retains the posture of innocent victim without relinquishing his stature as fearless warrior because he wages war against foreign invaders and ignoble courtiers.<sup>14</sup> When the Count of Nájera remarks that in the Cid's territory there is no Moor alive, the king responds by telling the Count that the hero "serves me better than you do" [1348-1349]. The magnanimous Cid liberally shares acquired booty with his men [847-849]. While waging war, the Cid mingles charity with military strategy. He frees the captured Count Berenguel of Barcelona, who had previously denied passage to his army [1040]. Revenge may not advance safe-passage in the future. Even while engaging the enemy in battle, the noble warrior displays, in tactical maneuvers, the behavior of the prudent. The Cid deceives the defenders of Alcocer into leaving their stronghold in pursuit of some regiments that feign defeat; the strategy to follow is to draw the enemy out after apparent retreat, "In the guise of the discreet to lure them out into an ambush."<sup>15</sup>

Vis à vis the authorities of the realm, the Cid retains the posture of victim. The king is swayed by his courtiers, but he, too, displays initial anger at Cidian prowess. Anthony Zahareas illustrates: "The Cid of legend and history was exiled for two reasons: one, through the calumny of his enemies and two, because Alfonso became angry after the Cid attacked the Moslem king of Toledo without his consent" (Zahareas, 1965, p. 170). His struggle is twofold. The nobility cherishes belief in the culpability of the Cid as victim. The king and the nobility fuse in a representation of communal authority. The combined mimesis generates a sacrificial crisis which leads to expulsion of the victim from society (Girard, 1986, p.189).

Just as banishment isolates the Cid, the forsaken nuptials separate his daughters from the parental fold. They too become victims. The noblemen unwittingly absorb the projected retribution that shall purify society. They become themselves the logical target for communal anger. In the *Poema* the affront at Corpes cannot be verified historically; we must understand it as sheer poetic contrivance. Since the outrage against the daughters is totally fictitious, we must account for it in the framework of a justifiable artistic construct. In the *Poema* Diego and Fernando Gonzáez are the nephews of Count Nájera; although they belonged to Alfonso's *schola regis*, they had no right to the title of *infantes*. But this is the title the *juglar* assigns to them. Moreover, Ian Michal explains: "There is no record of their betrothal or marriage to the Cid's daughters" (Hamilton and Perry, 1984, p. 228). The poetic fiction probably emanates from a legend created to signal unfair nepotism and disorder in the realm. In the course of the narrative, the grotesquely dishonorable action by the *infantes* stands out as unworthy of high lineage. We may add, as contributing effect to such dramatic character contrast the entire episode of the lion; both *infantes* cowered before the escaped lion, which the fearless Cid led back to its cage [2278-2301]. The confused *infantes* even claim the infamy of the outrageous assault is justified by their need to appease the rancor they harbor, fearful that anyone may harp over their cowardice during the lion episode [2548, 2556]. Consequently, the outrage perpetrated against the daughters must be accounted for within the narrative in a formalistic way. The anthropological perspective is sensible: two brothers commit a crime against two sisters, a classic case of mimetic rivalry and reciprocal desire unleashing violence.

The framework of corruption at court becomes obvious enough to reveal the obvert injustice perpetrated against the victim. However, impressed by the Cid's victories, the king becomes disposed toward pardoning the Cid; the monarch hopes to honor him further by a nuptial alliance through his unwed daughters. Since the promise of pardon includes the request for double betrothal, a self-conscious vassal could hardly separate one from the other [1905-1906]. Indeed, the special assembly summoned to implement the pardon, the *Vistas*, shall be held with the prospect of the marriage already looming overhead as an implicit contingency.<sup>16</sup>

The Cid of the *Poema* accepts the nuptials with gratitude for the pardon, yet with distrust toward the marriage:

'I should not wish for this marriage  
but, as the King, our overlord, urges it so strongly,  
let us discuss it quietly among ourselves.'

<sup>14</sup> There are issues of cruelty to be answered by all sides. Menéndez Pidal (1929) tells how the historical Cid "burned prisoners alive or subjected them to being torn apart by dogs" (p. 40). Apparently, the *juglar* does not use material in the *Poema* that could injure the living legend in order to frame a figure that delineates the favorable aspects of the Cid's heroism for posterity.

