

**“Si bien non comedes, conde”: Food Rituals, Alimentary Imagery,
and the Count of Barcelona’s Comic Feast in the *Cantar de mio Cid***

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There are few verses in the *Cantar de mio Cid* (=CMC) that describe the act of eating. One of the most important exceptions, however, is found at the end of the first *cantar*, in the pine forest of Tévar, where the Cid coerces his prisoner, Ramón Berenguer, the Count of Barcelona, to give up his airs and end his hunger strike.¹ My purpose in this essay is to offer a close reading of the humor in this exceptional passage in comparison with three other scenes that depict feasting and alimentary imagery that will throw light on the poet’s comic technique in the Tévar episode, and suggest a possible meaning behind the use of a food ritual to humiliate the Count. I will begin with an examination of the banquet scene in Cardeña, then the feast prepared by Minaya Álvar Fáñez with Avengalvón in Molina, and finally the Cid’s grass-biting gesture in order to argue that symbolic eating and food-related rituals displace social hierarchies and power relations among the characters of the poem. Comparing these banquets and symbolic bites with the Count’s comic feast, I will argue that the poet’s humor in the Count of Barcelona scene, while drawing on multiple levels of parody that may include biblical and liturgical allusions, also builds on folk humor, carnivalesque comic reversals and alimentary gestures that recast discourses of violence, expose social anxieties, and consolidate the poem’s Castilianized model of the epic hero.

A few methodological points should be acknowledged here, from the beginning. First, my approach to the Count of Barcelona episode in the CMC is based on a simple premise that is, nevertheless, debatable; namely, that the poet’s staging of the conflict with Ramón is intended to be funny, even ironic. Furthermore, the comic effect is derived from the emasculation and humiliation of the Count. Not all critics will agree, but many of the scholars cited here corroborate this conclusion. Furthermore, I argue that the poet’s humor in this scene, from the battle in the pine forest, to the forced feeding of the Count and his final departure at the end of the first *cantar*, is funny on more than one level. It is funny because of the poet’s use of parody, as several of the scholars I cite in this essay have shown, but the poet also creates humor in the narrative rhythm of the battle in the forest, the characterization of the Count, the positioning of bodies in their respective poetic scenes, the playful use of language, and the inversion of power dynamics. I submit that these elements of humor in the Tévar episode can benefit from a reading that also considers the ways in which discourses of violence, masculinity, dominance and submission can inform our understanding of humor, food rituals and alimentary imagery in the CMC.

Another clarification has to do with the nature of humor, generally, and more specifically carnivalesque humor in the CMC. The poet’s comic abilities have been detected in several verses throughout the poem; most noticeably in the lion episode, where the Cid has to put a stop to all the *juego* at the expense of his sons-in-law (vv. 2304–2308), and in the playful teasing of the *Infantes’* underwhelming actions on the battlefield (vv. 2532–2534). Humor in the CMC may be one more aspect of the poet’s art that contributes to the hybrid and heteroglossic nature of this particular epic

¹ Colin Smith points to the *Historia Roderici* as the poet’s source for this episode (*The Making* 144–46). The historical Rodrigo Díaz fought the Count of Barcelona twice (1082 and 1090). As Alberto Montaner clarifies in his edition of the poem, the count with whom he fought was Berenguer Ramón II, “el Fratricida” (116 n957).

poem, removing its characters from the “absolute time” of epic, familiarizing them and bringing them closer to the present through laughter.²

As for the nature of carnivalesque humor, I must make clear that by comparing and contrasting what could be described as “official” banquets with an “unofficial”, comic feast, I do not mean to imply, following a conventional Bakhtinian reading, that there is a conflict between two opposing world-views in the poem.³ As many critics have observed, Bakhtin’s dichotomous view of medieval society can be misleading, and decades of scholarship has shown that these two world-views can go hand-in-hand in medieval literature and culture; in fact, the apparent subversion of folk humor and carnival may operate to authorize institutions of power as sanctioned inversions that always call attention to, and indirectly legitimize the norm.⁴ I will argue that the poet’s humor in the Tévar episode functions in a similar manner; while laughing at the Count’s ineptitude, the poet also shows the Cid as a model prince that will regenerate and Castilianize the socio-political hierarchy outlined in the poem. In this way I believe that the Count of Barcelona scene, read as a carnivalesque, comic battle and feast, supports James Burke’s argument that “[a]lthough the *Poema de Mio Cid* proclaims the ideals and doctrines of the official, it employs the discourse of the comical and the carnivalesque in doing so” (*Desire* 116).

A food gift in all societies, ancient and modern, has been shown by sociologists and anthropologists to have similar social functions around the world. Rehearsing the work of anthropologists from the turn of the twentieth century on, Ana Meigs reports that the sharing of food is an expression of solidarity (103).⁵ Furthermore, the ritual sharing of food reenacts power structures between and among the host(s) and guest(s). Surveying the field of food studies among anthropologists, Mary Douglas concludes that “[g]iving food away unilaterally makes an asymmetrical relation”, and that “[t]he lopsided food gift loads the recipient’s status with demeaning signs” (“Standard” 10). This last observation may seem counter-intuitive, since gift-giving of any kind, including food, may seem to express respect for the receiver, and a sense of obligation or submission on the part of the giver of the gift. This is how most readers of the *CMC*

² The reference is to Bakhtin’s essay, “Epic and Novel”, where the “absolut past” and tradition “determine the nature of epic” (17). In the same essay Bakhtin argues that laughter, as a novelizing force, brings narrative material into close contact with the present (15). In “From the Prehistory of Novelistic Discourse”, Bakhtin claims that every “straightforward genre”, like the epic, can become the object of parody and humor (55), but obviously the *CMC* is not an epic travesty. Without entering into the thorny topic of the genre of the *CMC*, I would simply suggest that the blending of humor into the poem adds to its generic complexity, as Ian Michael has argued (“Epic to Romance to Novel” 507). For a recent appraisal of genre in the *CMC*, see Alfonso Boix, *El Cantar de mio Cid: adscripción genérica y estructura tripartita*.

³ I refer here to the well-known Bakhtinian notions of “official culture” in contrast with “unofficial” medieval folk culture, laughter and grotesque realism (*Rabelais* 154, 165–66).

⁴ For an excellent overview of Bakhtin’s utopian view of carnival and its critique, see Peter Stallybrass and Allon White’s introduction to *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*. See also Martha Bayless, and especially her chapter on “Religion and Humor in the Middle Ages”. Burke also outlines the idea that the carnivalesque can support the official, while providing the opportunity for recreation (*Desire* 29). Among the many works that nuance Bakhtin’s views on medieval culture, Ryan D. Giles’s *Laughter of the Saints: Parodies of Holiness in Late Medieval and Renaissance Spain* is an outstanding, recent example for scholars of Spanish literature. On the poet’s use of carnivalesque humor in the *CMC*, see Michael D. Thomas, who identifies carnival as a “genre-strand” that creates social satire (109–11).

⁵ In her study of banquets in *Amadís de Gaula* and Arthurian literature, María Luzdivina Cuesta Torre makes the same point about feasts, especially for Christian communities, where shared meals signal communal unity by comparison with the religious significance of the Eucharist (188–89).

interpret the hero's embassies to Alfonso, for example.⁶ But food rituals displace power structures in the poem from the top down, as a close reading of three episodes that mention eating and feasting will show. In these scenes the participants enter freely into a hierarchical structure that is recast in the protocols of feasting, and in alimentary gestures, where the host of a real or figurative banquet sits at the head of the table, and those that accept his food happily take their places in the social order of the meal.

1. Food Rituals In The *Cantar De Mio Cid*

The first reference to a great banquet appears in San Pedro de Cardeña, after the Cid makes arrangements with Don Sancho to protect and care for his family:

Grand yantar le fazen al buen Canpeador.
 Tañen las campanas en San Pero a clamor.
 Por Castiella oyendo van los pregones,
 cómo se va de tierra mio Cid el Canpeador;
 unos dexan casas e otros onores. (vv. 285–289)⁷

The feast celebrates the arrival of the hero and his family, taking place after the agreement between the Cid and Don Sancho, which stipulates that, among other provisions, for every mark spent on expenses for his family, the monastery will be repaid fourfold.⁸ Don Sancho is able to recognize and trust the moral virtue of the Cid in these negotiations, and happily accepts his terms (v. 261). Robert Ter Horst has examined contracts of this kind throughout the poem, pointing out how the Cid's promises are grounded in his partners' ability to recognize his intrinsic, non-material value, which eventually materializes in victories on the battlefield, increased wealth, and regained honor (220). Ter Horst's reading of the agreement with Don Sancho is illuminating, and his insights into the relationships between the Cid and his beneficiaries will be helpful for unpacking the clash with the Count of Barcelona. But before moving on, there are more details surrounding this brief mention of a banquet that are worth noting in order to better understand the social significance of the ritual sharing of food in the poem.

Don Sancho's feast celebrates the completion of his dealings with the Cid, and the abbot and his monastery gain prestige through the act of hosting the meal.⁹ The Cid has also become allied with the historically important monastery in a symbolic and material way, his name and family mark the monastery, which will also be rewarded monetarily for its aid.¹⁰ The banquet calls attention to this new alliance between the Cid and the Church, and as Alberto Montaner suggests, the ringing of the bells may even be read as a call to those who would join the exiled hero (80 n286). As we know, and as Alberto Boix has made clear, the Cid's first responsibility is to provide

⁶ Edmund de Chasca shows how the Cid's gifts of horses sent to Alfonso are also signs of his own honor (190). Joseph Duggan points to the Cid's embassies as examples of "interested gift giving" (33). For a detailed study of gift-giving and the role of the horse in the poem, see Francisco LaRubia-Prado.

⁷ All quotations from the poem are taken from Alberto Montaner's edition.

⁸ On the historical name of the Abbot of Cardeña, Sisebuto, and a hypothesis for why the poet changed it to Sancho, see Smith (*The Making* 172–73). Sisebuto, according to Ramón Menéndez Pidal, governed the monastery for twenty-five years, and died in 1085 (40).

⁹ See Bonnie Effros, who studies the uses of shared meals and *convivia* among clerics and nobles to garner prestige, display their masculinity, and conclude agreements (16, 28 and 32).

¹⁰ Menéndez Pidal eloquently describes the significance of San Pedro de Cardeña as "el más floresciente de Castilla desde quizá la época visigoda" (37), while refuting the theory, put forth by Rudolph Beer, that the *CMC* was composed at the monastery.

food for his men (“La comida” 35), and the image of the Cid as host and provider becomes symbolically clear in the following verses when the audience hears of the one hundred and fifteen knights, along with Martín Antolínez, who come to the Cid’s figurative table. Metonymically, these mouths to feed stand for the soldiers that submit to Rodrigo’s leadership and give the hero hope: “Plogo a mio Cid, porque creció en la yantar, / plogo a los otros omnes, todos cuantos con él están” (vv. 304–305).¹¹ In these verses submission is metaphorically represented as eating the food provided by the hero who has been rejected by his king, and now will establish a new union with his allies.¹² The power relations I have just alluded to in the symbolic act of eating rise to the surface in San Pedro when the poet reminds his audience that the men that join the Cid have broken their ties with Alfonso, leaving behind land and feudal privileges (v. 289). Now they pledge loyalty to the Cid, and they do so by accepting him as their new provider, host and leader.

An important final insight into alimentary imagery in this early appearance of a *convivium* in the *CMC* can be gained by recalling one of Bakhtin’s repeated observations about medieval banquets which will also be helpful for my reading of the comic feast in the Tévar episode. More particularly, it is Bakhtin’s insistence on the triumphant tone and ambivalence of the banquet that is of interest here. According to the Russian theorist, in a feast the material world is destroyed and made flesh through ingestion, and in this way banquets are both universally destructive and regenerative (*Rabelais* 283). Clearly, the “grant yantar” is not a comic feast, but the public celebration in San Pedro, centered on a grand, merry banquet, commemorates simultaneous events that mix contradictory emotions: the Cid’s exile, his contract with Don Sancho, and the formation of a new, hierarchical union. The feast calls to mind the cause of the Cid’s visit to San Pedro; his own degradation, and the loss of honor for those who come to his side. In the verses immediately preceding those cited here, the audience sees the Cid’s tears as he embraces his daughters, leaving his wife and family behind (vv. 274–277); but the tone of the banquet scene is celebratory. The Cid is pleased, so are his men. A new (and better?) alliance has been formed out of the destruction of the old, and the Cid promises—with the help of God—great returns for his men (vv. 300–303).¹³ The jubilant atmosphere and ambivalence of medieval banquet imagery should be kept in mind when studying how the Cid poet creates humor in the Count of Barcelona episode, but two further examples of ritualized feasting and symbolic eating stand out in the *CMC* for their recasting of power relations in the poem.

Avengalvón may be one of the earliest examples in Spanish literature of the “noble Moor” type (Smith, *The Making* 101), but regardless of his place in literary history, his character does exemplify the maurophilic view of the Muslim adversary that Louise Mirrer summarizes in her study of masculinity and “other” men in Spanish epic and ballad traditions (170).¹⁴ Avengalvón meets up with Minaya in Molina de Aragón, in the northern region of the present-day province of

¹¹ Alberto Montaner clarifies the use of “la yantar” in this verse as “‘la mesnada’, ‘el ejército’ (propiamente, los vasallos a los que el señor debía alimentar)” (81 n304).

¹² By “submission” I do not mean to imply that the men are forced; rather, they submit to their places in Rodrigo’s band, within its social hierarchy, with the Cid standing at the top as the real and figurative host of his men. Alfonso Boix also shows how the abundance of food and banquets symbolize unity and peace (37), and I would simply add that the unity shown in feasting does not mean that all the guests are equal members of the community.

¹³ Burke studies the Cardeña sequence and argues that the poet draws on the life of St. Peter and *traditio legis* to create themes of revelation and manifestation that will structure the entire poem (*Structures* 102–03).

¹⁴ See also Israel Burshatin, who studies the image of Avengalvón as a “tamed Moor” (“The Docile Image” 273–74). Burshatin also studies the relationship between Avengalvón and the Cid in “The Moor in the Text” (99–103).

Guadalajara (Montaner ed. 148 n1463).¹⁵ The Cid has sent Minaya, along with a hundred warriors, to bring his wife and family to Valencia. Their greeting is a dramatically happy one, but the Moor's comments betray an uneasy tension in his relationship with the Cid and his lieutenant:

—¡Tan buen día convusco, Minaya Álbar Fáñez!
 Traedes estas dueñas por o valdremos más,
 mugier del Cid lidiador e sus fijas naturales;
 ondrarvos hemos todos, ca tal es la su auze,
 maguer que mal le queramos non ge lo podremos far,
 en paz o en guerra de lo nuestro abrá,
 ¡mucho·l' tengo por torpe qui non conosce la verdad!—
 Sonrisós' de la boca Minaya Álbar Fáñez: (vv. 1520–1527)

In preparation for the appearance of Avengalvón, the audience was introduced to him earlier as the Cid's friend and ally: "mio amigo es de paz", as the Cid explains to Muño Gustioz and others whom he sends to Molina (v. 1464). In the greeting cited above we hear more details about the nature of this relationship, and it becomes evident that the qualifying words "de paz" are a key to understanding their union. Avengalvón here belongs to one of the basic medieval jurisdictional categories for Muslims; that is, he is a Muslim *de pacis*, as opposed to *de guerra*. He has entered into a treaty with his Christian overlord, and his greeting to Álvar Fáñez exposes the force and threat of violence that shape his realism. Avengalvón and the Moors of the region have no choice but to be "friends" and let the Cid have what he wants, since he will take it whether they are "en paz o en guerra".

The idea that Avengalvón and his Muslim brothers should submit to the Cid as part of a natural, even divinely ordained social hierarchy mirrored in the *CMC* may be acceptable for some readers. In support of this interpretation, one might recall that Avengalvón describes the Cid as his "amigo natural" (v. 1479), but in the next verse he immediately reminds us that the arrival of the Cid's men could be received as a threat: "a mí non me pesa", reassuring Muño Gustioz, "sabet, mucho me plaze" (v. 1480). On the other hand, it is difficult to imagine that the pragmatic alliances and military settlements, so common among medieval Iberian Christians and Muslims, would be a satisfactory alternative to mass conversion in an ideal Christian world governed by a religious "principle of order" that informs the obedience of the Cid and the entire epic.¹⁶ Regardless of how a medieval Christian theologian may have interpreted these questions, it is almost laughable to believe that Avengalvón's capitulation to the Cid would have been viewed as natural or exemplary in an Islamic world order. In neither world would the Cid be the natural friend of a Muslim in the way that Alfonso is the Cid's "señor natural" (v. 1272). On the contrary, and as David Nirenberg explains, the subjugation of Muslims to Christian lords worked out through peace treaties was a constant source of anxiety for Muslim jurists and Mudejar communities (65–66).

I have intimated here that there may be dramatic irony in this scene, which raises a final question about the last verse cited above: "Sonrisós' de la boca Minaya Álbar Fáñez". John Rutherford has exhaustively studied the smiles that appear throughout the poem, including what Colin Smith describes as the Cid's "diplomatic smile" (*The Making* 198). In this particular scene,

¹⁵ The historical existence of Avengalvón is largely accepted, but it is not clear that he was the governor of Molina (Montaner ed. 148 n1464). Colin Smith argues that the Cid poet would have known of his existence (*The Making* 173, 179). See also Samuel Armistead and Joseph Silverman's note on this subject.

¹⁶ The term is borrowed from Thomas Hart's reading of hierarchical patterns in the *CMC* (171). I also refer to his essay for the argument that the poem is charged with a religious worldview (169).

Rutherford argues that the smiles exchanged between Minaya and Avengalvón are exceptional in comparison with other grins from the poem, particularly with the simpers that introduce speech directed to social or moral inferiors (746–47). Rather than a display of superiority, these gestures, according to Rutherford, are a unique example of “symmetrical smiling”, and they express a feeling of mutual respect, even equality between the Christian and the Moor (749). Rutherford’s study of humor in the *CMC* is one of the most important in recent years, and I agree that there is no sense of “impertinence” in these greetings (749). I would submit, however, that Minaya’s reaction is more like the rest of the knowing, even ironic smiles that Rutherford examines throughout the poem, and that it is the food ritual he arranges with Avengalvón that alerts our attention to the poet’s acknowledgement of their unequal social standings.

Following their happy exchange of salutations, Minaya invites Avengalvón to eat, and the poet directs our attention, in a rather short passage, away from the act of eating and the food that was served, to the protocols of hosting and receiving a meal. After promising Avengalvón that he will be rewarded by the Cid for his help, Minaya invites him to dinner:

Vayamos posar, ca la cena es adobada.—
 Dixo Avengalvón: —¡Plazme d’esta presentaja!
 Antes d’este tercer día vos la daré doblada. —
 Entraron en Medina, sirvíalos Minaya,
 todos fueron alegres del servicio que tomaran,
 el portero del rey quitarlo mandava;
 ondrado es mio Cid en Valencia do estava
 de tan grand conducho commo en Medina·l’ sacaran;
 el rey lo pagó todo e quito se va Minaya. (vv. 1531–1539)

Mary Douglas has shown in one of her most influential studies on the social significance of food that every meal is a structured event that “represents all the ordered systems associated with it” (“Deciphering” 53). Keeping Douglas’ observation in mind, we can unpack these verses and see how the poet represents the meal as an event that figuratively recasts the social hierarchy of the poem, and the power relations among the diners by signaling their places at the table, either as hosts or guests. At the bottom of the social order is the subservient Moor who enthusiastically receives the meal (“¡Plazme d’esta presentaja!”), while promising one in return. By assigning Minaya as Avengalvón’s host at the beginning of this scene, the poet asserts his superiority over the Muslim. Just as the men who joined the Cid in San Pedro figuratively submit to his leadership by accepting him as their host, Avengalvón submits to Minaya’s authority by allowing himself to be his guest first. His gleeful acceptance of the *presentaja* declares his submission to the social system that orders Minaya’s banquet.

The Cid is also interpolated in this symbolic pyramid of hosts and guests. As Minaya’s sponsor and virtual host of the *cena*, he takes his place above the Moor and his own lieutenant. In the end, however, it is the King that claims his place at the top of the food chain by covering all the expenses (“el portero del rey quitarlo mandava”), and the poet assures his listeners that the Cid, though not physically present at the meal (“en Valencia do estava”) was honored to accept Alfonso’s generosity and authority as the ultimate host. Finally, the poet tells us that Minaya left a free man (“e quito se va Minaya”); that is, free of any debts. But Álvar Fáñez is not free. He is bound by a rigid social structure figuratively reenacted in the feast; a feast he arranged, but that was ultimately paid for by the King. Minaya finds his place in the poem’s hierarchy through the symbolic act of eating, and by becoming Alfonso’s guest. A final example of a symbolic biting,

followed by a banquet will conclude this survey of food rituals in the *CMC*, in preparation for my reading of the Tévar episode.

In one of the most dramatic scenes of the entire poem, the Cid rides out from Valencia to the river Tajo with fifteen of his most trusted knights to greet Alfonso, who by now has been won over to the Cid and is willing to embrace him as his loyal vassal. The Cid's fidelity and desire to humble himself before his lord is presented in a powerfully symbolic alimentary image:

Con unos quinze a tierra-s' firió;
 como lo comidía el que en buen ora nació,
 los inojos e las manos en tierra los fincó,
 las yerbas del campo a dientes las tomó.
 Llorando de los ojos, tanto avié el gozo mayor,
 así sabe dar omildança a Alfonso so señor. (vv. 2019–2024)

The Cid's theatrical gesture draws on what Louise Vasvári has described as "rituals of phallic aggression" that symbolically displace relationships of dominance and submission ("Semiotics" 132). Here the Cid takes the submissive posture, similar to other kinds of gestures that Vasvári cites as belonging to the repressed semiotics of "phallic signaling", such as bowing, and most noticeably in the *CMC*, hand kissing ("Semiotics" 132). What is striking about this oral signal of obedience at the feet of Alfonso is that it shows how eating and alimentary gestures can be mapped onto discourses of power, dominance and submission.

Returning to the *CMC*, Joseph Gwara has argued that the Cid bites the grass at the feet of Alfonso in order to offer himself as his horse (16); nevertheless, as charger for the King or not, the symbolic act of eating is the same for man and beast in the poem. It is an oral gesture that dramatically represents the reception of the more powerful, dominant male. The Cid prostrates himself and opens his mouth, submitting himself to being mounted by Alfonso, standing above him. Seeking his favor by symbolically eating the food at his feet, the Cid recognizes his natural king and submits to his authority.¹⁷ The banquet scene that follows will reestablish the champion's place of honor within the poem's social hierarchy, as well as his submissive position *vis-à-vis* Alfonso.

Once the hero has publicly cleansed his honor and regained favor with the king, the Cid's first request is that Alfonso be his guest (v. 2046), but as with the *cenar*s arranged between Minaya Álvar Fáñez and Avengalvón, the etiquette of feasting determines the power relations between the Cid and Alfonso:

Dixo el rey: —Non es aguisado oy:
 vós agora llegastes e nós viniemos anoch,
 mio huésped seredes, Cid Campeador,
 e cras feremos lo que ploguiere a vós.—
 Besóle la mano, mio Cid lo otorgó. (vv. 2047–2051)

The Leonese monarch cannot allow the Cid to be his host, and by placing Alfonso at the head of the table first, before the Cid can return the favor, the poet stresses Alfonso's dominant position over his Castilian paladin, and the Cid's surrender to his rule. After finding their assigned seats in the global social hierarchy of the poem, the *Campeador* can then show off his own cornucopia of power in an epic potlatch on the following day:

El Campeador a los sos lo mandó,

¹⁷ See also Duncan McMillan, who argues that the Cid prostrates himself as a penitent, and suggests a possible Old French source, *adenz*, for "a dientes" (257, 259–60).

que adobassen cozina por cuantos que y son.
 De tal guisa los paga mio Cid el Campeador,
 todos eran alegres e acuerdan en una razón:
 passado avié tres años no comieron mejor. (vv. 2063–2067).¹⁸

In this rare glimpse of a merry feast, with the representation of the pleasure of eating, the audience has a bit more detail to imagine the Cid's banquet as a sumptuous meal. In contrast, Alfonso's feast is not described at all; we are simply reminded that the Cid was Alfonso's guest first (v. 2057), and as I have argued, this telltale point of protocol reaffirms the social order into which the Cid has been reinstated.

Like the noble warrior heroes Massimo Montanari finds in chivalric romance, the Cid and his guests have good appetites (74). It is impossible to know from these verses if the Cid's table was lavishly appointed, or if he and his party enjoyed their meal with all the courtly "buone maniere" that Montanari describes as signs of aristocratic prestige in the thirteenth century (75), but at the very least we can imagine that the *Campeador* and his *convidados* ate well. Given the amount of wealth the Cid had at his disposal, "non comieron mejor" probably means that they also ate a lot, and the abundance at the Cid's banquet would be another sign of his nobility, honor and power.

In the conclusion of my survey of food rituals and alimentary imagery in the *CMC*, the reader may be wondering why I have not included a study of the wedding celebrations, or the reference to Asur Gonçález's disheveled appearance in Toledo (v. 3375), followed by Muño Gustioz's insult about his having lunch before mass (vv. 3384–3385). Both of these scenes do mention eating, but I would argue that the wedding banquet and characterization of Asur Gonçález do not serve the same symbolic function in the same way as the feasting rituals and alimentary imagery do in San Pedro, Molina, and the Tajo river. As Geoffrey West has observed, eating is generally "muted" in the poem (6); in point of fact, the wedding banquet is only mentioned in connection with the target-practice games, or *tablados*, prepared by the Cid (v. 2250). Throughout the entire *bodas* episode, however, the poet does make use of unilateral gift-giving that inscribes the celebrations within a discourse of power that is closely related to the kind we have seen in food rituals. Even the Cid's own men share in the honor of hosting the celebrations by presenting the guests with gifts of their own (vv. 2258–2261).¹⁹ Nevertheless, the prestige that the Cid and his men gain over their guests is not figuratively represented in alimentary or banquet imagery. As for Asur Gonçález's eating habits, and the insult that Muño Gustioz hurls at him, this image of dining may be better described as an early example of what Bakhtin calls "private eating or private gluttony and drunkenness", which are entirely different from the public banquet images and symbolic eating I have been studying thus far (*Rabelais* 301, 303).

In the three examples I have examined, the Cid is affiliated with a great banquet, and he is presented as the devoted provider for the men that come to his figurative table in Cardeña. He is the virtual sponsor of his lieutenant's feast in Molina, then the guest of Alfonso who pays for Minaya's banquet, and finally the submissive subject that swallows Alfonso's authority at the Tajo river. In each of these scenes, symbolic eating and food rituals recast or establish power relations that interpolate the participants into their proper positions within the structured event of the feast. In the Tévar episode, the poet plays with the power dynamics of food rituals to create humor at the

¹⁸ On potlatch rituals, see Marcel Mauss (3–5), and Maurice Godelier, who reviews Mauss' work, among other anthropologists, on potlatch societies (147–70).

¹⁹ On gift-giving in the *CMC*, see Francisco Miranda. See also, Duggan (30–42).

expense of the Count of Barcelona, and to ingratiate himself with an audience that would have identified with the Cid's aggressive Castilian masculinity.

2. The Count's Comic Feast

The last word on the defeat of the Count of Barcelona in the *CMC* may not have been written, but there is general agreement among most contemporary critics and editors of the poem that the scene is charged with humor, sarcasm, irony, even class rivalry.²⁰ Alberto Montaner says of this passage: "Todo el episodio está construido con una evidente ironía, en la que se revela un claro deseo de criticar (y aun de ridiculizar) a la alta nobleza cortesana" (115 n954–1086). Thomas Montgomery, in his commentary added to Matthew Bailey's edition of the poem, notes the "sarcasm" and "threatening language" in these verses (vv.1013–1085), and Ian Michael hears a disrespectful tone in the Cid's voice when describing the footwear and tack of the Catalan horsemen (*Poema* 148 n995). