

The Song of the Cid

A DUAL-LANGUAGE EDITION
WITH PARALLEL TEXT

Translated by
BURTON RAFFEL

Introduction and Notes by
MARÍA ROSA MENOCAL

PENGUIN BOOKS

Introduction

It begins with weeping, the open sorrow of a man riding into exile. Soon we hear its distinct echo: the weeping of those who remain behind, and who line the streets to see our hero and his band of loyal followers, all men forced to abandon their homes, and their homeland. There is more weeping: the good citizens along the route openly lament the injustice of it all, and they decry the irascibility of their king, who, they say, has not only banished from the kingdom a better man than himself, but also threatened to rip their eyes out from their heads should they open their doors to these fugitives, this company of sixty men who ride out with their proud banners, following the man they call Cid.

But the king cannot prevent the men and women from opening their hearts to the Cid. Just what has so angered the king, just what the Cid has done to earn himself this calamitous sentence, is never mentioned, and will never be explained, but from this dramatic and poignant beginning forward there is never any question of where our sympathies lie. For the length of three cantos, out of the old Castilian capital of Burgos and into the proverbial deserts of exile—which here means all that lies beyond the Castilian frontier—we follow Rodrigo Díaz, our hero. We are often reminded that he is from Vivar, a small town some five miles to the north of Burgos. This is very much the heart of Old Castile, the Christian kingdom that ultimately conquers the lands of the peninsula that had long been Islamic territories. But Rodrigo Díaz is known mostly by his unambiguously Arabic name: Cid is a direct rendering into Castilian of *sayyid*—Lord, or Commander. Sometimes he is also called by his strongest epithet, *Cid Campeador*—the Champion, or the Warrior. By any and all of his names, from

the start there is no doubt he is our hero, as we listeners, or readers, are easily welcomed into his first little troop of lucky few, who so possessively, and with such palpable endearment, often call him *mio Cid*—my Cid.

The *Cantar* or *Poema de Mio Cid* has survived some eight hundred years as a written poem, and perhaps decades longer than that as part of an oral poetic tradition. Long regarded as Spain's national epic, it recounts the clearly fictionalized life and deeds of a charismatic historical figure who played a role in some of the dramatic episodes of the tumultuous eleventh century. *The Cid* has particularly strong kinship with other national epics (including the American Western) that recount mythologized historical events believed to be vital to the formation of a people or a nation. Central to many of these is an acting-out of the passage from the almost wild universe of unruly frontiers and their attendant injustices to the new world—the new community, the new nation—where a newly crystallized society is instead governed by laws, and where justice reigns.

The Cid's roughly 3,700 lines are divided into 152 stanzas (called *tiradas* in Spanish, and *laisses* in French, and sometimes in English) of irregular length. These are in turn part of three major subdivisions called *cantares*, powerfully suggesting the work's inextricability from the tradition of singing (*cantar*); in English, *cantares* is easily translated as "canto." Much else about the poem's form—its single lines broken into half lines, its oft-repeated formulas, its irregular meter, its use of assonance—also suggests that the poem that comes down to us was composed and performed orally, and transmitted orally for some time, before being committed to writing. But the poem's occasional learned and ecclesiastical expressions, and its detailed understanding of important legal traditions, suggest instead that there were written sources of various sorts at play in the creation of the poem, and perhaps even that the version we read today is a text originally composed as a written poem.

In either event, one of the poem's most distinctive features is its relative proximity to the historical events narrated. The roughly

contemporary *Song of Roland* recounts the overtly mythologized story of Charlemagne and his troops crossing the Pyrenees in 778, returning to France from Spain after the siege of Saragossa—events removed from the mid-twelfth-century audience's lifetime by some four hundred years. Regardless of whether the *Cid* poet was a wandering and illiterate blind bard, whose masterpiece was most canonically performed in the last decade of the twelfth century before being recorded by a scribe, or instead a cultured lawyer, who had studied in France and even read some of the French epics, such as *The Song of Roland*, and who finished writing his text in 1207, he was evoking a past that was not far beyond living memory, and that was still well enough known that any number of its salient historical milestones did not need to be retold in the poem in order to be understood.

The historical *Cid* died in 1099. He had lived out his life of military prowess and fame during a particularly momentous period of Spain's history: The last quarter of the eleventh century was pivotal in the Iberian peninsula, much of which had been an Islamic polity for nearly four hundred years. After several centuries of grandeur and cultural achievement, the Caliphate of Cordoba collapsed at the beginning of the eleventh century, torn apart by civil wars provoked by crises of succession, as well as a series of ideological rifts—contemporaries poignantly called this era the *fitna*, or times of troubles. What remained after the demise of the once powerful central state of Cordoba were dozens of often warring city-states, called the *Taifas*, from the Arabic *muluk at-tawaif*, meaning the kingdoms of divided parties, or factions. Although they continued and even expanded many of the great cultural traditions of the past, especially poetry, these fractured kingdoms became increasingly vulnerable to the military incursions and ambitions of the various relatively small Christian kingdoms of the north.

These now-expanding Christian polities—Asturias, Galicia, León, Navarre, Aragon, Barcelona, and, of course, Castile were the major ones—often regarded one another as rivals, and most of them had long had all manner of contacts with the Islamic world that lay just over porous and ever-shifting borders. There were

military confrontations, perhaps most famous among them the incendiary attack on the pilgrimage city of Santiago de Compostela in 997 by the infamous usurper al-Mansur, a pivotal figure in the downfall of the caliphate. But the complex relations between Islamic and Christian states also included much that was not hostile, including alliances of one Christian kingdom with the Islamic state against their Christian rivals, as well as intermarriages of royal and other important families across the Muslim-Christian divide. And beginning in the Taifa period of the eleventh century, when the events of *The Song of the Cid* take place, weakened Taifa cities began paying *parias*, or tribute money, to Christian kingdoms, in return for protection against all enemies, Christian or Muslim.

At his death in 1065, Ferdinand I of Castile and León—father of Alfonso VI, the king who exiles the Cid, in both history and our poem—was receiving occasional tribute money from the large and important Taifas of Seville and Valencia, and quite regular *parias* from others: Saragossa, Badajoz, and Toledo. The abundant tribute, paid in both coin and goods, as our poem insistently details for us (the Cid collecting such tribute at every turn, as kings did), made some of the Christian kings and kingdoms ever wealthier, and increasingly powerful. And none more so than the Castilians.

Here was a land poised for far-reaching changes, with dramatic shifts of power around almost every corner. Despite the fact that Ferdinand had spent his life and kingship struggling to unite various rival Christian kingdoms, he ultimately chose to leave the land as a divided inheritance to his three sons: the youngest, García, inherited the least central and least desirable kingdom, Galicia; Alfonso, the middle son, received León, considered the richest prize; and Castile went to the eldest brother, Sancho, whose entourage, the historical record reveals, included a rising star, the prominent warrior and courtier Rodrigo Díaz. Not surprisingly, the brothers were not content to share what they had already seen could be a formidable unified kingdom, and they spent most of the decade after their father's death in a series of few-holds-barred struggles against one another. When the dust settled it was not

Rodrigo Díaz's sovereign, Sancho, but rather the middle brother, Alfonso, who emerged as the victor, and who was able once again to create a single united Christian kingdom. But this was achieved only at the expense of his brothers and, in fact, not until Sancho was murdered in 1072, while putting down an insurrection in the dramatically sited city of Zamora, the inheritance and the dominion of Ferdinand's daughter, Urraca. Some believed that Alfonso—who at the time was in exile in Toledo, driven there by Sancho—was directly implicated in the regicide of his brother, perhaps even in collusion with Urraca. These melodramas go unspoken in the poem but are nevertheless understood as the causes behind the exile of the Cid, an exile that is not only the dramatic opening but also the very heart and soul of the poem itself.

Also unspoken in the poem is the cardinal political event of the Cid's lifetime: In 1085, Alfonso—for over a decade now the powerful Alfonso VI of the unified kingdoms of León and Castile—took Toledo outright, suddenly making this glorious old Taifa city no longer part of the Islamic orbit but the new center of Castilian life. Here was a city far larger and vastly more cosmopolitan than any of the older capitals to the north, a brilliant new jewel in the crown of this ambitious and increasingly powerful king. But it was not just Toledo's prosperity that made it of incomparable value, and its conquest a palpable turning point. This was no less a place of profound historical and symbolic importance: Toledo had once been the ancient capital of the Visigoths, the Christian rulers overrun by invading Muslim armies centuries before, and the capital of the church in Spain.

Very little of this escaped the Taifa kings. Although for several generations they had bitter relations among themselves, and many had been militarily dependent on Christians, paying them *parias*, the various Muslim monarchs of the peninsula grasped that the outright loss of Toledo was a defeat of a different order. In a rare moment of something resembling unity among themselves, the Taifa kings, led by their most prominent, al-Mutamid of Seville—who may well be the historical figure loosely summoned up in the poem's "lord of Seville" in the second canto—decided to ask for military assistance against Alfonso, who, emboldened by the ease

with which he had taken Toledo, clearly had further expansion in mind. For this they turned, with considerable trepidation, to the Islamic state in power just across the Strait of Gibraltar, a recently ensconced Berber regime called the Almoravids. Led by the imperious Yusuf Ibn Tashufin—the basis for the Yusuf of the poem, against whom the Cid fights the memorable battle to defend Valencia—the Almoravids crossed over to Spain in 1086, just one year after Alfonso had taken Toledo, and helped the Andalusians deal Alfonso a decisive defeat at Zallaqa, one of the most famous battles of the age. They headed back home, but before long the Almoravids were back on the Iberian peninsula, this time to wage war on their erstwhile allies, the hapless Taifa kings, whose kingdoms they now coveted, and who ended up appealing to Alfonso himself for help in what turned out to be their ultimately unsuccessful struggle against these invaders.

Heady times, these, for a warrior, and especially for one like Rodrigo Díaz, who was at odds with Alfonso after the murder of his own king, Sancho, and more often than not was very much his own man. The historical Cid was exiled not once but several times, for reasons that, on at least one occasion, clearly had to do with what Alfonso felt was egregious lack of loyalty—the virtue the poem is devoted to establishing and repeatedly praising—and for embezzling the *parias* he had gone to collect for the Castilian king from al-Mutamid of Seville. And in history, the great Castilian warrior fought at the head of virtually any army that he could muster (and frequently these were “mixed” armies, with both Christian and Muslim soldiers) or that would hire him, including that of the Muslim Taifa of Saragossa.

These details are but the tip of the iceberg of differences between what history records and what the poem narrates. The poem is a work of historical fiction, a literary masterpiece that paints its original stories on a vivid historical canvas. Some events in the poem are wholly imaginary, such as the marriages of the Cid’s daughters to two fictitious noblemen and the sequence of events that follow from that dramatic plot turn, but even these are saturated with historical allusions and truths, spun out of a dense fabric of historical concerns, including those of the moment at

which the poem crystallizes, a century after the events narrated. Some would say that, as with most other historical fiction, it is really the political and social dramas, the anxieties and preoccupations, of the poet's time, rather than those of the events narrated, that lie just beneath the surface.

Arguably the most notable historical concerns that have long colored readings of the poem are not from the eleventh century, or even from the twelfth or the thirteenth, but from much later centuries, when Spain no longer had Muslims living on the peninsula, and when implacable religious enmity between the two peoples was believed to have always driven encounters between them. Popular beliefs about the poem deeply affect readings of it, as well as of the history it may reflect. Because this is a text long perceived as central to understanding the national character, there are distinctive claims made as to what it is about—the Reconquest, the ideologically charged struggle of the Christians against the Moors—that are difficult to find in the poem itself, a poem, it is vital to note, that contains a single character—a Frankish churchman, to boot, rather than any Castilian—who speaks and behaves as a wild-eyed Moorslayer, as the later mythology tells us all Christians did.

Writing about *The Song of the Cid* in *El País Semanal* in 2007, the year of the poem's eight-hundredth anniversary, Javier Marías, one of Spain's most prominent contemporary writers, remarked that it is one of those books that few know but that most believe they have read. Many surprises await those who imagine, before actually reading the *Cid*, that the poem pivots on the epic struggles between Christians and Muslims in medieval Spain, much as the famous Old French *Song of Roland* pivots on its epic struggle between "Christians and Pagans." Although the *Cid* is indeed a warrior of epic skills, and although his exploits on the battlefields from Castile to the outskirts of Saragossa and ultimately to Valencia can be seen as the stepping-stones of the plot, the heart of *The Song of the Cid* is not at all in its warfare. And while many, perhaps most, either in Spain or abroad, are likely to say that the *Cid* is a hero because of his role in reclaiming Christian lands, an attentive reading of the poem reveals that this is scarcely an issue at

all, and that while our hero may be a pious Christian he is not driven by anything like religious zeal in his battles and conquests. Both the Cid and his poem have other preoccupations, and other problems to resolve.

Exile, as well as the opportunities for triumph and redemption that exile provides, is the poem's principal concern, and that of its surprisingly tenderhearted warrior-hero. The Cid's first stop on his way out of Castile is the monastery of San Pedro de Cardena, some half-dozen miles to the southeast of Burgos. His wife, Jimena, and their two small daughters, Elvira and Sol, are already there, and as Rodrigo leaves them in the care of the abbot Don Sancho—for clearly the Cid cannot take them into the rough unknown that his political banishment forces him to face—we witness scenes of unembarrassed familial passion. We also hear the Cid's profound concern not only for their immediate well-being, but just as much for what might seem, at first glance, to lie in a distant and peripheral future: his daughters' eventual marriages.

The question of what will become of Elvira and Sol will turn out to be not distant at all but indeed quite central—the Warrior's enduring concern, from this beginning until the final lines of the poem, which celebrate the extraordinary matches finally and triumphantly made. When we ride with the Cid out of Castile and down those roads he is forced to take, to build a new life for himself after he has been cast out, and his whole universe thus scattered, we grasp that the poem is preoccupied with the ways and means of re-establishing the order and justice in the universe that were lost when the Cid was exiled. Exiled unfairly, as a host of voices in the poem invariably remind us, our hero must display publicly, over and over again, his abundant good qualities in order to make things right. And while some of these good qualities are the virtues one would expect of a legendary warrior—utter fearlessness and great physical prowess—others are those that make him an appropriate hero for a society whose affairs are conducted largely off the battlefield: transparent honesty and dignity; belief that justice prevails; and exceptional generosity to all, including the king who has banished him. The Cid's unflinching loyalty to Alfonso, despite the unfair exile, and his quest for jus-

tice, to reclaim his rightful place in society, are perhaps the most vivid and omnipresent strands in the poem, and tightly interwoven.

Once out of Castile, the Cid and his men begin their quest for a new life, which means they will attack and raid one town after another. This war-making is motivated neither by politics of any sort, religious or otherwise, nor by the desire to conquer the lands attacked and make them his own, at least until Valencia is reached in the second canto, some three years after his having been forced to flee from home. It is only then, when the Cid takes one of Spain's greatest cities, *Valencia la clara*, "shining Valencia," that he feels he has found a new home for his family. Up until then, the goal was far simpler: the accumulation of ever-greater wealth. Some of the material gains come directly off the battlefields, and we quickly learn the very great value of horses, as well as their saddles, and of tents and, of course, of the great swords of kings, two of which he will win in combat: the first, taken from the Christian Count of Barcelona, is named Colada, while Tizón is won from Búcar, the Muslim king of Morocco who first appears at the beginning of the third canto. A great deal of the gain also comes as coin, both silver and gold, the tribute that mimics the *parias* that defined relations between Christian and Muslim kingdoms, here paid outright to the Cid either because he has taken a place or, once his fame begins to precede him, to prevent him from attacking.

And his fame does begin to grow immediately, from his first raid (dangerously made inside Alfonso's Castilian territories, as they are on their way out) onward, and with that renown, and with the wealth that increases with every raid and conquest, more and more men will flock to his side. Within a few years, the warrior we first glimpsed as he was leaving Burgos, weeping, with a handful of loyalists at his side, finds himself at the head of a real army, all volunteers, all happy to join what has become a profitable adventure. Our poem is always careful to have us understand that this juggernaut of success is rooted in the virtue of generosity, in the giving away much more than in the taking: The Cid is from the outset a veritable river to his men. Never, while he is traveling the roads that lead from the near despair of losing everything to

the triumph of great wealth and possession of a major city, do we sense that our hero is craven, or bloodthirsty, or anything other than a man whose unjust exile is what has transformed him into this legendary warrior ("Castile's great exile had become a serious danger") and forced him to make such a life for himself and his men. In stanza 62, the Cid tells the vanquished Count of Barcelona that he will release him but not return any of the hoard he has taken from him "Because I need it for these men of mine, / Who have, like me, no other way to find it. / We stay alive by taking from others, as we have with you. / And this will be our life for as long as God desires, / Living as men must, when their king has thrown them into exile." And a considerable part of the fortune won this way also serves the vital purpose of re-establishing the Cid's standing with King Alfonso, to whom he begins to send always greater gifts from the bounty he takes with each battle, each victory.

The king, in turn, begins to see the worth of the warrior he has exiled, taking the measure of his utter fearlessness, which enables him to move easily from one conquest to the next, even when he and his men are seriously outnumbered. The monarch also sees the warrior's worth in terms of the considerable wealth he amasses, a substantial part of which then becomes his own. Although he cannot pardon the Cid with undue haste, Alfonso appears to understand his error from early on—an error, it would appear, rooted in poor counsel, the corrupt advice of jealous nobles close to him. The king does almost immediately pardon those close to the Cid and, each time he receives his always greater gifts, encourages others to band with him: "Rejoin my Cid and seek more treasure."

Predictably, however, our hero's ability to transform the original desolation of his exile into a triumph of might and growing wealth, of great fame and near-universal admiration, of personal dignity and worth in the face of injustice and duress, provokes even greater envy and covetousness among some of those in King Alfonso's court. And so it is that less than halfway through the poem its core dramas begin, when two young noblemen (who we can see in a minute are far from noble of character) persuade Alfonso to betroth them to the Cid's daughters. The rest of this animated, fast-moving, and often surprising narrative poem plays

out the story of these obviously ill-fated marriages to the nobles of Carrión, and the trials of every sort that follow from them.

Virtually all of the events of the dramatic dénouement are starkly literary: the opening scene of the third canto, when a lion escapes while the Cid is sleeping, and in an instant lays bare the cowardice of the sons-in-law; the heartbreaking beating of the Cid's daughters, in a distant and dark woods, and the poignant sorrow of the father when he is told, revealing a warrior determined to seek social justice for the outrage, rather than the physical vengeance he could easily have had; the pageantry-filled court that Alfonso calls in Toledo, where every noble in the land is summoned to witness the charges and countercharges; and then the dramatic confrontation between the Cid and those among the nobility who have long sought to discredit and banish him, a showdown, we realize, that has been coming all along. The Cid, our Warrior, emerges the victor in all of these trials without once lifting his own sword.

The *Cantar de Mio Cid* has long enjoyed a seminal place in the Spanish consciousness of its notoriously complex medieval past and, thanks in some measure to the popular 1961 big-screen extravaganza *El Cid*—with international stars Charlton Heston and Sophia Loren in the leading roles—a certain place in the popular imagination beyond Spain, a kind of window into this unusual chapter in medieval European history. The text of the poem survives in a unique and incomplete manuscript that is a fourteenth-century copy of an earlier and lost one, probably from the early thirteenth century. Today considered one of the greatest treasures of the Biblioteca Nacional in Madrid, it was acquired only in 1960, after circulating for several hundred years among private collectors and interested scholars. Although the manuscript was discovered in 1596—in Vivar, appropriately enough, the legendary birthplace of the Cid—the existence of the work was not revealed to a broader public until the publication of a scholarly edition by Tomás Antonio Sánchez in 1779, an edition clearly a part of the universe of Romantic discovery and study of the medieval world. From that moment on, this narrative poem has remained indissolubly linked to very broad intellectual and scholarly

disputes, and especially so to arguments, both direct and indirect, over the national origins and character of Spain, and about the qualities of its culture, arguments scarcely resolved to this day.

The peculiarities of the mutilated manuscript have, from the outset, seemed to invite persistent and divisive disputes: on one hand, the first folio—and with it probably some fifty verses—is missing; on the other, at the end of the nearly four thousand verses, there is explicit mention of someone called Per Abbat and the specific date—1207, once the calculation is made from the Hispanic to the Julian calendar—he tells us he recorded the poem in his manuscript: “Per Abbat le escrivíó en el mes de mayo . . .” Most scholars agree that the Old Castilian *escribir* here does not refer to authorship but rather indicates that Per Abbat copied the manuscript, and most also believe that this would be perfectly congruent with a great deal of what is known about the anonymity of many medieval texts and the vicissitudes of their translation from the universe of oral culture to that of the written word. All of this leaves wide open the question of authorship and, closely related, that of dating—problems not unique but in their general parameters shared by other famous premodern epics, not least the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. At the same time, the lacuna at the beginning of the poem—vital, among other reasons, because we tend to assume it would have told us more about the roots and causes of the Cid’s exile—provoked a far-reaching practice of filling in the poem’s story from other sources, as if the poem itself were merely a fragment of a larger story, rather than an autonomous artistic composition related to but distinguishable from the history that emerges from other sources.

Other sources do certainly abound. Long before the discovery and publication of this masterly poem, materials about the life of the Cid were plentiful, and some of these were roughly contemporary, going back to his own lifetime in the eleventh century, or the century or two immediately thereafter. These include purportedly historical as well as openly legendary and literary material, although unambiguous distinctions between the two are sometimes difficult to make, and not only when we are dealing with medieval material. Rodrigo Díaz was a charismatic and well-known figure

in his lifetime, as attested to in fairly simple historical documents known as "diplomas" (or charters) that speak to his participation in events at various courts of the Castilian monarchy. Beyond these there are also two important Latin works, one a history, *Historia Roderici* (1140-47), and the other a historical poem, the *Carmen Campidoctoris* (*The Song of the Warrior*), which was long believed to be contemporary with the Cid's life but is now thought to be from as much as a century later. Material about the Cid's life proliferates in later histories composed at the court of the prolific scholar-king Alfonso X, from the mid-thirteenth century on, especially in the massive *Estoria de España* (*History of Spain*). These written histories themselves incorporate extensive popular and orally derived materials about the Cid, much of it clearly bound up with the vigorous ballad tradition, the *Romancero*, which overflowed with popular songs about the Cid, and was itself closely linked to a broader epic tradition that, with the exception of the *Cantar de Mio Cid*, has survived only in these indirect attestations. All of these often entangled sources further beg the question of history versus mythology, or literature, and of the relationship between the oral and the written at a period when the latter was beginning to supplant the former. But in all of this what remains indisputable is the great popularity of all manner of stories about this warrior, a popularity that has long transcended national preoccupations and reached as far as the theater of seventeenth-century Paris, where Corneille's innovative 1636 *Le Cid* proved an immediate success.

In very broad terms, these intertwined problems constitute the principal and still starkly contested grounds of questioning and belief about this singular text: Who, if anyone, composed this masterpiece? Should we understand it not as authored in the modern sense but as part of the oral tradition, an oral tradition that in Spain especially has long been concerned with historical events, and long been believed to carry authentic historical information? Just what is the poem's relationship to the history and historical characters it sings about, and what is the Cid's relationship to the historical figure who actually lived and fought in late eleventh-century Spain? And what does any of it matter to a reader many

centuries removed, whether that reader is a Spaniard or an American, a nineteenth-century gentleman or a twenty-first-century student?

In the early twentieth century the towering Spanish scholar Ramón Menéndez Pidal published two works—his edition of the *Poema de Mio Cid*, which came out between 1908 and 1911, and, in 1929, his monumental *La España del Cid*—that powerfully staked out the ground for one set of answers to these questions, and shaped the vision of the poem and its meaning for generations, even to this day. For Menéndez Pidal the *Cantar*—for this is what he invariably calls it (despite the use of the word *poema* in his title), with its strong connotation of being sung rather than written—is unambiguously the product of the oral tradition. An anonymous composition that closely reflects the historical events and milieu of Castile during its formative years, from which the poem, which he dates to circa 1140, is scarcely far removed, Menéndez Pidal's *Cid* is a work of profound and direct historical veracity, revealing to us the Cid's authentic private and civic persona. To make this argument his book begins with a long and impassioned rebuttal of the work of one of the legendary Arabists of the time, a distinguished and prolific specialist in the Hispano-Arabic world named Reinhardt Dozy, whose writings on the Cid were based on, among other things, Arabic documents dating back to the time of the Cid.

Several historical texts do exist in Arabic: A native of Valencia named Ibn 'Alqama, who lived through the Cid's capture of his city, wrote an account long lost in its original form but largely transcribed into a later historical work; another contemporary, Ibn Bassam, profiled notable Andalusians in an important biographical dictionary discovered by Dozy. But Dozy's late-nineteenth-century debunking of the romanticized literary Cid threatened to undermine the Campeador's already well-established hagiography, which made him a paragon of medieval Christian values; indeed, Dozy's work even included the observation that the Cid had qualities far beyond his Arabic name that made him seem more Muslim than Catholic. Menéndez Pidal, however, unembarrassedly argued that our hero's virtues—his loyalty to an unwor-

thy king, which is really to the nation; his open devotion to his family; his generosity to all—needed to be remembered as foundationally Castilian, and thus Spanish, and to be emulated in the difficult present. That present, of course, was the stage-setting for Spain's devastating civil war, and Menéndez Pidal's views not only won the day among most scholars, and among the Spanish intelligentsia, but were also eventually appropriated explicitly by the Franco regime, despite the fact that Menéndez Pidal himself did not share the regime's ideology. As the great historian of medieval Spain Peter Linehan points out, the painful questions about exile and loyalty that bitterly divided Spain's intellectual classes after the triumph of the Nationalists strongly echo the questions at the heart of the poem, and many interpretations of the *Cid*, and of medieval Spain in general, are indissolubly tied to the dramatic events in Spain's history in the twentieth century.

In 2007 even an innocent traveler to Spain might well have become aware that the year marked the eight hundredth anniversary of the *Cantar de Mio Cid*. The milestone was celebrated in ways both potentially meaningful—a rare public display, one evening, of the precious manuscript at the National Library—and overtly camp—a label, with charging knight and all, on bottles of the sparkling mineral water called Vichy Catalan. And when the Prado, Madrid's extraordinary art museum, opened its new wing to international acclaim, the commemorative exhibition of nineteenth-century history paintings in the new spaces revealed to visitors the once great popularity for painters of the scene of the *Cid*'s daughters, beaten and abandoned in the imaginary Corpes woods. Most remarkable, perhaps, and certainly most unplanned, was the scandal that erupted over the sword long displayed at the Military Museum as the *Cid*'s Tizón, which, along with his other sword, Colada, plays a prominent role in the events of the poem. The sword was sold for a considerable sum to the region of Castile-León, so that it might be displayed in the cathedral at Burgos, where the tombs of the *Cid* and of his wife, Jimena, are centerpieces of tourist interest. But the Ministry of Culture decided to have the authenticity of the sword scrutinized, and eventually announced that the sword could not possibly have

belonged to the Cid, having been made in the fourteenth or fifteenth century. The anniversary display in the cathedral went on just the same.

Despite this kind of attention—or perhaps because of it—the poem is indeed, as Javier Marías noted, scarcely read in our own century, even by educated Spaniards, and almost never approached outside of loathsome required-reading school lists, nor without a series of largely negative preconceptions. In a post-Franco Spain, justifiably proud of its social and economic modernization and of its increasingly prominent role as one of the leaders of the European community, of an open and ethnically diverse society, it is perhaps not surprising that there is little real interest in this so-called national epic, assumed to be openly anti-Muslim and a glorification of a bigoted Christian worldview, a work held up for so long as emblematic of the Franco era's repressive values. But these preconceptions are largely unjust and, at times, deeply ironic, given the centrality of the question of Christian-Muslim relations not just in Spain but also throughout the world in the twenty-first century.

The poem itself reveals a far more complex world than most imagine, a universe within which, among many other things, the Christian hero's most trusted ally can be a Muslim, and where the most odious villains are important members of the Castilian aristocracy. As readers of Burton Raffel's vigorous new translation will immediately discover, the reality of the poem is very different from the mythology, and its preoccupations are enduring ones. Although few readers of either the glorious Old Spanish or this brisk and instantly captivating new English version will sympathize with all of its values—and when is that ever the case with a work of fiction?—most will find themselves transported to a world sometimes unexpectedly familiar. Raffel's rendition serves to remind readers of the straightaway power of oral narratives—hence the choice of the title *The Song of the Cid*—and captures much of the genius of the poem, especially its frontierlike directness and its unashamed expression of the most fundamental aspects of the human condition: the seduction of wealth, the grief of exile from a homeland, the unspeakable love of one's children, the anger provoked by betrayals, the difficult contemplation of how to achieve

justice. And all of this plays out on a stage where warfare is a fact of life, and yet where there is a visible and central struggle to replace raw violence with the rule of law as the ultimate arbiter of justice. Here we have an epic narrative that vividly conjures up a world at once removed and yet far from remote from us.

MARÍA ROSA MENOCAL