<sup>15</sup> *a guisa de menbrado por sacarlos a çelada*. [579] The translation above is mine. The condensed poetic beauty of this simple line in the original text is unforgettable.

<sup>16</sup> "There were three kinds of gatherings, in ascending order of importance: *juntas* ('meetings'), *vistas* ('assemblies'), *cortes* (convocations of the royal court or *curia regia*)" (Hamilton and Perry, 1984, p. 231).

*'d'este casamiento non avría sabor,  
mas pues lo conseia el que más vale que nós,  
fablemos en ello, en la poridad seamos nós.'* [1939-1941]

The Cid's misgivings about the marriage are based largely on the *infantes'* haughtiness and the connections they hold at the royal court: "They are very proud young men and they belong to the king's household" [1938].<sup>17</sup> The rivalry between the Cid and the dissemblers at court, or *mestureros*, gives way to the higher consideration of obedience to the *rex imago*. Menéndez Pidal (1967) explains: "Those so called dissemblers, or minglers (that is to say, sowers of discord) constituted a true public calamity which deeply destroyed social life" (p. 69). What is rendered as "overlord" in Hamilton and Perry's translation, actually, in the original text, means "the one who is worth more than us," *el que más vale que nós* [1940] (Hamilton and Perry, 1984, pp. 124-125). The humility of the Cid emerges as a political stance. The inferior worth of the grooms is evident; in a deplorable financial state, the *infantes* make ready for the *Vistas* by pawning goods, "they paid cash for some things and obtained others on credit" [1976].<sup>18</sup> The decadent nobility does not possess much more than the common populace. The conquering Cid, in turn, displays diffidence to the king. The hero, upon encountering the monarch, prostrates himself, pledging devotion. The king tells the Cid to rise on condition that, if the hero does not behave more normally the monarch will withdraw his love [2027-2029]. The humble hero insists that he shall not rise until he has *amor* from the monarch loud enough for all to hear [2031-2032b]. The warrior lord's province of Valencia seems to become officially annexed when the king ratifies the governorship by granting the Cid a place in his kingdom, along with the pardon:

The King replied: 'I shall do so with all my heart.  
Here and now I pardon you and restore you to my favour  
and welcome your return to my kingdom.'

*Dixo el rrey: 'Esto feré d'alma e de corazón;  
aqu ívos perdono e dovos mi amor  
[e] en todo mio rreino parte desde oy.'* [2033-2035]

Acknowledging the Cidian territory of Valencia as part of his kingdom the king dispossesses himself indirectly. In this obvious case of contagion, the donor makes the receiver another self. The treaty joins both characters through mutual demands since allegiance and duty are involved.

This pardon scene would represent a climax in the story, except for the betrayal and subsequent retribution in the *Cortes* and the duels. Mindful of his role as Christian warrior, loyal to the king as institution, the Cid's acceptance of the long-sought pardon is directed to God, to Alfonso, and to his army:

'I receive your pardon with gratitude, my lord Alfonso.  
For it I thank God, then you  
and these my vassals who stand here with me.'

*'¡Merçed! Yo lo rreçibo, Alfonso mio señor;  
grad éscolo a Dios del cielo e despu és a vós  
e a estas mesnadas que están aderredor.'* [2036-2038]

The moral strength of the Cid justifies his appeal as military hero for the ages. Menéndez Pidal holds that "The noble ethics of the exile from Vivar was, then, one of the main reasons why he became the object of legendary song" (De Chasca, 1967, p. 57).

The morning after granting the long awaited pardon the king requests that the marriages be effectuated:

'I ask the hands of your daughters, Doña Elvira and Doña Sol,  
In marriage for the Infantes of Carrión.'

<sup>17</sup> *Ellos son mucho orgullosos e an part en la cort.* [1938]

<sup>18</sup> *lo uno adebdan e lo otro pagavan.* [1976]

*'Vuestras fijas vos pido, don Elvira e doña Sol,  
que las dedes por mugieres a los ifantes de Carrión. [2075-2076]*

We see that, before leaving the king's presence, the heroic Cid insists that it is the monarch himself, and not he, who marries the girls, "it is you, not I, who are giving my daughters in marriage" [2110].<sup>19</sup> Moreover, back in Valencia, the Cid will announce the marriage to his family with a disclaimer of liability as caveat: "it is he who is giving you in marriage and not I" [2204].<sup>20</sup> The hero's detachment from the betrothal maintains his established superior worth, while his acceptance of the marriage shows subservience to the king's will. Although the monarch views the pardon as intimately entwined to the betrothal, the worried father wishes to distinguish the two. Lack of such differentiation is foreboding.

Acceptance of the marriage, combined with recalcitrance over accepting agency for the same, outlines the stern difference between the Cid and the *infantes*. The line describing the separation of the daughters from the parental fold duplicates the previous torn nail metaphor, which was used to describe the earlier separation [375] of the Cid from his wife, Jimena, and the family: "They parted with such pain as when a finger-nail is torn from the flesh" [2642].<sup>21</sup> The dramatic echo draws a conceptual parallel between the *mestureros*, responsible for the Cid's exile, and the ungrateful *infantes*; cruelty and greed outline inferior worth for both factions, causing suffering which the Cid and his family must bear; for the bonds of matrimony are to be severed by a nefarious breach. Yet, unlike the subtle intrigue at court that triggers the unjust exile, the personal outrage of the cowardly assault against the newly wed brides is openly criminal.<sup>22</sup>

As doña Sol, one of the Cid's daughters, warns, the wretched deed will stand as testimony for the worthlessness of the *infantes*:

'Do not ill-treat us like this,  
for if we are beaten you will be disgraced and  
men will charge you with this crime in assemblies and courts of justice.'

*'Atan malos ensienplos non fagades sobre nós.  
si n ós fu éremos maiadas, abiltaredes a v ós,  
rretraer vos lo an en vistas o en cortes.'* [2731-2733]

Even though doña Sol concludes her plea for mercy with a reminder of the impending suit, the *infantes* remain heedless. The king could not possibly condone the action since the *infantes* behave as if the Cid were still the exiled *infanzón*. They do not heed the acquired differentiation, merit attained through noble deeds. The corrupt nobles' beating of the Cid's daughters is a monstrously unfair event in plot development; the *infantes* were granted the role of grooms by an overzealous monarch.<sup>23</sup> Alfonso had implemented the nuptials in the hope of attaining unity of classes. But, instead of aiding the ascension of the Cid's stature, the nobles are shown to be worth less than the Cid, projecting further contagion in the social order.

The epic of *Mio Cid* transitions from the hero's persistent wooing of the king for the long sought pardon, through the three embassies, on to the demand for retribution for the affront. Hence the monarch must grant redress for the egregious crime perpetrated by the *infantes*. The plot progresses into the court scene and on to the final duels which establish that the pardon and the ill-fated matrimonial alliance must converge in the Medieval relief brought about through trial by combat.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>19</sup> *'Vos casades mis fijas ca non gel as do yo.'* [2110]

<sup>20</sup> *'bien me lo creades que él vos casa, ca non yo.'* [2204]

<sup>21</sup> *Cuemo la uña de la carne ellos partidos son.* [2642]

<sup>22</sup> Girard (1986) insists that, beyond a certain threshold, hate exists without a specific reason (p.38).

<sup>23</sup> Girard (1986) explains how marriages are not clearly perceived as exchanges when society is in a state of social crisis. Institutional collapse obliterates "hierarchical and functional differences, so that everything has the same monotonous and monstrous aspect" (p. 13).

<sup>24</sup> "Trial by Combat was, in theory at any rate, a means of causing God to pronounce a public judgement on which of the two combatants is in the right" (Hart, 1962, p. 170).

The failed recognition of noble value unveils the *infantes* as wretched victims themselves.<sup>25</sup> The cruelty of their crime forbids the reader's attachment to them; we identify them as a destructive faction, undeserving of the pity saved for the Cid and his daughters. By belonging to a lower class the *infanzón* warrior and his family outline a marginality typical to the outsider; the banishment and the affront at Corpes reinforce the separation. The nobles remain insiders who reflect in their spoiled character defects of the ruling cast.

There is an element of choice which prevails prominently. The *infantes* choose to perpetrate the outrage against the Cid's daughters, just as the *malos mestureros* choose to alienate themselves from the conquering warrior. The Cid does not willfully become their persecutor the way they choose him as victim. They wish to banish him from the realm. In the course of the epic the false nobility is unveiled as persecutors guilty of polluting the community. The Cid declares himself victor through the toil of his labors as conqueror and by overcoming the personal injury suffered unjustly. He deserves relief; they earn the defeat of the vanquished. Thus, differentiation is restored through their punishment, and society is saved, ending a cultural crisis. Through a sacrificial stance, the Cid attains mythological status. The affront is perpetrated against the Cid's daughters, not due to any specific act they committed, but because "they belong to a class that is particularly vulnerable to persecution" (Girard, 1986, pp. 17-18). They are guiltless characters in the epic. Their innocence makes them liable, amplifying the indecent cowardice of the *infantes*. The ruffians are less wealthy, and less noble than their victims. The differences between the noble *infanzón* and the false nobility is unveiled in terms of the envious hatred they display.

The *infantes* feel justified in the assault on the Cid's daughters due to their lineage. As Count Garçi Ordóñez states at the trial:

'The lords of Carrión are of such noble lineage that  
they should not consider his daughters fit to be their concubines.'

*'Los de Carrión son de natura tal  
non gel as devién querer sus fijas por varraganas.'* [3275-3276]

Such condescension is appalling. The confused Don Fernando, likewise, reiterates his uncle's view:

'We are of the family of the counts of Carrión  
and have the right to marry the daughters of kings and emperors,  
and the daughters of petty nobles are not our equals.'

*'De natura somos de condes de Carrión,  
deviemos casar con fijas de rreges o de enperadores  
ca non perteneçién fijas de infançones.'* [3296-3298]

The issue of greater worth by the lazy nobles is a futile groping for supremacy which their cowardly acts belie. But the trial is destined to establish justice. Per Bermúdez, the Cid's nephew, counters the false argument by an accusation of lesser worth:

'By deserting them you incurred infamy.  
They are women and you are men,  
But they are your superiors in every way.'

*'por quanto las dexastes menos valedes vós;  
ellas son mugieres e vós sodes varones,  
en todas guisas más valen que vós.'* [3346-3348]

<sup>25</sup> Perpetrators of persecution, where the true nature of difference is not recognized, "possess the marks that suggest a victim" (Girard, 1986, p. 24).

Despite a difference in class, the nobility is not at par with the Cid's family in proper behavior. Even gender distinction is reversed by the traitors' cowardice. Differentiation must be established, neither at the level of lineage, nor gender, but, rather, at the level of merit, as dictated, more specifically, by proper conduct. The *infantes* lack true worth. Their argument of superior lineage is an invalid explanation; there is no justification to account for the outrage. Persecutors may experience hate without cause.<sup>26</sup> The *Poema* reveals the nobility's decadence.

We should dwell on a crucial parallel between history and the *Poema*. Menéndez Pidal enumerates historical circumstances that support the herculean prowess of the Cid. The historian explains that Garçi Ordóñez, a favorite of the king, "practiced a lesser form of *Reconquista*, the economic weakening of Moorish lords." The inglorious Count of Nájera, uncle of the *infantes*, committed the blunder of harassing Motánid in Seville while the Moor enjoyed sanction from the Cid as regional collector of tributes.<sup>27</sup> The Cid made proclamation of alliance to the Moorish king in an ultimatum the count did not heed, advancing on through to Cabra, a castle on the nearby frontier. The Cid, who had been idle for a while, launched an attack with the small host that served him as escort and overcame enemies in vast number. Although the Cid incarcerated the count merely for three days to prove the battle was won, the count's pride was injured. The Arab historians recorded it as extraordinary, an event of everlasting importance (Menéndez Pidal, 1929, p. 287). The critic (1929) proceeds: "Although the humiliation of Garçi Ordóñez pleased the people, it was very unpleasant to King Alfonso, who cherished a predilection for the Count of Nájera" (p. 288). The difference in political tactics apparently did not affect royal favoritism; the unusual victory, in fact, "awakened envy in many" (Menéndez Pidal, 1929, p. 289). This character trait seems to have been shared by the king. Menéndez Pidal (1945) says elsewhere that Alfonso VI was considered invidious, envious, or, in the etymological sense, an adverse viewer who views with bad eyes another's merit and tries to impede it; and this invidious king gives audience and support to the crowd of dissemblers or informers, the *catellani invidentes* (envious Castilians), as they are called in the *Historia Roderici*, and he ends up by expelling from Castile the hero, whose pre-eminence bothered him (p.163).<sup>28</sup> Menéndez Pidal's exaggerated supposition (1970) could account for the exile (pp. 141-144); however, the Alfonso of the *Poema* was rather swayed by ill advice (p.158). We gather that the friction was of long standing. The Cid of the *Poema* reminds Garçi Ordóñez not to reprimand him for a disheveled beard since no one has shown the hero such disrespect. The count's experience is otherwise. Apparently, the poetic Cid vigorously pulled at the count's beard. The Cid exclaims:

"No woman's son has ever plucked it and no one, Moor or Christian,  
ever tore it—as happened to yours, Count, in the Castle of Cabra.  
When I took Cabra and plucked your beard."

*'nimbla messó fijo de moro nin de christiana,  
como yo a vós, conde, en el castiello de Cabra;  
quando pris a Cabra e a vós por la barba.'* [3286-3288]

The Cid's reference to the incident at the Cabra castle, in which his will to favor the Moorish king predominated over Garçi Ordóñez's greed for more tribute, shows the hero's superior worth [3287-3290]. Evidently, in history and in the *Poema*, a confrontation establishing supremacy occurred at the Cabra castle.

In the *Poema* the main drive toward superior worth is outlined by a comparison between the hero and the monarch. Ian Michael considers the *pens óe comidi ó* phrase, meaning 'thought and deliberated,' "a formula used for the receipt of bad

<sup>26</sup> Girard (1986) insists on the issue of "hate without cause" (p.103, p. 118, p. 124, p. 146, p. 204).

<sup>27</sup> Menéndez Pidal (1929) explains that taxes were "a contribution which was rendered as a form of homage, that is, annual payment of tribute by the Moorish prince in exchange for protection and aid from the Christian lord" (p. 84). The historian (1929) adds: "But the control through tribute was very instable. As soon as the power wielded by the Christian dominator waivered, the Moorish vassal ceased to pay, or took his tribute to another lord more powerful who threatened or entreated him; and battles raged over the *parias*: since the middle of the XIth century the system of *Reconquista* began to be superimposed to the imposition of tribute" (p. 85). The Middle Ages provided the warrior spirit with an incontrovertible arena.

<sup>28</sup> The envy at court is the key point establishing differentiation between the Cid and his persecutors. Girard (1986) justifies Satan's banishment to Hell by viewing the Gospels as a way to end "humanity's imprisonment in a system of mythological representation based on the false transcendence of a victim who is made sacred because of the unanimous verdict of guilt; this *transcendence* is called Satan, and of all Satan's faults, envy and jealousy are the most in evidence; Satan could be said to incarnate mimetic desire were that desire not, by definition, disincarnate" (p. 166).



news” (Hamilton and Perry, 1984, p. 231). The textual critic (1984) refers to several uses: 1) first employed when the king hears the *infantes*’ request for the betrothal [1889]; 2) and used as well when the Cid receives from his ambassador, Minaya, news of the long awaited pardon, mingled with the marriage proposal [1932]; 3) the formula occurs also as the Cid hears about the infamous affront [2828] (p. 231). In addition to these instances, 4) the formula is repeated when the king receives the Cid’s request for justice for the outrage [2953]. Both the Cid and the monarch share an identical display of sullenness during the intense deliberation proper to those in a true position of authority.

The final scenes of the epic overcome tragedy and insult through the dispensation of justice. Yet, after the trial, the Cid departs. The final retribution is left to the Champion’s retainers. Mio Cid is not present during the duels that restore justice.<sup>29</sup> His absence displays rightful indignation, while conveying the fact that the hero does not give in readily to mimetic reciprocity. The differentiation between the Cid and his enemies is absolute.<sup>30</sup> He departs as gesture of disdain; he has agents to leave in charge; the king himself gives the measure of security, “as a lord does for a good vassal” [3478].<sup>31</sup> Although we miss here the adjective “good” with “lord,” the earlier plaint of the people of Burgos seems answered, “What a good vassal. If only he had a good lord” [20].<sup>32</sup> The adverbial conjunction “if” in the famous 20th line, outlines surprise, rather than expressing a true hypothesis; the clause expresses regret that there should be need of a better lord. By not warring against the king, the Cid is already a moral subject, “good vassal.”<sup>33</sup> The hypothetical use of “if,” *si*, as an adversative adverbial conjunction in the dependent clause of a conditional statement, usually indicates a necessary contingency precedent a specific result in a rhetorical framework. In his address to the lords of *Carrión* at court, before departing, the hero addresses the unrepentant *infantes* directly: “If you do not give satisfaction for this crime, let the court pass judgement” [3269].<sup>34</sup> In the absence of any justification for the outrage, the final sentence is sure.

Irremissibly, the plot advances on to final retribution. William Entwistle (1930) explains that during the Middle Ages it was believed that in a trial by combat “victory was on the side of truth” (p.13). For this reason, the king closes the argument succinctly:

‘If you are successful in the combat you will gain great honour,  
and if you are defeated do not blame us.’

‘Si del campo bien salides, grand ondra avredes vós,  
e si fuéredes vençidos, non rrebtedes a nós.’ [3565-3566]

The outcome of the duels must be accepted as final. Alfonso is adjudicating as a just monarch should, again answering the plaint of the people of Burgos.

Mio Cid combines the merit attained through his prowess along with his acceptance for the vicissitudes of life. Three

<sup>29</sup> To regain his honor was a strong motivation for the Cid’s heroism. His honor was compromised by his banishment and by the abuse of his daughters. In both cases he regains his honor through battle. Stephanie Matos-Ayala (2013) suggests that in these two instances he may combine the youthful vigor of Roland, and the authority of the elder Charlemagne (pp. 42-45). Therefore, we may conclude that it is sensible for the elder Cid to delegate chastisement at the duels to his men.

<sup>30</sup> The debasement of the nobility is most obvious during the trial by combat, when Don Diego shouts out, fearing Martin Antolinez’s sword: “Diego González held a sword in his hand but did not use it./ and then he (the *infante*) shouted out:/ ‘Help me, great God! Protect me from this sword!’” *Diago Gon çález espada tiene en mano, mas no la ensayava,/ essora el infante tan grandes voces dava:/ ‘¡Valme, Dios, glorioso señor, e cúriam d’este espada!’* [3662-3665] Michael (1984) comments: “mention of Diego’s rank makes his cowardice appear more shameful” (p. 240).

<sup>31</sup> ‘yo vos lo sobreliervo commo a buen vassallo faze señor.’ [3478]

<sup>32</sup> ‘¡Dios, qué buen vassallo, si oviesse buen se ñor!’ [20]

<sup>33</sup> Miguel Garci-Gómez (1975) adumbrates the meaning of the line with delicacy: “Those curious and compassionate burgaleses, upon seeing the good vassal accept his misery patient and composed, were wishing him that he should find a good lord, who would know how to convince the monarch of the vassal’s kindness, neutralizing with clemency the malignancy of the evil enemies” (p. 77). Bandera Gómez (1969) links the line to an overview of the Epic: “In the *Poema* are represented those two Alfonsos, the King as institution, and the King as individual” (p. 39).

<sup>34</sup> ‘Si non rrecudedes, véalo esta cort.’ [3269]

times in the course of the Epic the Cid thanks God for his misfortunes. The first instance is early on, at the start of the *Poema*:

‘I give Thee thanks, O God, our Father in Heaven.  
My wicked enemies have contrived this plot against me.’

*‘¡Grado a ti, Señor, Padre que estás en alto!  
Esto me an buelto mios enemigos malos.’* [8-9]

The hero is grateful to the Lord for the fate dealt to him by the evil dissemblers at court. As he embarks on his exile, he feels the duty to bear his cross. The same gratitude is expressed directly to Christ upon hearing about the foreboding marriage proposal:

‘I give thanks to our Lord Jesus Christ for this favour.  
*‘Esto gradesco a Christus el mio señor.’* [1933]

The Cid equates his destiny to the divine will. His life is at the mercy of Providence. Even after learning about the opprobrious assault against his daughters, the noble warrior lord similarly thanks Heaven, addressing Christ again:

‘Thanks be to our Lord Jesus Christ  
for this honour the Infantes of Carrión have done me.’

*‘Grado a Christus, que del mundo es se ñor,  
quando tal ondra me an dada los ifantes de Carrión.’* [2830-2831]

The repeated address to Christ convinces the reader that the Cid considers himself a chosen vessel of God. Origin for expression of the sentiment is found in Psalms 119:71: “It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn Thy statutes” (Bullinger, 2000, p. 840). The Cid’s resignation in the *Poema* reveals blind faith. These invocations are characteristic of other formulaic expressions used throughout: “When his prayer was ended the Cid remounted” [54]; “When Mass has been said we must prepare to ride away [320]” (Hamilton and Perry, 1984, p. 25, p. 39). The various epic formulas express an obstinate submission under divine rule.

Leo Spitzer (1948) claims “historical deconstruction of a historic theme under influence of the legend;” the German critic admits that “the Cid brings to unique fruition his own being, the ideas of his epoch arise simply as emanations from his character” (p. 116). The doctrine extracted is the spirit of the age: the charismatic leader was humble to the king, paternal to his men. As we have seen, the *juglar* remarks, in counterpoint measure to the king [1889, 2953], how the Cid deliberates with care before passing judgment [1932, 2828]. His legal concerns reveal that his word becomes law. Karl Jaspers (1962) reminds us that Socrates and Christ are paradigmatic individuals who make an impact on civilization by example, without writing themselves (p. 94). Similarly, the Cid drank the draught of envy, yet remained a pillar for posterity no less.

In the context of *Mio Cid* we view the hero’s slow progression along the plot of the epic as a path toward manifestation in his character of proper attributes, without mimetic interference from envious or evil factions at court. The Spanish leader refuses to give in blindly to vengeance. The *juglar* closes the *Poema* by drawing a parallel between the Cid and Christ; besides being grateful to God for his misfortunes, Mio Cid dies the day of Pentecost [3726].<sup>35</sup> Pentecost is the day after Christ’s Ascension, when the Holy Spirit descends upon the apostles gathered in mourning. In the last chapter of *The Scapegoat* Girard (1986) states that the Paraclete is “the destroyer of every representation of persecution. He is truly the spirit of truth that dissipates the fog of mythology” (p. 207). Silvio Simonetti (2019) explains that Girard considers myth malignant because it reverses the roles of the mimetic victim and the persecutor; the Gospels represent

<sup>35</sup> Pentecost is celebrated the seventh Sunday after Easter Sunday; correspondingly, Pentecost usually falls in late May or early June. The day is considered the start of the church’s mission to the world. It is doubtful that the historical Cid died the Day of Pentecost. Ian Michael (1984) mentions that, according to the *Historia Roderici*, the Cid died in July 1099; and Pentecost fell on May 29 that year; consequently, lines 3726-3727 are considered additions by the XIVth century scribe of the original manuscript from 1201-1207 (p. 14, p. 309). We may ascribe the Pentecost-death to poetical fiction.

the truth by impeding overlap between victim and tormentor (blog). Moral differentiation is an absolute categorical distinction. A comparison drawn between the Cid and Christ becomes plausible if we concede that the Cid is also reputed to be a historical as well as a legendary figure. For Bandera Gómez (1969) the Cid is a “warrior Christ” who transcends historic reality (p. 171).<sup>36</sup>

Symbolically, just as the Holy Spirit descends upon the apostles after Christ’s Ascension to Heaven, the spirit of the *Campeador* remains a pervasive presence among the living. Perhaps the conquering Cid provided inherent ideals of persistent toil to the later *conquistadores* who sought to export the mission of Church and State to a hostile New World. They were caught in the horrendously contradictory role of invaders, bringing supposed salvation to the innocent native population, which they subdued by brute force. And yet, their violence in the New World, and subsequent conquests, triggered the Columbian Exchange, which started the commerce between Europe and the Americas that has lasted for centuries. We look toward René Girard as a writer who dwells on “the violent origins of all human culture” (Girard, 1979, p. 244). Such assertion could be true. To resolve issues of past and future historicity involved in proper interpretation of *Mio Cid* is forbidding; but actual existence of the legendary figure suggests that the unjustly banished, grieving, warrior lord may share moral fiber with the falsely accused Socrates and Christ, paradigmatic figures of our Western civilization.

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<sup>36</sup> Bandera Gómez affirms (1969) that exemplariness in the heroic Cid constantly faces the ambivalence of an uncertain future (p. 151). Quoting from Ernst Cassirer’s *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, our critic (1969) reminds us that in the mythical world even the past lacks a cause (p. 143).

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