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Nika Šetek

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**Masculinity in *Cantar de Mio Cid*:**

**The Roles of Metonymy and Hierarchy**

**APPROVED BY**

**SUPERVISING COMMITTEE:**

**Supervisor:** \_\_\_\_\_

Michael Harney

\_\_\_\_\_  
Cory Reed

**Masculinity in *Cantar de Mio Cid*:  
The Roles of Metonymy and Hierarchy**

By

**Nika Šetek, B.A.; M.A.**

**Report**

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## **Dedication**

For Jadranka and Željko Šetek

And for Lina and Rob

## **Abstract**

### **Masculinity in *Cantar de Mio Cid*:**

### **The Roles of Metonymy and Hierarchy**

By

Nika Šetek, M.A.

The University of Texas at Austin, 2014

SUPERVISOR: Michael Harney

The unknown author of the medieval epic poem *Cantar de Mio Cid* uses the pre-existing hierarchy of gender to address issues of honor and class. The text associates moral superiority with the medieval understanding of the masculine as superior to the feminine. This effect is largely achieved through the use of metonymic expressions, which serve to construct the Cid as the ideal model of masculinity in the poem. These metonymies include the Cid's beard, swords and daughters, all of which serve to tie masculinity with honor. On the other hand, the unsympathetic characters, such as the Cid's son-in-laws, the count Ordóñez and the moneylenders are not only portrayed as lying cowards, but they also display an inability to properly handle the metonymic symbols of masculinity. For example, the Infantes are poor warriors and they assault the Cid's daughters instead of protecting them, while the count allows for his beard to be plucked. What we find is that the text collapses hierarchies of class and religion into the hierarchy of gender. While

the women in the poem, whose occupation of feminine roles appears natural, are presented as positive characters, a male character's association with the feminine signals moral inferiority. The hierarchy of gender, which traditionally subordinates the feminine to the masculine, becomes applied to the Cid's adversaries, who are largely presented as effeminate men and who cannot measure up to the warrior ideal of masculinity embodied by the Cid. The association of the Cid's enemies with the feminine allows the poet to attack both the type of higher nobility that identifies honor as something one is born into instead of something one earns, and the presumably Jewish characters who engage in money lending. In contrast, the Cid's honor is one achieved through deeds, which justifies his upward social mobility. When the Cid finally climbs higher than his enemies, the gender association naturalizes this change in fortune: the "truly" masculine assumes its expected position over the effeminized.

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In “The *Poema del Cid* and the Potentialities of Metonymy,” Thomas Montgomery states that the *Cantar de Mio Cid* (henceforth *CMC*) does not hide its true meaning, “does not overtly say one thing and mean another. The poem can claim never to practice deception.” (434) The unknown author of the poem gives the impression of a straightforward account of events by avoiding metaphor and instead relying on metonymy. The poem thus conveys an impression of truth, presenting itself as a recalling of real occurrences. It seemingly eschews the personal opinion of its author, who attempts to present himself as a witness or reteller of events, not an inventor of stories (433). Of course, as Montgomery notes: “Its truth is largely a fiction, a brilliant, self-serving one, and its metonymic code is a brilliant means of advancing that fiction.” (434) A significant part of the fiction constructed relates to the character of the Cid himself. Certain metonymic expressions, including some of the Cid’s epic epithets, take central stage in this process, as they are meant to stand in for the Cid in the minds of the listeners/readers. The epic epithets in particular are repeated over and over in the work to either describe or refer to the hero without using his name. Beyond being associated with the Cid himself, some of the metonymies are linked to certain concepts or ideals. For example, Montgomery calls the Cid’s beard a “metonym of masculinity” (422). In this sense the metonymic expressions serve the function of creating associations that are often permanent, but appear less contrived than a metaphor might. For example, the beard is always associated with masculinity in this work, which in turn is connected with honor. These connections are also a part of the cultural knowledge that the poet and his listeners/readers presumably shared, as the beard was a common symbol of both



masculinity and honor in the period<sup>1</sup>. The motif of the beard can therefore be used as a sort of shorthand in discussing larger questions of what it means to be masculine or what it means to have honor. The simplicity and seeming spontaneity or genuineness<sup>2</sup> of the metonymy allows for this symbol to be embedded in the narrative in a way that appears perfectly natural. This naturalness is in turn interpreted as truthfulness, in terms of credibility of both action and character. To continue with the same example, the Cid's beard, its remarkable growth and the impression it makes on other characters render doubting the Cid's honor and virility a non-issue for both the reader and the characters in the work.

Informed by Montgomery's views, Jill Ross notes that in contrast to its semblance of truthfulness and directness, the poem contains several deceitful characters. She expands the connection between metaphor and deceit that Montgomery establishes and locates the metaphor in the poem not in language, but in certain characters. She sees the scheming nature of the Infantes de Carrión as divergent from the rest of the poem, which overall produces the sense of a truthful account through its use of metonymy. She

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<sup>1</sup> The entry for "Beard" in Encyclopedia of Sex and Gender uses the CMC as its primary example of the connection between honor, masculinity and beard, stressing its importance in Spain and also noting that "[T]his conflation of personal honor with manliness, virility, power, and the beard has been claimed in relation to other cultures throughout the Mediterranean basin and the Middle East" (Canadé Sautman 122)

<sup>2</sup> Found in metonymy's actual connection with the character it is associated with, as opposed to the metaphor, which relies on a third concept or object, thus being more distant from the "truth", or the actual object/person it is referring to. As the *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* points out, metonymy "involves establishing relationships of contiguity between two things, whereas metaphor establishes relationships of similarity between them." (206)

stretches this observation to liken the Infantes themselves to a metaphor, otherwise largely absent from the poem. She writes that while

the language is overwhelmingly synecdochic, the way the Infantes use language can be described as metaphorical in the most literal sense. The Infantes function like tropes in the way they violently transfer words away from truth and use language as a means of veiling their true intentions. (98)

Connecting the Infantes with metaphor in this way allows Ross to draw a connection between metaphorical language and “a notion of the feminine as dangerously disruptive and subversive.” (98). She traces this idea to the Eve’s ability to persuade Adam to eat the apple, achieved through “a deformed rhetoric where truth has been severed from language.” (99) What Ross ignores is that the pure usage of untrue language does not make one a villain in this text. The Cid himself lies to Rachel and Vidas, however the circumstances of his lie and the supposed inferiority of those who receive it justify his falsity. Therefore, while noting that the Infantes are indeed liars in a way that the Cid and other positive characters are not, the way in which Ross equates their language to metaphor seems strained. The usefulness of such a connection in her work is clear, as it allows her to draw a link between femininity and the Infantes grounded in language. Namely, Ross proposes that, since the Infantes’ language is metaphorical in the way that she describes, and since metaphorical and false language is associated with the feminine, the Infantes are also associated with the feminine. It seems no accident, then, that the antagonists in this work are not only associated with deceit but also fall short of the ideal masculinity that the Cid represents. Indeed, there is a connection between villainy and

lack of masculinity in the *CMC*, as I intend to show in this essay. However, Ross lays too much emphasis on the idea of the Infantes' supposed metaphorical use of language.

A lie does not necessarily equal a metaphor, and Ross's argument rests on the assumption that we will accept a sort of equivalence of the two. Nonetheless, it is true that the Infantes do indeed exhibit certain characteristics that are traditionally associated with the feminine, for example their submissiveness and passivity in episodes such as the encounter with the lion. It is also a fact that these negative characters use deceitful language. The connection that Ross makes between deceitfulness and femininity is present in the text in this roundabout way – not through the female characters themselves, but through male characters exhibiting feminine characteristics. In these episodes, the characters are also often not truthful about what had occurred, such as when the Infantes accept praise for their bravery in battle when they had in fact avoided the more dangerous parts of it. I therefore agree with Ross that in a certain sense, the *CMC* is a part of the tradition that views the feminine as untrustworthy, though not in its depiction of female characters. The women in the poem are presented as good, it is actually the male characters that lack masculinity, and in this sense approach the feminine, that become associated with dishonesty. Ultimately, when drawing on Montgomery's understanding of metonymy in the *CMC* to talk about masculinity and femininity, it seems more useful to rely on actual metonymic expressions. This essay, therefore, examines the use of metonymic expressions in the construction of masculinity in the characters of *CMC*. The focus is primarily on the expressions associated with the Cid such as his epithets “barba vellida/complida” and “el que en buen ora cinxo espada”, mentions of his swords Colada

and Tizón as well as, to a certain degree, his daughters Elvira and Sol. The ways in which the text arranges these metonymies allows for the question of masculinity to be firmly linked with questions of honor and class, ultimately collapsing the hierarchies of religion, class and gender into the supposedly natural authority of the masculine over the feminine.

The metonymic expressions that take the form of epic epithets are so completely associated with the Cid that they are used interchangeably with his name. They are, however, not the only metonymies that are strongly associated with just one character. Colada and Tizón, though not epic epithets, are similarly exclusive. In spite of changing hands throughout the epic, whoever they temporarily belong to after coming into the Cid's possession, they are always associated with his honor and masculinity. This strict association makes them convenient for establishing contrast between characters in regards to these issues. In the case of Colada and Tizón, the way they are used by the Cid is always recalled when they are used or simply possessed by others. Another example of an exclusive metonymy would be the Cid's beard, which crops up again and again as an epithet of the hero. When the count of Ordóñez's beard briefly comes up, it is merely as a counterpoint to the Cid's. Apart from this episode, the text ignores others' facial hair (or lack thereof) and focuses almost exclusively on the Cid's beard. This obsession with the hero's facial hair establishes it as a clear metonymic symbol of his masculinity. Understood as a part of the Cid, it cannot be used for other characters, though as Montgomery points out, there are certain metonymic expressions that are not as restricted to a single character, for example, "ardida lança," which is "[A]ppplied to several members of his *mesnada*" (422). It is only appropriate that the expressions associated

with the Cid be exclusive to him, and not applied to describe or refer to other characters, as he occupies a distinctive position in the text, not merely as the protagonist, but also a man whose social position within the epic is unique.

The Cid's banishment means he loses his property and becomes cut off from any source of income. The situation in which he finds himself sets up the main theme of the work, which, as Montgomery notes, is that of survival, "of the individual, the family, the clan, and the nation." (433). The Cid's conquests are not driven by the desire for glory, but by need. He is a sort of social bandit, corresponding to certain of the parameters that Eric Hobsbawm identifies in *Primitive Rebels* and *Bandits*. While Hobsbawm primarily speaks of a peasant's protest against an injustice committed against him and the very condition of poverty, much of how he defines a social bandit can be read in the character of the Cid. The beginning of a bandit's career is commonly connected to some crime, that is either not felt to be a crime according to local custom, or that he did not commit (Hobsbawm *Primitive Rebels* 15,16) and while the very beginning of the poem is lost, it appears that the Cid's banishment is the result of false accusations against him. The punishment that he receives is, therefore, unjust – though this injustice is not seen within the work as a mistake committed by the king, but rather, by the Cid's accusers. A bandit is usually protected and helped by his people (17), who are either materially profiting from him directly, or else benefit from the fact that he attacks a common enemy. Similarly, from the very beginning of the poem, there is a sense that the people are on the Cid's side, even when they are unable to help. In Burgos,

burses e burgesas por las finiestras son,

plorando de los ojos, tanto avién el dolor,  
de las sus bocas todos dizían una razón:

- ¡Dios, qué buen vassallo, si oviesse buen señor! (17-20).

It is only the fear of king's retribution that is keeping the people from giving the Cid shelter. They even stress Rodrigo's value as a vassal, seemingly lamenting that the king does not prove to be as good of a lord to him as he deserves. Finally, Martín Antolínez defies the king's command and "a mio Cid e a los suyos abátales de pan e de vino" (CMC 66). As Rita Hamilton points out, Martín Antolínez is a character who has his own epic epithets, firstly "el burgalés conplido" (CMC 65), later "burgalés de pro", "burgalés leál" and "burgalés natural". Always being presented as the ideal citizen of Burgos, he is actually the only one who acts directly against the royal command. His epithet, however, reminds the audience that the instinct of all good citizens of Burgos is to stand by the Cid's side. His cause is recognized as just, and the fact that Martín Antolínez is one of the characters to fight in the judicial duels and win, not only reminds the readers of the right decision that he made at the beginning, but is also "the fulfillment of Martín Antolínez's prophecy '*aun cerca o tarde el rey querer m'a por amigo*<sup>3</sup>' (76)" (Hamilton 165).

With these changes in fortune, we see that it is for good reason that the Cid's group of followers quickly grows, having at first mention "en su conpañã sessaenta pendones" (CMC 16) to "tres mil e seiscientos" (1265) in Valencia. The men are attracted by the promise of material gain, and while robbing and conquering proves to be a

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<sup>3</sup> Stress not added.

lucrative endeavor, fighting alongside the Cid also means an opportunity to rise up the military ranks, as the verse “Los que fueron de pie cavalleros se fazen” (*CMC1213*) exemplifies. Presumably, their material prosperity implies at least some small social advancement; while not one of title, at least one of improved circumstances. The Cid is not leading a rebellion that would bring about sweeping social change; the only change that happens is in the individual social positions of characters fighting alongside him. As opposed to starting a revolution, he brings social change and equality to his men, by redistributing the wealth that they acquire in battle fairly amongst them. The work pays close attention to loot and to money, but perhaps more importantly, the Cid’s army eventually conquers land and even the city of Valencia. Therefore, the Cid’s role of social bandit is intertwined with the role of a warlord in the sense that his power grows to the point of controlling an extended territory, and he finds himself outside the control of central authority, though he never denies the true king. The concern the poem shows for the material, the spoils of battle and their division shows the Cid’s ability as a warlord. While some of his men may be family or vassals and remain with him out of loyalty, to be successful he has to make sure that he divvies up the loot correctly, as his is not an army fighting for an idealistic cause, but a group of interested followers with a very tangible common goal in mind. As Max Weber writes:

The charismatic leader gains and maintains authority solely by proving his strength in life. If he wants to be a prophet, he must perform miracles; if he wants to be a war lord, he must perform heroic deeds. Above all, however,

his divine mission must 'prove' itself in that those who faithfully surrender to him must fare well. (249)

There are lists in the poem of things acquired and divided, such as “muchos gañados de ovejas e de vacas, / e de ropas, e de otras riquezas largas.” (*CMC* 481-481b) and the Cid's leadership is respected because his distribution is fair and satisfactory.

Although he never denies the king, the Cid's power is actually parallel to the king's. The bond between the Cid and Alfonso is never completely broken in the poem, as our hero is always concerned with repairing the lord-vassal relationship. The Cid's feud is not with the king, and the situation the Cid finds himself is not blamed on Alfonso, who had been deceived by the Cid's enemies. Alfonso ultimately recognizes his mistakes, and even before that, he fits Hobsbawm's description of a king's usual position in stories of social bandits, as one who is “remote and stands for justice” (Hobsbawm *Primitive Rebels* 22). The Cid always recognizes his place beneath the king, even after his power is such that he could potentially afford to declare himself independent from the king's rule, particularly in light of how he had been treated. His personal enemies are members of the aristocracy – which is another common feature of social bandits (22) - and more specifically, they are courtiers, which draws a sharp parallel between their way of life and that of the Cid. The Cid's adversaries, and the Infantes in particular, have a different understanding of what constitutes honor, which might be a product of their different lifestyles. As Michael Harney points out, they see honor as something that was ascribed to them by birth, and is tied up entirely with their kinship status. The goods and deeds of their ancestors have built up the Infantes' honor, and the idea of them increasing



it through personal achievement is not present. Instead, the Infantes prefer associating themselves with the Cid, thus part-taking indirectly in his glory and honor achieved through action, as well as taking advantage of his material gains. (Harney “Class Conflict” 190-191) What is questioned, then, at least implicitly, is actually the power afforded to the Infantes by their birth in spite of their moral inferiority to the Cid. The poet brings this issue to the foreground in part by juxtaposing their masculinity, which is presented as deficient and effeminate, to that of the Cid, which is firmly grounded in the image of a warrior and conqueror, and confirmed in his fulfillment of his duties to his men.

The supposedly natural superiority of the male over the female, justified partially by the scientific and medical understanding of the time<sup>4</sup> but also endorsed theologically by the idea of the Fall, allows for the poet to use the gender hierarchy to address issues of class and power. As Joan W. Scott points out in an article addressing the importance of gender in historical analysis, “gender is a primary way of signifying relationships of power,” (1069) and is “one of the recurrent references by which political power has been conceived, legitimated, and criticized. It refers to but also establishes the meaning of the male/female opposition.” (1073) Scott provides numerous historical examples not only of domination over women, but also of other hierarchical structures relying on the “natural” male/female relationship. Gendered rhetoric often aligns certain populations with the feminine, thereby presenting them as inferior, submissive, in need of protection or

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<sup>4</sup> Vern L. Bullough offers a clear and concise discussion on the topic in *Sex, Society, and History*.

control, etc.<sup>5</sup> In the *CMC*, both the Jewish characters and the Cid's enemies at the court are presented as effeminate. This association simultaneously establishes and confirms their inferiority before the idealized warrior masculinity that the Cid embodies. It is therefore clear that the poem does not represent masculinity simply as a static category occupied by all male characters in the same measure. There is certain fluidity in the representation of gender, which can be imagined as a sort of scale, with femininity on one end and masculinity on the other.

We see male characters both successfully performing and failing to perform acts that are associated with manliness (and more specifically, the type of manliness required of their particular social position), as well as displaying characteristics commonly associated with the feminine, through the performance of “womanly” acts. But as the text exists within a larger cultural context, the “womanly” or the “feminine” is not a neutral category. It is understood in contrast to the masculine, and as subordinated to it. Women in the Middle Ages were understood to be inferior to men in both physical and moral terms. These prejudices stemmed from the Church as well as scientific and medical assumptions of the time, rooted in part in ancient philosophers' beliefs on the subject, such as Aristotle's understanding of female as an incomplete male. (Bullough 44-45)

While medieval theorists mostly believed that, having been created by God, women could

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<sup>5</sup> Scott gives examples of two different phenomena. On the one hand, she talks about legitimizing “dominion, strength, central authority, and ruling power as masculine (enemies, outsiders, subversives, weakness as feminine)” (1072) and the legal application of that code, common in authoritarian regimes. More importantly for the present discussion, she also refers to gendered concepts, not necessarily applied exclusively to the female population but more generally to population assigned supposedly feminine characteristics.

not be ill-conceived, nonetheless they could not equal man in terms of authority because man is the more rational of the sexes (45). The various medical ideas of female difference and inferiority were in some ways confirmed by what was already understood from the Bible, as the woman is not only inferior to man in her judgment (therefore Eve initiates the Fall), but she was also not created from the same material as man (51). Bullough details various medieval theorists' and scientists' approaches to the question of the female body and difference between the sexes, but more relevant to the present discussion is the general understanding of the female, and by association, the feminine as inferior and subjected to the male. As Bullough writes in the conclusion to his discussion,

[M]edieval males had all kinds of learned reinforcement for treating the female as their inferior not only in terms of her creation and her 'sinfulness,' but because of her anatomy and physiology (...) In a sense Christianity offered a positive antidote for some of this 'scientific' misogyny by insisting that women were also God's creatures, but in spite of this the male knew women were inferior to him and believed that they had to be kept under control. (59)

It is in this cultural context that questions of gender and hierarchy in the *CMC* should be examined, though it is interesting that women are actually not presented as inferior. In fact, the Cid's wife and daughters seem to be his equals in moral terms. This is not a misogynist text, since it does not present its female characters in a bad light. What it does seem to do, however, is utilize the preconceived idea of female subordination to the male as a "natural" hierarchy. With a change in terms – that is, imparting characteristics and acts that are "feminine" on one set of characters and those that are "masculine" on

another, the poet achieves a natural-seeming hierarchy between these new terms (for example, between the Cid and his son-in-laws).

The characteristic most commonly associated with masculinity is courage, particularly the bravery displayed in acts of battle. In fact, poor performance in battle is closely related to a failure to perform as a man, moving such a character towards the feminine end of the spectrum, which is to be understood as inferior. Since courage is such an important aspect of masculinity in the poem, it may appear strange that one of the characteristics that highlight the Cid's virility is eschewing violence outside of the battlefield. Avoidance of unnecessary violence is actually another characteristic that Hobsbawm mentions in regards to social bandits (*Bandits* 46), and therefore somewhat aligns with the Cid's unique social position. For example, instead of seeking blood revenge on the Infantes after they attack Elvira and Sol, the Cid demands a juridical process. It would be wrong to assume that the Cid is taking the high road because that is what a hero is meant to do. In fact, his choice to not seek personal vengeance on his sons-in-law after they assault his daughters is unusual in the epic genre, as blood revenge would be the norm in resolving this sort of conflict in an epic poem<sup>6</sup>. However, the so-called Afrenta de Corpes is just one in a series of Fernando and Diego's displays of cowardice, and crucially, the Infantes' are not only presented as cowardly but also unmanly. As Vern Bullough points out, "the most simplistic way of defining it [manhood] is as a triad: impregnating women, protecting dependents, and serving as

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<sup>6</sup> As A.D. Deyermond points out: "En la mayor parte de la épica hispánica [...], la venganza se presenta de modo tan sangriento como en cualquier otra; aun así, el Cid asume una venganza judicial que no implica la muerte (88)

provider to one's family." (34). Fernando and Diego, on the other hand, are not only sorry warriors but also instead of protecting and providing for their family, they almost murder their spouses. The fact that, up until this point in the work, the only characters we see them engage in a physical conflict with are Elvira and Sol in a sense equates them to women. So, to engage his son-in-laws in direct battle would be beneath the Cid not solely because of their cowardice, but also because that cowardice reveals them as effeminate men. This lack of masculinity means that, to fight them would be like fighting women. In this case, it is the non-violence that adds not only the Cid's honor but also his masculinity; as a "true" man, he seeks another way to deal with their betrayal. Once the case is brought to court, the Cid's champions do engage the Infantes in judicial duels. This could be perceived as compromising to their masculinity, though I believe the context in which the duels occur minimizes that effect. Apart from this non-violent conflict resolution, there are other things the Cid does that may be surprising in a hero, and problematic for his masculinity. In the first line that we have from the epic, we find him crying, "De los sos ojos tan fuertemiente llorando" (*CMC* 1), however, there is no indication that showing emotion harms his image in any way. In fact, this line establishes him as a relatable, humane character, whose loss makes him suffer and feel pain. It underlines the necessity to commit other acts that may not be worthy of a hero and justifies them, such as deceiving Rachel and Vidas and cheating them out of their money.

Of course, Rachel and Vidas being moneylenders makes these actions appear more appropriate, as lenders are seen as people who prey on the weak, and are therefore common victims of social bandits. The episode in which the Cid outsmarts Rachel and

Vidas is crucial when considering the way the Cid's masculinity is constructed. Louise Mirrer points out that, since Rachel and Vidas are usually interpreted to be the only Jewish characters in the *CMC*, this moment in the text is a prime example of equating Christians, and the Cid in particular, with masculinity, while the Jews take on feminine characteristics (180-181). This distinguishes the Christians from the other populations in the peninsula and establishes their supposed superiority. Rachel and Vidas are shown to belong to the domestic space, since as Mirrer says, "the Jews' locus of activity is the home, whereas that of the 'men' is the battlefield." (181) Unlike the "real" men who fight for their wealth, Rachel and Vidas expect a profit from war but do not actively participate in it (181). They also display submission in their repetitive kissing of the Cid's hand. While this act is not unusual in the work, one kiss usually suffices, while the moneylenders kiss the Cid's hand four times (three of which are actual kisses, the fourth being a verbal gesture). Normally, the kissing of the hand indicates vassalage, but not in the case of the Jews (180). The way they speak also marks them as "powerless men", as they usually speak in unison (179). The Infantes de Carrión also often speak in unison, drawing a connection between these two sets of characters. Mirrer also lists ritual utterances, empty threats, flattery and shows of respect as characteristic of Rachel and Vidas' speech and as positioning them below the Cid (180). She concludes that "it is *masculine*<sup>7</sup>, not simply Christian, beliefs and attitudes the Jews are excluded from in the text [which] is made clear in the work's express affirmation that the attitudes and ideals of the Cid and his vassals belong specifically to men." (181)

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<sup>7</sup> Stress not added.

One of the main indicators of masculinity in the text is military ability, which is continually alluded to with the use of the epithet “el que en buen ora cinxo espada” as well as the metonymic qualities of Tizón and Colada. Menéndez Pidal equates “el que en buen ora cinxo espada” with “el que en buen ora nació,” as both refer to the good fortune associated with the moment of the Cid’s birth – one concerning his literal birth, and the other his birth into knighthood. As Robert Hathaway points out, however, the reason that the epithet “el que en buen ora cinxo espada” comes up more in the first two cantares, is that those focus primarily on warfare and conquest. He insists that the sword epithet cannot be considered equivalent to “el que en buen ora nació”, as the connotation of military fortune and aptitude cannot be ignored. As he points out,

the poet also used this formula as a reminder that the efforts of Rodrigo cannot go for naught. The most frequent use is in stanza 86, in section c3<sup>8</sup> (primarily devoted to narrating his martial exploits) where within a span of forty-three lines it is used three times” (Hathaway 314).

This is the section where the Cid achieves what he has strived for by conquering Valencia, and contrasts the first time the epithet appears is in the very beginning of the poem, at the start of the Cid’s banishment, when “Una niña de nuef años a ojo se parava: - ¡Ya Campeador, en buen ora cinxiestes espada!” (40-41). In hindsight the words seem almost prophetic, as the wealth and land that is now hereditary and can be passed down generations were all achieved through conquest, represented by the sword, and symbolizing the Cid’s heroism and masculinity. This metonymic and symbolic value of

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<sup>8</sup> Refers to one of the sections in which Hathaway divides the poem.

the sword is also present in Colada and Tizón, the swords the Cid wins in two crucial battles.

The Cid acquires Colada when he defeats the count of Barcelona, don Remont, whom he takes as prisoner. The sword has not only a great monetary value but its procurement also underlines the military superiority of the leader and his men. The Cid's army is well-prepared for the great battle, while the description that the Cid offers of the count's army indicates that "Ellos vienen cuesta yuso e todos traen calças, / e las siellas coceras e las cinchas amojadas" (992-993), which means they are using equipment not appropriate for battle, being too concerned with their appearance. This is one of the moments where a distinction is drawn between the courtiers, or at least men whose livelihood is not entirely attached to warfare, and true warriors. The poem's ideal of masculinity is primarily grounded in the warrior ideal, which is embodied in the Cid and his men. The count's men, on the other hand, are concerned with frivolous things and are unaccustomed to fighting, having acquired their position and wealth by birth. The concern with appearances and the lack of military ability makes them effeminate when compared to the Cid's army. The transference of such a valuable piece of weaponry as Colada would then only seem appropriate to the poet and his readers/listeners, as the Cid is shown as being more deserving of it. Similarly, Tizón is acquired in the battle against Bucar, the Moorish general, in what is the third attempt by the Moors to conquer Valencia. This sword is worth even more than Colada, and is again originally the property of the leader of the opposing army. The two blades form a pair from this point on, and are a treasured possession.



The Cid gives the pair as gifts to his sons-in-law. This is a very meaningful present, not only because the swords have a great monetary value but also because they have a metonymic relationship with the Cid, representing his heroism in battle and his success as a conqueror. To pass the swords on marks the hope that Fernando and Diego would use them as valiantly as the Cid did, and honor them as a symbol of him. This expectation is in sharp contrast with the actual behavior of the receivers. Instead of using their swords in battle against a true enemy, their most notable use of any sort of weapon is that of spurs and saddle straps against their own wives. In fact, in that particular episode, Elvira and Sol ask them to employ Colada and Tizón and cut off their heads instead of putting them through torture, but the Infantes refuse<sup>9</sup>. This makes perfect sense, not only because their actions serve to indicate their cruelty and cowardice, but also because Colada and Tizón are a hero's swords, and as such are tools that the Infantes could never use. Instead of engaging in fair battle, they show themselves as bravest when their opponents are women who have absolutely no means of defending themselves.

The point of the Infantes de Carrión's attack on Elvira and Sol is to re-establish their masculinity after the episode with the lion. When a lion becomes loose in the castle,

“Ferrán Gonçalez [.....]

non vio allí dó s'alçasse, nin cámara abierta nin torre,

metios' so l' escaño, tanto ovo el pavor;

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<sup>9</sup> Thomas Caldin argues that this request is the only way for Sol and Elvira do escape their position as objects of exchange between men. Their desire for death is therefore not merely a byproduct of the torture. The fact that they survive the attacks merely places them back into the system, the “cycle of symbolic change within which their desire is never recognized and they can be no more than objects.” (98)

Diego Gonçalez por la puerta salió  
Diciendo de la boca: - ¡Non veré Carrión! –  
Tras una viga lagar metiós con grant pavor,  
El manto e el brial todo suzio lo sacó.” (2286<sup>a</sup>-2291)

Their embarrassing cowardice stands in contrast to the Cid’s calm bravery: he walks up to the lion and the animal instantly submits to him, allowing him to walk it back to its cage. The Infantes soil themselves – either literally or they dirty their clothes by hiding in such inappropriate places. Diego’s cry that he would not see Carrión again is the same that is heard before the battle against Bucar, and serves to indicate the brothers’ spinelessness. The Cid’s men find the Infantes’ behavior laughable and mock them. Even though the leader prohibits it, the Infantes’ honor has already been brought into question, and they attempt to retribute it by attacking the Cid’s daughters. Their main motive is revenge, as they state after they commit the deed:

- De nuestros casamientos agora somos vengados,  
non las deviemos tomar por varraganas  
si non fuéssemos rogados,  
por nuestras parejas non eran pora en braços.

¡La desondra del león así s’irá vengando! – (CMC 2758-2762)

It is clear that, in the minds of the Infantes, it is not merely the humiliation caused by the lion episode that they need to avenge themselves for, but also the very marriages that they entered in. This is somewhat ironic, as it was the Infantes themselves who suggested the marriages in the first place. In Jill Ross’s view, the Afrenta de Corpes “is their attempt to

reinscribe the shameful stains of cowardice and effeminacy on the bodies of women so as to reassert control over their own virility.” (85) Ross’s point is that the violence leaves a mark, a text to be read by the Cid, quite literally a message written in blood. To reassert their masculinity, brought into question by their cowardly behavior before the lion, the Infantes attack women, to position themselves above them, where the man is meant to belong. The setting of the attack is a *locus amoenus*, implying a sexual aspect to the violence. In fact, the Infantes make love to their wives in the same spot the night before attacking them and leaving them for dead. The implied sexual nature of their crime exemplifies Bourdieu’s claim that manliness “remains indissociable, tacitly at least, from physical virility, in particular through the attestations of sexual potency – deflowering of the bride, abundant male offspring, etc. – which are expected of a ‘real’ man.” (12) The Infantes’ intention is firstly to get revenge, but also to reestablish their manhood, first by proving their sexual aptness and then by displaying their absolute control over the women’s bodies, including even the power to deprive them of their lives.

However, as their primary intention is to attack the Cid through Elvira and Sol, this supposed reestablishment of virility has an opposite effect, at least to an extent. The Infantes de Carrión attack the ladies because they lack courage to attack their father or even to respond properly to insults they receive, even though “in a society of honor and shame, the humiliation of the Cid’s honour should have occurred publicly or in the Cid’s presence.” (Ross 88). The Infantes show a similar lack of courage, virility and honor in battle. Although the Cid compliments them for how bravely they fought after the battle against Bucar, it comes out in the end that they were in fact trying to avoid the most

dangerous points of battle, as “Vasallos de mio Cid seyénse sonrisando / quien lidiara major o quién fuera en alcanço, / mas non fallavan ’y a Diego ni a Ferrando.” (2532-2534). Still, their spinelessness does not prevent them from benefiting from the booty won in the battle. In fact, it is these winnings that make them rich enough to consider leaving Elvira and Sol and contracting more advantageous marriages.

It is worthwhile to note that the Cid has reservations about the Infantes de Carrión from the beginning and makes clear that it is the king, not himself, who chooses them as husbands for his daughters. After the king tells him “ellos vos las piden e mándovoslo yo” (*CMC* 2078), indicating that the marriage is more than a suggestion, the Cid responds “afellas en vuestra mano don Elvira e doña Sol, / dadlas a qui quisiéredes vós, ca yo pagado só.” (2088-2089), stressing the king’s responsibility for the match. Crucially, due to how the conditions of the marriage were established, that is with the Cid’s insistence on the king’s responsibility for the match, it is not only the Cid who is dishonored, but also the king himself. In spite of the bad consequences of the marriages, the approach that the Cid takes when asked for his daughters’ hands turns out to be beneficial, as the king has to, for his own honor’s sake, take the Infantes’ offense very seriously.<sup>10</sup> This allows for a public judicial resolution, which in effect further shames Fernando and Diego.

The Infantes are repeatedly presented as cowardly and lacking in terms of the masculine ideal presented in the poem, perhaps because, as courtiers, they are normally

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<sup>10</sup> Thomas R. Hart sees the Cid as a sort of teacher: “his repeated successes, notably the conquest of Valencia and the second marriages of his daughters, serve to educate the King, teaching him the true worth of his vassal.” (70) and his actions as bringing about change in his world, as “by treating the norms of his society as if they were real and biding, [he] causes them to become real.” (71)

not required to be any other way. They seem to have little experience with war and they are mostly concerned with money and social prestige, as their calculated marriages show. As was previously mentioned, there is a connection drawn between them and Rachel and Vidas, as both pairs tend to speak in unison and focus on potential material gain from their connection to the Cid. While the Cid's own men also seek material gain, their relationship with the hero is different, as they serve him on the battlefield and are his vassals. Anything they might win from their association with the Cid is earned in battle, while the Infantes marry their way into the Cid's newly earned wealth. On several occasions, they plot and lie in order to advance, but the lie that embodies their other lies is that of their virility. They are men who fail when measured against the ideal the poem sets forth; they embarrass themselves in battle and the incident with the lion, they are unwilling to take care of their family and they attack women but shy away from conflict with their equals. In her discussion of masculinity and genre, Clara Pascual-Argente notes three crucial ways in which the Infantes are stripped of their masculinity. First is their inability to look at the Cid when he enters the court, while the king and others present give him their full attention. Instead, the brothers align themselves with count Ordóñez, whose own masculinity is briefly brought to question when we find out the Cid had grabbed him by the beard in the past. Secondly, by requesting them to return the swords, the Cid is "stripping the brothers of their only and vicarious sign of virility." (Pascual-Argente 549) Thirdly, she discusses their insistence on lineage and their refusal to "play by the rules of political love," which culminates in the Afrenta de Corpes (550).

The Cid, on the other hand, exhibits his virtue and masculinity not only in his actions, but even in his very appearance, particularly in his impressive beard.

The beard is the metonym that Montgomery explicitly links to masculinity, the Cid's well known "barba vellida/complida" (422). This tie between beard and masculinity is not surprising as there are many indications that the beard was commonly accepted as a sign of manhood in the Middle Ages. According to Derek G. Neal's discussion on the male body in the Middle Ages, beards were a sign of both sex and gender, as they were connected not only to being a man, but also to the idea of manliness (127-128). In the *CMC*, the idea of honor is closely related to masculinity, and the line between the two blurs<sup>11</sup>. In fact, both are symbolized by the beard, which is found in different word clusters in the three cantares, indicating the protagonist's main concerns in the various parts of the poem. Hathaway looks at the epithetic and para-epithetic<sup>12</sup> use of the beard, particularly in its form of *la barba vellida*, as a physical sign of exile (317). To be sure, this is a valid point – the beard is used as a reference for the passing of time, and the Cid states that he will let his beard grow as a symbol of exile and honor<sup>13</sup>. Hathaway also notices that, once the conflict in the poem is more focused on the man himself as opposed to the warrior, the beard gets more mention than the sword epithet, because the beard is explicitly connected with his honor and particularly with the quality of *mesura* in the "honor-dishonor episodes" (319). He also briefly notes that: "As the Cid's career

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<sup>11</sup> See Footnote 1.

<sup>12</sup> Hathaway defines para-epithets as "mentions which are not strictly formulaic yet recall the implicitly epic-heroic connotations of the physical detail" (317-318)

<sup>13</sup> "Por amor del rey Alfonso, que de tierra me á exhado, - /nin entrarié en ella tigera ni un pelo non avrié tajado, / e que fablassen d'esto moros e cristianos." (1240-1242)

successfully progressed, the beard lengthened; his warriorhood past, the beard remains as symbol.” (319). He does not, however, connect the beard to masculinity or dwell on the many mentions of beards being plucked or touched in the final cantar, when the Cid has to publicly defend his honor and that of his family. These moments speak to the tension and anxiety that is created in this part of the poem, since allowing for one’s beard to be tugged or grabbed dishonors the wearer, as will be discussed shortly.

P.A. Bly, on the other hand, focuses strictly on the beard in the *CMC* and does look more at which cantar focuses on what aspect of the Cid’s facial hair. He provides a chart that shows that the first cantar is most concerned with the beauty of the beard (16), associated with adjectives like “velida” and “complida”. This is the part of the text where the Cid has been banished and is gathering men for an army and fighting his first battles. The second cantar, where the Cid takes the city of Valencia gaining wealth and lands and marrying his daughters to the Infantes de Carrión, is concerned with length and growth of the beard (16). Finally, the in the third part, the focus is on the actions associated with the beard (17). The beard becomes more associated with verbs than with adjectives – the touching of the beard by the Cid, or his statements about never having had his beard plucked by anyone, reveal the anxiety of the final cantar, after Fernando and Diego have abandoned the daughters and left them for dead, while the Cid asks for justice. Like Hathaway, Bly focuses on the beard as a symbol of honor, but he does not explicitly discuss the traditional association of beardedness and masculinity or honor and masculinity<sup>14</sup>. On the other hand, *Encyclopedia of Sex and Gender*’s entry on the term

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<sup>14</sup> See Footnote 1.

“beard” uses the example of the *CMC* to show that “[T]he beard could focalize anxious struggles between men over masculinity and virility, acting as an object of symbolic sexual transference.” (Canadé Sautman 121) Anxiety over masculinity in the *CMC* is focused mostly around the concern of performing the right kind of masculine ideal, as is indicated by the Infantes’ need to reaffirm their manliness after the humiliating incident with the lion. The concern with virility is very present in the *CMC*, particularly because plays on gender relation and hierarchy are central to the way heroes and villains emerge in the text. The beard is one of the metonymic devices used to bring that play to the forefront, much like Colada and Tizón were. The beard plays this part particularly in the third cantar, when the Cid faces the Infantes and count Ordóñez in court.

During the juridical process, count Ordóñez brings up the question of the length of the Cid’s beard and its impact on those who observe it. The implied worthiness of the Cid based on the condition of his facial hair is so much a part of the work that it is brought up as an official complaint in court. Questioning the Cid’s beard, the count questions the man, from his birth (whether or not he is noble enough) to the legitimacy of his conquests, at the same time justifying the crimes that the Infantes committed. When the Cid responds to the attack, he says:

¿Qué avedes vós, conde, por retraer á mi barba?

Ca de cuando nasco a delicio fue criada

ca non me priso a ella fijo de mugier nada

nimbla messó fijo de moro nin de cristiana,

commo yo a vós, conde, en el castiello de Cabra,



cuando pris a Cabra e a vós por la barba.

Non y ovo rapaz que non messó su pulgada,

la que yo messé aún non es eguada. (3283-3290)

Instead of defending his honor or character directly, the Cid defends his beard, the attacked symbol. It is a beard that has never been plucked – which would be a grave offence and insult that one could not ignore. As Nilda Guglielmi writes, “el pelo de la barba masculina fue sinónimo de la valentía y coraje y no había de ser tocado por hombre alguno porque lo contrario implicaba vencimiento e infamia.” (238) The Cid therefore ties his beard up when going to the court for the trial (3097), to protect it from being touched and bringing about more dishonor, “y solo las desata después que, el pleito satisfecho, recobra su honor.” (Guglielmi 241) The fact that the count supposedly ignored the Cid’s ripping out some of his beard and did not seek revenge shows his cowardice and lack of honor. It shows that the antagonist is somehow less than a man, just like the Infantes, as he is not even being able to protect the outward symbol of his masculinity.

While masculinity is the primary focus of this paper, it cannot be discussed completely apart from femininity, particularly as we have seen that the villains in this work are effeminate men. The question of how women fare in this epic is therefore pertinent. As Harney points out in *Kinship and Polity in the Poema de Mio Cid*, women, while not appearing to take center stage in this epic, are really the driving force behind much of the action:

The daughters, while they do not play a major role in the action, are the sole motive for the epic’s central conflict as well as the pretext for its

resolution. The functions of the female characters – daughters and wife – are both central and multifarious. The first marriages, it has been observed, “provide the base upon which the Second and Third Cantares depend,” leading as they do to the Afrenta de Corpes, the trial and the ensuing judicial combat, and the triumphant second marriages. (111)

As was mentioned before, Elvira and Sol’s marriages are examples of hypergamy or marrying up (117), as the Infantes themselves belong to the higher nobility. The marriages are beneficial for all parties, however, as the Infantes gain wealth, and in fact initiate the marriages for that very reason. The second marriages that Elvira and Sol contract, however, are not only a better match, as the daughters marry princes, but are also

the Cid’s supreme accomplishment, one for which he is solely responsible and therefore one which redounds first and foremost to his personal honor. The good marriage, we note, has nothing necessarily to do with the personal qualities of the spouses; it is an accomplishment in its own right, a feat of diplomatic savoir faire by which a family earns the envy and the admiration of its community. (116-117)

This Cid’s final victory is therefore achieved through women. As Harney points out, the personal qualities of the spouse are of little importance (in fact, we know nothing of these new husbands apart from their enviable social status). This inconsequentiality comes up when Elvira and Sol are beaten and left for dead by the Infantes de Carrión and the Cid takes the judicial approach to restore his honor. We read about the process, hear the two

sides speak, but may notice that very little is said of the actual physical violence done to these women. Their personal qualities are not brought up to show they are undeserving of such treatment, and their personal pain is never brought up before the court.

It appears that the blood of women in this poem does not have the same power as the blood of men. The violence that Elvira and Sol go through is private, unlike most of the violence in the text, which occurs mainly on the battlefields before many eyes. While the Infantes' intended effect for this particular bloodshed is to enact revenge on the Cid for the humiliation they had experienced, the event alone is of little consequence. As Harney had pointed out, the daughters are the pretext for the final resolution, but they themselves do not actively participate in achieving it. The effect of violence done to women barely affects anybody beyond the victims themselves; it is only when men engage in battle that the story can truly move forward and resolution is in sight. Peggy McCracken observes a similar pattern in the French tradition, concluding that

Women's blood seems to have a much more limited symbolic potential, at least in medieval fiction. Women's blood remains tied to women's bodies. Women's blood can be martyr's blood, the blood of a suffering body [...]. But women's blood cannot guarantee justice or mark a covenant. In medieval fiction, only men bleed in ways that have consequence beyond their own bodies, in ways that bring about lasting change and recognition.

(18)

That is not to say that the blood shed is an irrelevant plot point. On the contrary, the Afrenta de Corpes is crucial in setting up the third cantar. But it is necessary to follow it

up with judicial duels, which can and do have a more lasting effect on the social order in which the characters are involved. It is the spilling of male blood that brings about resolution, signals justice had been served and marks the full restoration of the Cid's honor and the dishonor of the Infantes.

It not surprising, then, that the focus is on the fact of the Infantes' abandonment of their wives, not so much the manner in which the abandoning was done, by almost murdering them. Elvira and Sol's blood is tied to their experience and their bodies, but it does not have a lasting consequence, it does not bring about great change. Only when men engage in battle can actual, more permanent and farther-reaching change be achieved. The combat therefore comes as the final part of the trial, and concludes the questions of honor and status. Before making that final demand, the Cid requests for his swords to be returned and for monetary compensation. He says:

por mis fijas que m' dexaron non he desonor,  
ca vos las casastes rey, sabredes qué fer oy;  
mas cuando sacaron mis fijas de Valencia la mayor,  
yo bien los quería d'alma e de coraçon,  
diles dos espadas, a Colada e a Tizón  
(ésta yo las gané a guisa de varón)  
que s'ondrassen con ellas e sirviessen a vós.  
Quando dexaron mis fijas en el robredo de Corpes,  
Connmigo non quisieron aver nada e perdieron mi amor (*CMC* 3149-  
3157)

He goes on to ask for the swords back, which the Infantes gladly accept, thinking that may be all the restitution that is required, in spite of the symbolic emasculation that this return signifies. These nine lines revisit some of the crucial moments of the epic. We are told once more that the king himself is responsible for the marriages, therefore this dishonor befalls him as well. The Cid throws in that the daughters were taken away from Valencia, which he had won for them, reminding us once more of his military successes. The two swords, which take central stage for part of this dispute, are discussed, and we are again told of their metonymic and symbolic value as representatives of the Cid himself, and his valor and masculinity, as he won them “a guisa de varón” (*CMC* 3154). Their symbolic meaning is highlighted by the next line, which states that the swords were meant to be utilized in service of the king, to bring about more honor to the Infantes and of course the Cid and the king as well. At this moment there is an implied comparison to what the Infantes did instead, that is, used forbidden weapons<sup>15</sup> instead of the swords and attacked not a common enemy but Elvira and Sol, entrusted to them by the king himself. What is lamented here is that the Infantes did not treat the Cid with the same respect and love that he gave them, and the abandonment, not the physical harm of the Cid’s daughters, is for now seen as the central issue. This is a dispute centered on the marriages and their dissolution, and the relationships that those marriages created. Bonds that had acquired wealth or prestige for the interested parties are being broken, and all involved are concerned with an assurance that their honor has not been harmed by the actions of

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<sup>15</sup> Montaner’s note on the verse “Espuelas tienen calçadas los malos traidores” (*CMC* 2722) reveals: “Cualquier daño corporal hubiera sido infamante, pero los infantes se aprestan a usar armas prohibidas (espuelas y cinchas), lo que resultaba especialmente injurioso.”

the Infantes. In fact, it seems that the women themselves serve also as a sort of metonymy. They are representative of the Cid in the sense that any honor or dishonor done to them directly affects their father, and their value seems to largely lie in that fact, rather than their individual selves. This is not to say that the Cid does not display affection for them, for he undeniably does, as is clear in his tears when he parts from them.

The Cid makes his next request in court using similar rhetoric, this time asking for his money back. This is another moment in which contrast is established between the high nobility whose wealth is entirely grounded in land and inherited, and the Cid's wealth, which has been earned and is largely monetary. This scene also serves to humiliate the Infantes who are unable to repay their debt. It is only in the third request, a series of judicial duels, that the Cid finally focuses on the violence committed. It may be argued that, for an audience expecting things to come in threes, waiting to make the request creates a stronger effect, but it is hard to ignore how little is said of the beatings. What is particularly interesting is the way the Infantes and their people respond to the accusations, which is technically that of "menos valer"<sup>16</sup>. The Cid states his accusation in the following way:

Cuando no las queriedes, ya canes traidores,  
¿por qué las sacávades de Valencia, sus honores?

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<sup>16</sup> As Alberto Montaner explains briefly and clearly in a footnote to his edition to the *CMC*, "Lo que el Cid pretende es que la corte declare oficialmente la minusvalía o infamia de los infantes, cuya pena era la inhabilitación para cualquier cargo público, para actuar como representante de terceros y para pertenecer al séquito de cualquier señor noble. Es decir, constituía una especie de expulsión vitalicia de la actividad social de la nobleza, aunque el infamado no perdiera todos sus privilegios." (201)

¿A qué las firiestes a cinchas e a espolones?

Solas las dexastes en el robredo de Corpes,

a las bestias fieras e a la saves del mont.

¡Por quanto les fizistes, menos valedes vos! (*CMC* 3263-3268)

He explicitly brings up the attack and the weapons used. The charge is clearly connected to the Infantes' display of cowardice in the cruel treatment of their wives. The responses received, however, do not address the violence at all, but focus on the hypogamy, or the "marrying down" of the Infantes when accepting Elvira and Sol for their wives. Garcí Ordóñez asks, "¿quién ge las diera por parejas o por veladas?" (*CMC* 3277), remarking that they are not worthy of being "varraganas" (3276) to men of such social stature as the Infantes, even though it was the Infantes themselves who asked for the marriages, which were approved and demanded of the Cid by the king. Their approach, then, is to devalue the women as much as possible – not by attacking them as people, but as an inferior option, now that the path for hypergamy is open for the Infantes. Fernando and Diego's behavior is justified by their higher birth; again the personal harm is not considered or answered to; they only see the fact of leaving Elvira and Sol in spite of the bond of marriage as worthy of response. The discussion soon turns to other demonstrations of cowardice by the Infantes, such as the lion incident and their behavior in battle, with Pero Vermúdez concluding, bringing it back to the issue at hand: "por quanto las dexastes menos valedes vos. / Ellas son mugieres e vós sodes varones, / en todís guisas más valen que vos." (3346-3348) Note that the insult in this case is that the women are superior to the Infantes, which effeminizes the brothers once more. In fact, the mere possibility of

comparison between the men and women on this front indicates that Fernando and Diego are more feminine than they are masculine. This flip counts on the audience's understanding of the feminine as inferior to the masculine, and therefore of the Infantes as clearly inferior to the Cid.

The text thus encodes its message by means of a pre-existing system of gender relations, associating the morally inferior with the already understood inferiority of the feminine. The cluster of metonymic expressions such as the frequent references to the Cid's swords and beard serve not only as a constant reminder of the Cid's undeniable masculinity, but also as symbols of his honor, tying the two ideals together. As the poet plays with the metonymies, having these symbols change hands or having characters engage in discussions over them, the issues of virility and integrity are kept in the foreground. Meanwhile, the scheming and lying, as well as consistent displays of cowardice, highlight the lack of masculinity and honor in the Infantes and other unsympathetic characters such as count Ordóñez. Hierarchies of class and religion collapse into the hierarchy of gender, allowing the poet to launch attacks against the type of higher nobility that relies entirely on its birth and wealth, as well as the presumably Jewish characters who engage in money lending. On the other hand, the Cid's active pursuit of honor justifies his upward social mobility, which seems to be a sort of side effect to his accrual of wealth and honor. Though the poem does not advocate great social change, it does present a world where advancement is not only possible, but also beneficial to society as a whole, as it allows for the deserving, like the Cid, to get ahead. Since the masculine is meant to be superior to the feminine, the high nobility of the



effeminate characters comes to appear as an unnatural imbalance, which the reader/listener is anxious to see rectified. As the Cid climbs higher than his enemies, natural order seems to be restored, the “truly” masculine ruling over the effeminate.

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