

El Cid

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SAMPLER

El Cid

Mío Cid Campeador

Vicente Huidobro

*translated from Spanish by
Warre Bradley Wells*

Shearsman Books

Second Edition.

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Notice

Every effort has been made to trace the representatives of the
translator's estate but we have had no success. We would be pleased
to hear from anyone who controls the literary estate of Warre Bradley Wells.

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SAMPLER

DEDICATION TO DOUGLAS FAIRBANKS

Dear Mr. Fairbanks,

One evening last summer at the Hôtel Crillon in Paris you talked to me about the Cid Campeador, and told me that he was one of the historical personages who most interested you. You asked me to collect some notes about him and send them to you in the United States. You spoke with such enthusiasm that it communicated itself to me, and then I conceived the idea of writing something about the Cid.

To you, therefore, I partly owe this *Hazaña of Mío Cid Campeador*,¹ and so I would like your name to stand at the beginning of its pages and there remain as long as this work endures. It was born for me out of all the documents which I started studying for you. If anything in it is of service to you, if any single phrase of mine helps you to feel more deeply for our great hero and understand him better, I shall be content.

Your sincere admirer,
VICENTE HUIDOBRO

¹ This may be translated, more or less, as 'The Exploits of My Cid, the Champion'. A footnote on p.65 goes into greater detail on the definition of 'Campeador'.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

I owe it to the truth to say that I had already thought before of writing a new romance about the Cid Campeador, but I abandoned the idea. This was after having read some pages of A. García Carraffa in his *Enciclopedia Heráldica* about Don Alfonso X., 'the Wise,' who, as everybody knows, was the great-great-grandson of the Cid. I noticed here that Señor García Carraffa, following up the descendants of this King, traced one line which went to Chile and numbered among its latest scions my maternal grandfather, Domingo Fernández Concha.

Alfonso X did not attract me, but the Campeador certainly did. I make no concealment of my preference for men of action and adventure. I felt myself a grandson of the Cid. I imagined myself sitting on his knee, stroking that noble great beard of his, which was so imposing that nobody dared touch it. Whether my grandfather was a descendant of Kings or not did not concern me. I may say, however, that I have never met a man with more of the bearing and manners of a King than he. He was the quintessence of Old Spain. What greatness there was even in the humility of this Galician grandfather of mine from Mondoñedo! Someone has said that the Spanish race is a race of princes. So I think myself, and, if I speak here of my ancestors, it is because I cannot hide the pride I take in my Spanish blood. Through my ancestors I am Castilian and Galician, Andalusian and Breton. I am Celt and Spaniard, Spaniard and Celt: an aboriginal Celto-Iberian, impervious and hard-headed.

I propose to offer here some explanations regarding the form and content of this *Hazaña de Mío Cid Campeador*. The reader will find in this book some Gallicisms and (Latin-)Americanisms, both in turn of phrase and in individual words. I make no excuse for these. I employ them simply from caprice. I prefer to write *el volantín* (the kite) rather than *la cometa*, because I find this Chilean word more beautiful than the Castilian word *cometa*, and more natural than the colloquialisms *pandorga* or *birlocha*. Similarly in regard to some Gallic turns of phrase, it pleases me to use them, and I use them.

Besides, it seems to me a very good thing that languages should invade one another as much as possible—should fly like aeroplanes over frontiers and customs-houses and land in anybody's territory. Perhaps, thanks to this mutual invasion of languages, we shall arrive some day—a thousand years hence—at one international language, and then the only disadvantage which

literature suffers among the other arts will disappear. Moreover, it is not to be denied that the pure Spanish of Castile is a somewhat stiff and stilted language, and that a little nimbleness and flexibility will do it no harm.

With regard to the content of this book, I ought to warn the reader that, whether the *Hazaña* is an epic novel, or a novel set to song, or an expression of the exaltation which a great life produces in the mind of a poet, it has in any case nothing to do with 'novelised lives' of that genus which is so fashionable today, and received its first impulse from the famous *Life of St. Francis of Assisi* by Johannes Jørgensen.

Since the *Hazaña* is essentially a means of poetical expression, it is natural that the author should choose lives out of the ordinary, which best lend themselves to his purpose, and offer him the most fruitful field of poetic imagery. The *Hazaña* is the novel of a poet, and not the novel of a novelist. There are some poets who write novelists' novels. Let them go their ways. I will have no share in this bad habit. I am concerned only with poetry, and I am concerned only with the truth as the poet sees it.

