

The *Mocedades de Rodrigo*: A Hero with a Bad Character?

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The famous *Cantar de Mio Cid*, composed probably near the beginning of the thirteenth century, is about the mature hero. The infamous *Mocedades de Rodrigo*, now dated to the beginning of the fourteenth, is about his Boyhood Deeds.¹ *MR* is thus earlier than *CMC* in the disposition of its narrative, though later chronologically. Its protagonist, as is well known, presents a startling contrast to the hero in his earlier manifestation. Menéndez Pidal states, justly, that Rodrigo "no sabe hablar sino con desplantes de altivez, sana, y fanfarronería, lo mismo contra su rey que contra el emperador de Alemania, contra el papa y hasta contra doña Jimena" (1957: 315). While the mature hero of *CMC* is characterized by sardonic gravity or 'mesura', the expectant audience of *MR* might have been perplexed to find that his behaviour when a boy had been the exact opposite.

Explanations have stressed that the late epic coincided with "el gusto decadente de esta época" (Menéndez Pidal 1957: 315-16). Rebelliousness such as Rodrigo's is found in epic heroes "more often when the epic is in decline, as part of a general tendency to hold the attention of an audience by startling innovations" (Deyermond 1969:21). For Thomas Montgomery, however, part of Rodrigo's behaviour has a universal, mythic quality. His berserk conduct on his first appearance at court should be understood by reference to a boyhood deed of Cuchulainn and the Roman legend of the Horatii and Curiatii: "the three tales

deal fundamentally with the initiation through successful combat of the young warrior, followed by his integration into society, a process in which women play a role" (1986-87: 542).² My own view (1994-95), somewhat akin to Montgomery's, is that Rodrigo's wildness and insubordination may be characteristic of the Youthful Deeds of epic heroes, as exemplified in *chansons de geste* largely from the twelfth century. At least part of the explanation for the unruly behaviour of the hero of the corresponding Castilian *mocedades* might thus lie in a generic imperative. An alternative approach denies that Rodrigo has any charge to answer. Victorio came to see his behaviour to king and pope as justified: the former is weak and the latter makes common cause with Spain's enemies (xiv-xv). And he dismisses other possible charges: "nuestro joven tiene un comportamiento absolutamente 'normal' en el género épico con respecto a los demás personajes" (xv).

Recently, J. Enrique Serrano Asenjo has also argued that the distance between the young hero and the mature one is less than has been supposed: "los tópicos de valentía y saber, *fortitudo et sapientia*, coinciden en el de Vîvar [Rodrigo], algo que ya señaló Menéndez Pidal para el protagonista del *Poema de Mio Cid*" (164). Initial rebelliousness is increasingly replaced by loyalty to his king, until in the end "la gran distancia que separaba a Rodrigo y Fernando en el pasaje del voto se ha desvanecido" (168). Although I do not claim that Rodrigo has no virtues, the present refundición of my earlier article stresses the persistently rebarbative aspects of his conduct. And it re-states my original hypothesis, but adapted to meet as far as possible an objection by Leonardo Funes.

"Su primer rasgo es la mocedad" (Serrano Asenjo 163). It is important, before considering parallels from French epic, to stress at the outset that Rodrigo is portrayed as a child, a clue to part of his behaviour that is often overlooked. He is a genuine even if conventionalized boy hero.

One of the first things we hear about him is that he is no more than twelve:

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A los nueve días contados cavalgam muy
 privado.
 Rodrigo, fijo de don Diego et nieto
 de Lain Calvo,
 et nieto del conde Nuño Álvarez de Amaya,
 et visnieto del rey de León,
 doze años avía por cuenta e aun los treze
 non son. (317-20)³

On the arrival of the apparently threatening summons to court, his father proposes to send him out of harm's way: "Fijo, passatvos para Faro, do vuestro tío Ruy Láinez está" (l.398). His recourse to his mother, when in danger of being late for his "lid" with the Aragonese champion, is a further reminder that he is not yet adult: "a la condesa doña Theresa Núñez e apriessa ovo preguntado: / 'Señora, ¿quántos días ha passados que yo fue en romería a Santiago?'" (ll. 573-74). It is as though he is not old enough to count.

There are two, more complex episodes that I see as also indicating Rodrigo's immaturity. First, on his appearance before the king following the disquieting summons, "Rodrigo fincó los inojos por le bessar la mano. / El espada traía luenga, el rey fue mal espantado" (426-27). Victorio's "al arrodillarse se le suelta a Rodrigo la larga espada" (37) seems unsupported by the text. He may have had in mind "Al hincar de la rodilla, el estoque se ha arrancado" from the corresponding *romance* "Cabalga Diego Láinez" (Díaz-Mas: no. 14,1.32) which he had quoted. Montgomery says that Rodrigo "kneels as though to perform this obeisance but instead draws his sword (or perhaps merely wears a very long sword; the text is unclear)" (1986-87: 546). But "draw" would probably have required *sacar* (cf. "saca las espadas e relumbra toda la cort" (CMC: 1.3177). *Traer*, as in "la espada que traía al cuello" (MR, 1.878), is here surely "wear" or "carry". Serrano Asenjo notes: "los temores a una posible traición hacen que los convocados tomen precauciones y así Rodrigo va a la cita con una larga espada [...]".

The sight of "semejante arma" explains Fernando's alarm (167). Yet it seems to me a trifle picky to suppose that Fernando would have been perfectly happy if Rodrigo had been wearing a sword of normal size. I suggest as an alternative that the sword would not have been "very long" for an adult but that it is too long for a twelve-year-old and thus conspicuous enough to frighten the timorous Fernando. If so, a compensatory touch of humour, at the expense of Rodrigo's childlike stature, is thus added to an otherwise serious scene.

Secondly, Rodrigo, when placed at the head of a company of knights, and so in need of a "seña", makes his own on the spur of the moment. The improvised standard may have been a topos. (Çorraquín Sancho in the mid-thirteenth-century *Crónica de la población de Avila*, "sacó unas tovajas que levava e púsolas en ell asta de la lança por seña" (Rico 541).⁴ Rodrigo by contrast appears to be in difficulties:

nunca viera seña nin pendón devissado.
 Ronpiendo va un manto que era de sirgo,
 la pena le tiró privado,
 a priessa esto de punta a la meter
 la espada que traía al cuello tiróla tan privado.
 Quinze ramos faze la seña, vergüença avía
 de la dar a los cavalleros. (ll. 875-79)

The passage is obviously corrupt. Menendez Pidal (1951) emended "viera" (875) to "oviera" and assumed a missing hemistich in l. 877. Victorio agrees with "oviera" but emends ll. 878-79 as follows:

la espada que traya al cuello, tiróla ran privado,
 erzióla de punta a la meter, la senna faze
 quinze ramos,
 vergüença avía de dar a los cavalleros [...]

The same scholar notes:

en efecto, al no ser caballero no "había tenido estandarte propio ni pendón divisado", cosa que va a confeccionarse inmediatamente [...] *Penna* [874]: era "la piel que forraba el manto", así pues, "rasgó el manto y sacó la piel del forro" [...] "La levantó [the sword, 878] para meterla de punta, e hizo la enseña de quince ramas" (74)

Carlos and Manuel Alvar say that "Rodrigo confecciona una seña (estandarte) con los trozos de un manto, que rasga con la espada" (150). He may have been trying to raise it on a sword instead of a lance. After all, "Nunca viera [o oviera] seña" (l. 873). But in whatever way he was making his standard, surely the point of the incident is that he is making a fool of himself (cf. "vergüença avía" [879]). In an episode that gives an original turn to a traditional topic, Rodrigo becomes a figure of fun because of his youthful inexperience in the matter of standards.

In these and other ways, Rodrigo as *mozo* recalls two youthful characters of the *chansons de geste*, Gui and Bertran, nephews of the hero Guillaume d'Orange.

Gui is also given a precise age when we first meet him: "del feu se dresce un suen nevou, dan Gui [...], / n'out uncore quinze ans, asez esteit petiz" (*Chanson de Guillaume* [= ChG], ll. 1436, 1441). Just as the incidents of the "long" sword and the standard, if my view of them is acceptable, would reinforce each other as ridicule of Rodrigo's youthfulness, so Gui, when made a "knight", is similarly the butt of adult humour. Thus, he is given "a little byrnie", "a little helmet", and "a little sword":

Dunc li vestent une petite broine,
 e une petite healme li lacent desure,
 petite espee li ceinstrent, mais mult fu bone.
 (*ChG* ll. 1541-43).

(Gui's possession of a sword suited to his age might, incidentally, throw light on Fernando's alarm when Rodrigo appears girt with an adult one). But he is then mocked for aping adult status:

II [Guillaume] lur demande: "Oui est cel
 petit armé
 sur cel cheval qui entre vus vei ester?
 Bosoing out de homes que ça l'ad amené.
 (*ChG* ll. 1616-18)

Again, Rodrigo, although trembling with fear on the threshold of his first battle ("nunca se viera en lit, ya quebrávale el corazón" [l. 321]), none the less defies his father's orders to stay at home: "cuéntasse en los cien lidiadores, que quisso el padre o que non" (322). Gui, also, joins his uncle at the field of the Archamp against the latter's wishes (CG ll. 1530-40). Georges Martin points appositely to the motif: "l'enfant héroïque partant au combat en dépit de l'interdiction des adultes" (457).

Bertran offers a different type of parallel. Rodrigo, as Serrano Asenjo stresses, is given to admonishing his elders and betters (164). When the orphaned Jimena and her sisters come to Vivar to plead for the release of their captive brothers, Diego Láinez reacts contemptuously:

"¿Dónde son aquestas freiras, que algo me
 vienen demandar? [...]
 Peditl[o]s a Rodrigo, si vos l[o]s que siere dar.
 Prométolo yo a Christus, a mí non me puede
 pessar". (ll. 338, 344-45)

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But Rodrigo, overhearing, rebukes him for seeking vengeance against Count Gómez de Gormaz's innocent daughters:

"Mal fezistes, señor, de vos negar la verdat,
que yo seré vuestro fijo et seré de mi madre.
Parat mientes al mundo, señor, por caridat.
Non han culpa las fijas por lo que fizo el padre.
Datles a sus hermanos, que muy menester
los han.
Contra estas dueñas mesura deveades catar".
(ll. 347-520)

Diego Láinez tacitly acknowledges that the rebuke is justified: "Fijo, mandátgelos dar" (l. 353). Elsewhere, a moral lecture involves the greater humiliation of the king. Fernando has demanded from Rodrigo the "quinto" of Moorish booty and the person of a captured Moorish king. The hero replies that the goods should go to the poor and that the prisoner must be treated chivalrously:

"Solamente non sea pensado,
que yo lo daré a los mesquinos, que assaz
lo han lazado [...]
Solamente non sea pensado,
que non por quanto yo valgo, que fidalgo
a fidalgo,
quando lo prende, non deve dessonrarlo".
(ll. 493-94, 498-500)

Bertram, similarly, rebukes his uncle, who has been disrespectful to the Emperor Louis:

A maleiçon Dé!
Vo droit seignor ne devez pas haster,
ainz le devez servir et hennorer,
contre toz homes garantir et tensor [...]
Sire, ne dites pas que ber.

Vo droit seignor ne devez menacier,
 ainz le devez lever et essaucier,
 contre toz homes secorre et aïdier.
 (*Le Charroi de Nimes ll. 421-24, 437-40*)

Guillaume protests, but in the end acknowledges the justice of the reproof:

Et dit li cuens: "Vos dites voir, beau niés;
 la leauté doit l'en toz jorz amer,
 Deus le commande, que tot a a jugier".
 (*Le Charroi de Nimes ll. 441-43*)

Gui, equally, rebukes Guillaume for wasting time when he might be pursuing Saracens:

"Unc mais n'oï tel!
 Poignez avant dreitement a la mer,
 ja s'en serrunt li sarazin alé". (*ChG, ll. 1876-78*)

Gui's "Unc mais n'oï tel" is heard again in a particularly fierce episode. Having beheaded Deramé, a Saracen who was lying wounded, he answers a Guillaume outraged by this lack of chivalry ("en halte curt te serrad reprové" [l.1967]) with words that match his recent act:

Unc mais n'oï tel!
 S'il n'avait peiz dunt il peust aler,
 il aveit oilz dunt il poeit veer,
 si aveit coilz pur enfanz engendrer [...]
 Tut a estruz se deit hom delivrer.
 (*ChG ll 1968-70, 1975*)

As in the case of Bertran, the uncle is forced to concede that the nephew, despite his few years, has the wisdom of an adult: "'Niés', dit Williame, 'Sagement t'oi parler! / Cors as d'enfant e raisun as de ber'" (*ChG ll. 1976-77*).

Thus, the "puer senex" topic is adapted to an epic "pueritia". Jeanne Lods, speaking of the *chansons de geste*, aptly terms the young warriors' high moral tone towards adults "l'exigence de l'absolue" (60). I suggest that the same trait characterizes Rodrigo.

Leonardo Funes has pointed out that Gui and Bertran are not heroes but secondary characters, and that their deeds are recounted not as *Enfances* but as incidental material in the chansons of others (3). I adduce them, none the less, to show that the similar behaviour in *MR* and the French epics is in both linked with youth. Moreover, the unusual violence of the young Gui, secondary character or not, is to some extent relevant to my theme. Two genuine heroes, on the other hand, Roland and Guillaume, recall, in *Enfances* of their own, the wilder aspects of Rodrigo's behaviour that have caused debate.

The hero of *MR* is not only inexperienced and censorious but also exaggeratedly violent in word and, to a lesser degree, deed. He kills a fugitive who has taken refuge behind the altar (l. 713). He abuses the Count of Savoy's daughter by urging the king to make her his mistress ("Enbarraganad a Francia", l. 988). He rebukes the Pope: "Dévos Dios malas graçias, ay Papa romano" (l. 1106). And with "Sol non sea pensado", words that recall Gui's "Unc mais n'oï tel" (ChG, l. 1876, 1968), he opposes the leaders who favour a truce with France (ll. 1156-60). Roland and his friends, in one of the several interlaced plots of the *Chanson d'Aspremont* that according to Anna P. Carney "could be called the 'Enfances Roland'" (250), "beat their uncooperative guard to death" (Carney 263) when forbidden to join Charlemagne's army:

Lors fu saisiz li vilains malotruz.
 Granz cols li donent et des poins et des fuz.
 Ainz que chascuns i ait dos cops feruz,
 li orent il trestoz les os moluz.
 Iluec remaint li portiers estanduz
 et li enfant sum de la porte issuz.

(*Chanson d'Aspremont* ll.1310-1315)

Inappropriate violence in *MR* and *Enfances* alike is paralleled more specifically in two analogous court scenes. Rodrigo, who has recently killed Count Gómez de Gormaz, creates a frightening impression on his first appearance before Fernando, as we have partly seen:

Quando Rodrigo bolvió los ojos, todos
yvan derramando.
Avién muy grant pavor de él e muy grande
espanto.
Allegó don Diego Láinez al rey bessarle
la mano.
Ouando esto vio Rodrigo non le quisso
bessar la mano.
Rodrigo fincó los inojos por le bessar la mano.
El espada traía luenga, el rey fue mal espantado.
A grandes bozes dixo: "Tiratme allá esse
peccado".
Dixo estonce don Rodrigo: "Querría más
un clavo
que vós seades mi señor, nin yo vuestro vassallo.
Porque vos la bessó mi padre, soy yo
mal amanzellado" (ll. 422-31)

Victorio glosses *peccado* as "diablo" (1982: 38). It is a word for Rodrigo that the king shortly uses again: "Dixo: 'Non es este omne, mas figura ha de peccado'" (445).

In the thirteenth-century *Enfances Guillaume*, the protagonist on his first appearance at court insists that he himself and not Charlemagne's sword-bearer should carry the sword before the emperor. He then attacks and insults the sword-bearer without excuse:

"Laissez l'espee, mar i adesereiz
car je la doi devante Charle porter" [...]
A poig senestre l'ait per it brais coubré,
pluis de trois tors l'ait entor lui torné [...]
Filz a putains!" dist Guillames le berz,
"Per cel apostre c'on quiert en Noiron prei,

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ne fust por Charle, le fort roi coronney,
 et le bernaige ke voi si assembley,
 jai vos feïse andouz ies oelz voler'.

(*Enfances Guillaume* ll. 2285-2304)

Charlemagne's words recall Fernando's in rather similar circumstances: "'Dex', dist li rois, 'ke mains en Triniteit, / de kel diable est cist hons eschapeiz?'" (*Enfances Guillaume* 2310-11). Carney comments that Guillaume's violence in his *Enfances*, "verging on lack of self-control, is not found in the other characters, or even in William in his other stories" (248). It seems that on their first appearance in public both adolescent heroes had to be alarming portents.

To summarize. I feel that Rodrigo's portrayal as a child is an important aspect of his characterization. This status is established at the outset and some of his "childlike" characteristics, such as risible ineptitude and naïf moral rebukes, recall the behaviour of similarly youthful warriors of the *chansons de geste*. His wildness and violence can be paralleled in genuine *Enfances*, the Youthful Deeds of heroes already famous, like himself, for more mature heroic conduct. Although *MR* is no doubt in part a mere pretext for further tales of the Cid and a response to natural curiosity about his early life, it could well be seen also-as a latter-day Castilian *Enfances*, a prequel that had been waiting to be composed.⁵

Finally, my hypothesis that Rodrigo's wildness is a reflection of his *mocedades* goes well with the recent findings of two scholars working on other aspects of *MR*. First, his marriage, absent from the text but implied by his "voto" to refuse Jimena until he has won five lides" (ll. 440-43), would have made him an adult; and is usually thought to take place well before the end of the poem.⁶ But David Hook and Antonia Long argue that his vow is not fulfilled until after both the French campaign, seen as the fourth "lid", and the reinstatement of the Bishop of Palencia, now placed as the fifth and final one. Accordingly, the poem ends "después de su triunfo militar

en Palencia, en un momento de doble importancia representado por sus bodas, las cuales constituyen a la vez el cumplimiento de su voto, y un rito de paso a la vida de madurez del héroe que encontramos en el *Poema de Mio Cid*" (66-67). This reappraisal better suits my hypothesis that Rodrigo's *mocedad* is one with his wild behaviour, also operative to the end of the poem. Secondly, Rodrigo's wildness is usually considered to be peculiar to *MR*, which is seen as a *refundición* of an earlier **Gesta de las Mocedades* prosified in the *Cronica de Castilla*.⁷ But Martin has argued that the extant poem reflects "une version primordiale des Enfances [...] dont la *Chronique de Castille* lime des arêtes pour mieux l'emboiter dans l'historiographie royale" (577). If the hero of *MR* thus preexisted the anodyne Rodrigo of the chronicle, who never speaks out of turn or puts a foot wrong, the hero would presumably have been wild from the epic's inception.⁸ This is no more than one would expect, if Rodrigo's character of "enfes terrible" followed a generic imperative attached to Youthful Deeds.

NOTES

1 The abbreviations *CMC* and *MR* are used. On the date of *MR*, see Deyermond 1999: 2-7.

2 See also Montgomery 1998: 29-41; and 1999: 29-41.

3 Citations are from the edition by Fatima Alfonso Pinto in Bailey 183-216. The line numbering does not follow that of Rodrigo y el rey Fernando, Menendez Pidal's critical edition of *MR* (1951: 257-89).

4 I am indebted to David Hook for this reference.

5 Other reflections of the chansons de geste in *MR* include "el palazín de Blaya", perhaps Roland (l. 831), the "Doze Pares" (ll. 1045-52, 1124), and "Amerique de Narbona", otherwise Aymeri de Narbonne, Guillaume's father (ll. 60,

817). Jimena's plea to Fernando (ll. 366-71) is to some extent paralleled by Elisant's to Charlemagne: "'Sire', dist elle, 'k'eroie je selant? | Mors est mes peires, un mark vos deman'" (*Les Enfances Guillaume*: ll. 3387-88). These references are from Deyermond 1969: 182-85.

6 Armistead's view was that the wedding took place after the forcible reinstatement of the Bishop of Palencia (also absent from the text), which he saw as the fifth and final "lid", but which he put before the French campaign, a separate cantar (1963: 345).

7 See Armistead 1955: Introduction and 121-58.

8 Romances associated with *MR* in which Rodrigo is equally wild may have preceded the epic's composition (Montgomery 1985: 121; Wright 1990:22-23).

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