To avoid possible misunderstandings, I should also warn the reader that, in my data about the Cid, I have sometimes followed the old legendary romances, ballads, and *gestes*, and at other times history. For example, poetry tells us that the Cid killed Jimena's father, Count Lozano, and history teaches us that this is false, since Jimena was not the daughter of this Count, but of the Count of Oviedo, Diego Rodríguez. Here I have made a little compromise between history and legend, and Count Lozano is presented as the godfather and guardian of Jimena. Why not? Further on you will see that the daughters of the Cid are not called Doña Elvira and Doña Sol, as legend would have it, but Doña Cristina and Doña María, which were their real names. Nor are they married to Counts of Carrión, in accordance with legend, but to Kings: Cristina to Don Ramiro of Navarre, and María to Ramon Berenguer III of Barcelona, which is the historical fact.

Moreover, I have treated the story of the outrage of Corpes as false, in the first place because we know it to be false historically, and in the next place because it is incredible that anyone would have dared to strike the daughters of the Cid, or that the Cid would have tolerated it and not exacted a much weightier vengeance than legend asserts. I do not see my grandfather the Cid suffering my aunts María and Cristina to be whipped without knowing the reason why from their husbands. The thing is false; I swear it is. If it were true we should know it in the family, and you would see how I would have made mincemeat in these pages of such a pair of scoundrels. The fact that I barely mention them will prove to you that this

insult is a fantastic lie. I invoke the learned testimony of the noble Don Ramón Menéndez Pidal.

At various other points I have corrected both history and legend with that right which the call of the blood gives me, and I have also assembled some episodes unknown even to the learned, which I have encountered in old papers of my ancestors. So do not argue with me about them, but be grateful to me for handing them on to the public. Here you have the true history of *Mío Cid Campeador*, written by the last of his descendants.

V. H.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE²

I have preserved the original form of all Spanish proper and place-names, because (as in the case of other countries) the variety of their English renderings is anomalous; because the originals are more euphonious; and—what good is a translator if he cannot strike the note of his author?—because it pleases me.

W. B. W.

² See note on this edition at the end of the book, for further information on this subject.

BIRTH

It was night—a Castilian night of mid-August in the year 1040. The sweltering heat of the day had died down a little, thanks to the breeze which, since sundown, had blown steadily for three hours, bearing with it the scent of the fields and the rustle of poplars. All day long the sun had smitten down with all its force upon the poor parched earth, beating on heads dizzy for a breath of pure air. The night had brought a truce, and all created things lay in heavy slumber, the brute sleep of exhaustion.

The house of Diego Laínez, in the town of Vivar, half fortress, half country seat, an enormous pile which seemed to strive for coolness by sheer weight of stone, reared in hard, rigid lines its austere majesty of dreaming stones. Stone upon stone, stone upon stone, such was the house of Diego Laínez—a dwelling of the dreams of stone, of the silences of stone, of the speech of stone, of the nobility of stone, of the emotions of stone (how wrong they are who say that stones cannot feel), of the energies of stone, a dwelling of men of stone: a dwelling marked out by Destiny's finger of stone.

Diego Laínez, the great warrior, the man of victories, the pillar of the throne of his Kings, heir to the blood of Laín Calvo; Diego Laínez, veteran of that battle wherein Count Fernán González vanquished Almanzor, was home from a council to which the King had summoned him; and sleep would not come to his wooing.

A thousand cares possessed him. Stripped upon his bed, he tossed in vain from side to side. The deep breathing of his powerful breast smote upon the walls like the blows of a prisoner. The fancies of the sleepless formed and refashioned and fused and crowded in his brain until it was on fire.

Spain took on for him the likeness of a patchwork coat, tattered and torn and tortured into a thousand elements separate and incongruous—provinces, cities, fortresses; here a kingling, there a count, there again a Moorish general proclaiming himself lord of a conquered territory; Christians at grips with Christians, Moors with Moors; medleys of Christians and Moors fighting with other medleys of Moors and Christians; treaties broken the day after they were made; the allies of today tearing themselves in pieces tomorrow, so that at the very moment when he took up his arms none knew against whom he was about to fight.

Such was the picture in the fevered brain of Diego Laínez. More than three hundred years previously the Moors had invaded Spain, and the

Empire of the Visigoths crashed with King Rodrigo into the waters of the Guadalete and was swept away down to the sea. The great Empire of the Moors reached its zenith, and all Spain submitted to its power—all except Don Pelayo. Then it, too, had suffered the decadence of supremacy, and began to break up in civil war. Of the Caliphate of Córdoba, once of an Arabian Nights' magnificence, there remained as broken pieces, as fragments of a fallen star, the Moorish kingdoms of Granada, of Seville, of Murcia, of Dénia, of Valencia, of Badajoz, of Toledo, of Zaragoza.

And Don Pelayo, swooping from rock to rock out of his lair in the recesses of Covadonga, had begun the reconquest. Diego Laínez thought of him with admiration not so much as a man as a flood, an avalanche; or Don Pelayo seemed to him like a dragon issuing from the caverns of Destiny, with fire flashing from his eyes, crunching Moors between his teeth, trampling fortresses underfoot.

Thanks to Don Pelayo, the Christians now held their reconquests from the Moors—the counties of Barcelona, of Aragon, of Castile; the kingdoms of Navarre, of Galicia, of León. The thoughts of Diego Laínez brooded with the pride of love upon Castile. He thought of the prowess of her counts, vassals of the Kings of León. The deeds of those Castilian counts who had bequeathed to their country an eternal memory of poetry and blood filed through his mind. Castile had made herself a living force, a personality; she was already a motherland. Diego Laínez was moved to speak his thoughts aloud: 'Give us another Don Pelayo, let there be born another unifying force, another unconquerable will, another man of Destiny!'

By his side his sleeping wife awakened in surprise at the sound of his voice. 'What ails you, Diego Laínez?' she asked; 'are you sick? Why are you not asleep?'

'I am thinking,' the man replied.

'And of what are you thinking?'

'What I think is no matter for a woman.'

'I know—politics and war.'

'The salvation of Spain.'

The woman fell silent, filled with pride in this man to whom she belonged. The thoughts of Diego Laínez, she knew, were high and noble thoughts. She had that instinct of all women for the thoughts of those near to them, but never in his thoughts had she heard the velvet footfall of betrayal. And she loved the integrity of her man—she who was daughter of a man noble as himself; she, Teresa Álvarez, daughter of Rodrigo Álvarez of the Asturias, a mighty warrior, conqueror of the castle of Ubierna, a

nobleman of wide lands, powerful alike through his fortune and his own prowess.

‘It is hot,’ she said at length; ‘it would be well to open the windows.’

‘Go to sleep.’ Diego Láinez rose and opened the windows. The silence returned, but still he wooed sleep in vain.

That simple gesture of opening a window, which seems so trivial, so unimportant, is a grave matter. For to open a window is as if to open the soul, and to expose the body to the soul’s influence. Through the open windows flowed in the night, and with the night came Castile, and with Castile Spain. Millions of stars streamed through the windows like a drove of cattle that had been awaiting the opening of the gates of a corral. Thousands of dispersed forces, drawn as if by a magnet, pushed through the massive window-frames. All the heat and all the straying sap of Nature were impelled towards this channel opened in the wall of that room, making it the spear-point of all their energies, all their aspirations. Countless currents of electricity converged upon the room, focal point in the chart of that night.

Diego Láinez felt all this swarm of profound activities converge upon him like something tangible. An immense vigour seized hold upon his body; his breast swelled, expanded, overflowed into the night. The world is a factory of forces, an accumulator of stimulating energies, a laboratory of hydrogen. He breathed, he drew in through every pore, all this richness which flowed towards him and offered itself to him like the elixir of life.

What outlet, what destiny was it seeking, all this concentration of life’s essences? Diego Láinez felt a vague disquiet. His flesh crept, and the blood tingled in his veins. Outside, the night was once more soft and languorous. A gentle breeze, born in some hidden garden, wafted in the caress of flowers, the softness of grass. A nightingale sang to his mate, and the night folded itself around him like a woman’s hair.

Diego Láinez looked at the woman sleeping by his side. Beautiful, buxom Teresa Álvarez was a true daughter of the country, with the noble blood of her descent running strong in her veins. Beautiful, desirable, fruitful was her body, apt for caresses, ready in love. Her firm, rounded breasts, redolent of orchards, rose and fell to the beating of her heart with the serene rhythm of the sea. To look at this woman was to grow young again, to see life sweet and clean for all its problems. Vice and intrigue and the wiles of forbidden pleasures became unmeaning. Only love was direct and logical—love consummated in the embrace of man and woman, fulfilling an imperious and supreme law of Nature.

Diego Laínez took her in his arms and caressed all the sweetness of her. She raised her full, ripe lips to his. He thrilled at every touch, and she died at every kiss. It was a solemn moment, a moment in which the world seemed to pause and listen, to hold itself in readiness for a coming festival. The man was all male, and the male no longer resisted his need; and the woman was all female, ripe as a rose for plucking. Diego Laínez clasped his wife with the rough vehemence of a boy, strove with her with all the energy of a warrior refreshed, eager for battle, impatient of victory. The earth obeyed the rhythm of their panting, and the mountains sighed with them. Infinity was emptied; the universe halted, the stellar system stopped for a moment, and God smiled as He looked down through the keyhole of the sky.

‘Ah, Diego, dear husband, never have I thrilled so before! I thought that I should swoon.’

‘I, too, my Teresa; it seemed as if we had never loved before.’ Diego Laínez was near tears for joy. I do not know what this may be, dear wife; but it seemed to me that it was not simply I who accomplished the act of love, but all the universe accomplished it through me. I feel that in me is fulfilled a design.’

‘Something miraculous is abroad this night.’

Again the thought of Don Pelayo possessed the soul of Laínez. Don Pelayo, Don Pelayo: a work interrupted, unfinished, cut short half done. The shade of the mighty warrior marched through the dreams of Diego Laínez, and the night was full of strength and heroism. The night was Don Pelayo, and outside the nightingale sang of Don Pelayo. Truly, something miraculous was abroad this night.

* * *

Nine months had passed since that night pregnant with miracle. All was activity in the great house of Diego Laínez. Teresa Álvarez felt the first pangs of birth, and the house was making ready for him who should be born.

Simple in those days were the preparations for a birth. There was no German-trained doctor, no noise of instruments in a surgeon's case, no anaesthetic—nothing but the ancient midwife, with her age-old, undying wisdom. Nothing could be imagined beyond the wisdom of the midwife—she who had known the secrets of so many wombs, she who had held in her hands so many little lumps of life, heirs of the future.

The ancestral home of the heir of Laín Calvo had changed its aspect of austerity and sternness. Its stones were instinct with hope, hope solid as

themselves. They were warmed by a heat peculiar to itself, that warmth of tenderness and longing souls, the smiling anxiety that rules a house where a child is to be born.

There were noiseless movements in the birth-chamber. There was a silence of expectation—a solemn silence, because unconsciously they awaited something great, something new, something never seen before: the unexpected, almost monstrous phenomenon of a child issuing from his mother's womb to greet the world with a malediction upon his lips.

The house was steeped in the scent of herbs cooked in olive oil, the scent of the secret preparations of the midwife. Its whitewashed walls were full of ears, and in the great entrance hall, where the friends and relations waited, the heads of wolves, of wild boar, and of bears hanging from the rafters seemed to watch for any disturber of the silence to leap upon him with snapping jaws. Voices went soft-footed. Only the mother had the right to groan or to complain. But from Teresa Álvarez there came no groan and no complaint.

'What is the news?' someone asked a servant who went by with a water-jar.

'Nothing yet. Patience. It seems the child is very big.'

The mother, lying on her bed between the white sheets, felt herself to be the centre of Spain and of the universe. Diego Laínez paced back and forth with soldierly step, his stern eyes full of a child-like mixture of self-reproach and paternal pride. Crouching like a beast in ambush, the midwife waited beside the bed. Her probing hands disappeared under the clothes. 'Soon. Be patient a little yet. He is coming...'

Teresa Álvarez uttered not a sound, she hardly moved, but her eyes closed, and she bit hard upon her lips. Then, 'What are you doing, boy?' she exclaimed suddenly; 'why do you not come? Be quick, my man!'

Outside the twilight sky was tinged with the colour of a mother's blood. The evening died, robed like an archbishop in crimson and purple. The overcharged clouds barely moved. The birds flitted by in silence. The flocks came down from the pastures noiselessly. Castile anointed herself in silence, waiting.

'Come, child, why do you tarry?' The mother writhed bravely in her pangs. All Spain shared the pains of the birth. The whole peninsula twisted like a body, contracted itself, bore down to ease the birth of the child.

'Come! Now, now!'

As if he had heard the imperious voice of his mother, the child turned in her womb, seeking the best way to present himself to life, to face the

issue. He had, so soon, a strategic mind. The womb bore. Spain trembled, and a low groan ran through her. She was moved to her depths. She raised herself up. Not a fly stirred in all the peninsula. A head appeared. Now, at last! Hastily, quivering like a fish, a plump child sprang into History.

Spain sighed, half opened her eyes, tearful and anxious: 'A boy or a girl?'

'A man child.'

'Diego... I love you. What a relief!'

There was no cry from the child who had descended upon History; instead, he shouted, he bellowed. The mother smiled to hear him, and closed her eyes once more, worn out, as if she had given birth to an Olympian. Diego Laínez looked at his offspring, seeking to discover in him his bravery of the future, his muscles, feet good for hard marching, a strong hand for the rein. He sought to find in him all his line of ancestors. He recalled the names of his lineage, and he drew himself erect, growing taller until his shoulders touched the roof beams.

The child bellowed and stirred. Born of a great family, of a valiant race, shed by an illustrious genealogical tree, he dropped into the world like a ripe fruit, at his due time—a fruit in which all the excellences of other fruit had concentrated themselves, into whose fashioning had gone generation upon generation of natural selection of good fruit: the fruit supreme, the fruit peerless.

'Let us call him Rodrigo, after my father,' said Teresa Álvarez.

'No, not Rodrigo,' replied Diego Laínez; 'do not forget that a Rodrigo lost Spain.'

'On the contrary, let us call him Rodrigo for that very reason. How do you know that God does not wish another Rodrigo to save her? God is a lover of epigram.'

'Rodrigo, Rodrigo is born.' The wind carried the news on its way, and tree told it to tree, and star to star. 'Rodrigo is born,' the earth whispered along the roads of Spain, 'Rodrigo is born.' The clouds gathered in the overcast sky, black clouds heavily charged with electric current. The storm blew up, the storm fated to attend all great happenings. Stripped leaves fluttered to the ground, leaves that were blessings shed by all the trees of Spain, messages of joy, letters of congratulation.

Rodrigo was born, and all things centred themselves in the new-born, all things followed the vital rhythm of that rosy, chubby body. Spain was born again with Rodrigo. Spain opened his eyes. Spain began to suck at the

breast of Teresa Álvarez. Spain shouted and kicked for them to bring him orange-water to break his wind.

The eyes of a whole people, all their aspirations, all their anxieties, all their longings were fixed upon that cradle. All these fused in it as in a crucible, and aspirations, anxieties, and longings seethed and sang in it until the cradle grew, and grew, and waxed enormous. The cradle of Rodrigo was bounded on the north by the Pyrenees, on the south by the Pillars of Hercules, on the west by the Mediterranean, on the east by the borders of Lusitania and the Atlantic. And he was Pyrenees and Hercules and the sea, a being of mountains and waves, strong and tempestuous.

Stretched in his cradle, the child bellowed and stirred. The midwife approached to wrap him in swaddling-clothes. The indignant Rodrigo protested, kicked his feet, waved his hands. Like one condemned to death who puts away the bandage with which they would bind his eyes, so Rodrigo, condemned to life, put away the bandage with which they would bind his loins. 'No, no, no!' he seemed to say. And in the midst of his agitation, with a sudden movement, he fell from the cradle. Aghast, they flung themselves upon the little body which lay as if lifeless on the ground, and then Rodrigo, caught up in his father's arms, burst into uncontrollable sobs.

At the same moment a violent tempest shook the firmament, filling the air with trembling, shattering the windows of Heaven; and a blinding flash of lightning shot across the sky, writing across the clouds in great letters of fire:

CAM
P
E
A
DOR.

YOUTH

THE child grew. How he grew! It was as if all Nature had concentrated upon him, to the neglect of all else. The vital juices of the plants, of the herbs, of animals and birds, all the sap of living things flowed into him as if he were the favourite of creation. One would have thought that they had put saltpetre under his feet, the marvellous nitrate of Chile at his roots. Rodrigo was fifteen years old, and he was already a redoubtable athlete. He was massive, but massive without fat, rippling with muscles, with bones well plenished with lime, and nerves supple and sound as those of a machine. Rodrigo had the power of forty horses, 40 h.p., and they called him Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar.

How I worship you, light-hearted, leaping boy, rude and untamed, ingenuous and virginal! You were the forerunner of all the sportsmen of today, and by how much their better! You were the unsurpassed inventor of the Yankee youth, the football player and the cowboy.

His lungs were so capacious that every time he breathed, he drew in half the oxygen in the world. The other people might share among them what was left. All day, from dawn, Rodrigo roamed the country, running the roads, scaling the hills, swimming the streams, taming colts, taking milk at his will from heavy-uddered cows, eating fruit off the trees, riding hard for the horizon, dominating the landscape with his smiling eyes, large and lustrous as pears or figs.

A violent urge to movement possessed all his being. Quietude is death, and Rodrigo was life, the archetype of life. This feverish need of action, of outlet for his superabundant energies, was the mark of the man. The richness and variety of his resources clamoured for the intoxication of continual activity. If he were not roaming the country, it was because he was sporting with his brothers in the courts of his ancestral home. He played at fighting, learnt the art of warfare, was trained in the niceties of fencing, the deadly slash of the two-handed sword, the usage of the lance.

'Attention, men! You are the Moors, and we the Christians. Charge! No quarter!'

His brothers, Hernán and Bermudo, were his elders, whatever History may say to the contrary. They were his elders; so my story demands. He must always be the third—the third, naturally. It would be a nice thing if my story

must give way to History! The third is the hero, because that introduces the quality of hope, which is a fundamental element of our affair. It is required by the slow development of the emotion which leads up to the climax. He was the third, I say. Where should we be if the first settled everything, leaving the other two no time to fail? The thing is absurd.

Rodrigo, then, was the third, the third son of Diego Láñez. That did not prevent his vehemence, his spirit of initiative, and his driving force from making him the first, not only among his brothers, but also among all his comrades. He consorted, more than with his brothers, with his cousin Álar Fáñez and his friend Martín Antolínez, because they were strong, bold and daring, full of guile and cunning. He was fond, too, of his other cousins, the four sons of Arias Gonzalo; but they were younger, and so—though his uncle Arias spurred them on in play, bidding them ‘Play the man, boys!’—Rodrigo put them always on the other side, with his two brothers and as many other older boys as would make the balance of forces even.

‘What would you have, uncle?’ he asked Arias Gonzalo; ‘I love my sport, and I have no time to play the instructor. Your sons are still very young, but I foresee in them great prowess and a glorious future.’

His uncle smiled his delight; he, like all the boys, was conscious of the influence of Rodrigo, of that power of inspiring an admiring affection which attached all men to him. Rodrigo was so open-hearted, so loyal, so much the knight. He was a gentleman savage.

* * *

In a corner of the courtyard Martín Antolínez, Álar Fáñez, and Hernán Díaz were competing in jumping. Martín Antolínez had jumped a length of nine metres and a half, Hernán Díaz a little less than seven, and Álar Fáñez, in a great leap, almost eleven metres. What have the champions of today to say to that—and all without spring-boards, or tricks, or fairy-tales?

‘Let’s see what you can do, Per Vermúdez, and you, Rodrigo Díaz,’ Álar Fáñez called to the others; ‘two duros that you can’t beat me!’

Per Vermúdez leapt, and achieved only eight metres. Rodrigo’s turn came. ‘Here goes for your ten pesetas!’ he said, and prepared to jump. He thought of the romances, the ballads, and the *gestes*, he thought of Guillén de Castro, of Corneille, and of me; he drew himself together, took off, and launched himself into the air. He had far outleaped them all. They measured the jump: twenty metres!

'May I be cut in ten pieces!' exclaimed Martín Antolínez; 'twenty metres!'

'It is not quite twenty,' declared Álvaro Fáñez; 'it is nineteen and a half, but it's more than enough to beat us all. Here are your two duros.'

'Not quite twenty? Look at the impress of my foot; I took off half a metre behind the mark, while you all took off touching the mark.'

'You are right, Rodrigo,' Álvaro Fáñez conceded, 'it is exactly twenty metres.'

'Three cheers for Rodrigo!' shouted Martín Antolínez; and everybody responded: 'Hip, hip, hip, hurrah!'

The girls, relations or friends of the boys, who often came to the house of Diego Laínez, attracted by the cheers, ran up and joined in the applause for the winner. That day Rodrigo beat the world's record of the Olympic Games, and his record has never been touched since. Three cheers for Rodrigo!

'Take the two duros,' Álvaro Fáñez insisted, 'you are unconquerable.'

'I don't want your two duros; give them to the first beggar you meet on the road.'

The girls had joined the champions, drawn to them by that attraction which women feel towards a man trailing clouds of glory, a man of strength, vigour and potency. It is a sexual attraction of maternal selection, an attraction unconscious and involuntary. It is a sacred impulse, sleeping in the heart of the species, the secret desire for perfection latent in women's inmost souls.

Among all these girls one stood out by reason of her bearing and her beauty: Jimena Rodríguez, daughter of the Count of Oviedo, Diego Rodríguez, and niece of King Fernando I. Her father at his death had left her in the care of her godfather, the Count Lozano, the Court favourite and at this time the King's right-hand man in arms, the military leader of the day. Jimena felt herself drawn to the great house of Vivar, and whenever she was abroad her feet led her automatically towards it. When her godfather's duties at Court kept him for days away from home, Jimena loved to go and spend hours of gossip in the protective company of Teresa Álvarez. Her hostess had so motherly a way with her that the orphan felt a wistful sadness, and with half-closed eyes she would drift into spacious realms of dream, until she almost lost herself to view, and dwindled to a mere speck on the horizon of her solitude. How she loved to get away from herself, to escape from life, sitting there in one of life's armchairs, listening to Teresa recounting the exploits of her son!

AFTERWORD TO THE SECOND EDITION

The English and American editions of Wells's translation of *Mío Cid Campeador*, under the title *Portrait of a Paladin*, appeared relatively soon after the first Spanish edition and hard on the heels of the author winning a substantial award for his film-script (later reworked into a novella) *Cagliostro* in New York. It had been intended the latter book be turned into a silent film, but the Talkies came along, and the plans evaporated. Huidobro did however walk away \$10,000 the richer.

The Cid novel was Huidobro's first foray into fiction, although he had already dabbled with essays and stage plays in addition to the poetry which had made his name. He claims in the dedication that it was his discussion with Douglas Fairbanks—an ideal candidate to play the role in a movie version, one would think—that encouraged him to write the book, and this may well be the case, as he certainly met Fairbanks when the latter visited Spain, and then again in New York. On the other hand, the mention of one of the world's most iconic movie-stars would certainly help the book get noticed, and Huidobro was good at the publicity side of things.

I would like to think that the novel's origins also have something to do with the author's new wife, Ximena, whose name coincides with that of the Cid's wife—the spelling is slightly different, although the same as in old Spanish, and the (modern) pronunciation the same. Given Huidobro's own somewhat tongue-in-cheek claim to kinship with the legendary hero in his introduction, this extra level of overlap with the subject was fortuitous. The actual source material for the book would have been mainly Menéndez Pidal's work on both the life of the Cid and on the 12th-century epic poem, *El cantar de mío Cid*. Another old work which had served to build up the myth was the *Mocedades de Rodrigo* (ca. 1360), which has gone under several titles in modern editions. Period sources also include the 12th-century Latin-language *Historia Roderici*, a story of the hero's life which is held by scholars to be generally reliable, and Ibn' Alqamah's eyewitness account of the Cid's capture of Valencia.

The translation appeared in London in 1931, the work of an experienced Irish translator of literary Spanish, and Wells did a good job with it. The text retains a slightly antique flavour, but in a historical novel, I do not see this as a defect.

In this new edition, I have amended a few things which jarred with modern taste, or were at least infelicitous, as well as the transcriptions of Arab names where I could identify the characters in question. Wells followed Spanish orthography in these cases and, as there is today clear agreement on the ways in which these names should be transliterated into English, I have

opted for versions which the reader can look up in English-language publications, or online sources. In the cases of Spanish names, I have mostly left them as they were in the first edition, and, indeed, in the original, with accents intact. The only exceptions are Navarre, Castile and Catalonia, for Navarra, Castilia and Cataluña, respectively, as these states are well-known in English under their anglicised names. I agree with Wells's retention of accents as it enables the reader to come close to the correct pronunciation; if the reader doesn't care about this aspect s/he can just read *past* the accents. An accent in a name marks the point at which the stress occurs. Thus Álvaro is AL-var, Jerónimo is Her-ON-ee-mo, Martín is Mar-TEEN, Díaz is DEE-ass and Fáñez is FAN-yes. (Note that at this period, the Castilian quasi-lisp did not exist, and nor does it in the author's native Chile. In modern Iberian Spanish, Díaz is DEE-ath and Fáñez is FAN-yeth.) Names with no accents should generally be pronounced intuitively: Rodrigo is Rod-REE-go; Fernando is Fer-NAN-do, Lozano is Loz-ANO.

The novel is of course a retelling of one of the great stories of Spanish literature and Spanish history, albeit in the latter case, somewhat encrusted with legend. El Cid, as Rodrigo Díaz de Vivar became known, was a historical figure, one of the greatest military commanders of his day, and—let us be honest here—a mercenary or, less pejoratively, a *condottiero*. He occupies a position in Spain akin to that of King Arthur in the anglophone world, with the difference of course that the Cid actually existed, even if he did not do all that was claimed for him. Not only did he actually exist, he was also the subject of the greatest surviving early epic poem in the Spanish language, generally known as the *Cantar de Mio Cid* or *Poema del Cid*, a work that was composed within 50-100 years of his death. The position of this poem in Spanish literature may be compared to that of *Beowulf* in England, the *Nibelungenlied* in Germany, or the *Chanson de Roland* in France.

It really does not matter that some of the events of the legendary life of the Cid did not actually happen, or did not happen *exactly* as described here, or in the old legends: they make for a splendid tale, just as the even less plausible deeds of King Arthur and his knights live on because they enthral audiences even many centuries after they were first told.

Huidobro's take on the tale is respectful, and is related with some gusto. I rather feel that he would have enjoyed Anthony Mann's 1961 movie, starring Charlton Heston, which in turn takes a number of liberties with the source material. Again, it really doesn't matter that this was the case, because Mann produced one of Hollywood's best historical epics. I saw it at the age of 11 and was carried away by the ending: the legendary ending of the tale, of course, which actually never happened. But it *should* have, because that ending is a perfect storyteller's dénouement.

Tony Frazer

GLOSSARY

Abdallah, King of Granada: 'Abd Allah ibn Buluggin ibn Badis (reigned 1077-1090). Defeated by the Cid at the Battle of Cabra (1079).

Abderam: referred to here as ex-King of Murcia, a city which was under the control of the Taifa of Seville from 1078 to 1091, when it fell to the Almoravid leader, Yusuf. Abderam's name may well be that of the man history refers to as 'Abd ar-Rahman ibn Tahir, who had declared the independence of Murcia from the Caliphate in 1063. Given that this identification is not *absolutely* clear, Huidobro's spelling has been retained. One should also clarify that he did not declare himself king (*malik*), but minister (*hajib*), presumably to disguise the degree of his insurrection against the caliphate.

Aben Ali: it is unclear who this might be, although the correct name is likely to be *Ibn Ali*. There is however no trace of a poet by this name at the right time, although there *is* a famous Arabic poet from Alzira, a city near Valencia, whose full name was Abu Ishaq Ibn Ibrahim Ibn Abu Al-Qatib Ibn Khafaja (1058-1138). He is known to history as Ibn Khafaja, and wrote a praise poem in honour of Yusuf after the latter recaptured Valencia for the Moors. There is also a long eye-witness account of the Cid's conquest of Valencia by the historian Ibn 'Alqamah (Abu 'Abd Allah Muhammad ibn al-Khattab Ibn 'Alqamah, 1036-1116), the original of which has been lost, but a partial copy of which has come down to us via the later historian Ibn 'Idhari, whom modern commentators regard as trustworthy. It is possible that Huidobro's choice of name reflects, in corrupt form, 'Abd Allah Ibn 'Alqamah, even though he was no poet.

Aben Nazir: Possibly the Abenalhazis from the *Cantar*, and in turn *possibly* cognate with Abu Bakr ibn abd al-Aziz, King of Valencia 1075-1085. Previously governor of Toledo, he took advantage of the weakness of King Yahya al-Qadir to become *de facto* ruler of Valencia with the aid of King *Alfonso*.

Abenamic: identity unclear.

Alcobiella: probably modern Alcubilla del Marques, Alcubilla meaning 'small tower'. The *Cantar* in fact refers to *Alcoçeba*, but this has been assumed to be a copyist's error, although it could simply be an attempted transcription of *Alcazaba*, meaning citadel, deriving from Arabic *al-qasbah*, a walled fortification within a city. Other commentators have suggested that the location of this is now a ruined castle, probably added to a watchtower from the time of its Moorish occupation, at Atalaya de Vadorey in Soría.

Alcolea: modern Alcolea del Pinar, in the province of Guadalajara.

Alfonso, Don (c. 1036-1072). Son of Fernando. Became Alfonso VI of León after Fernando's death.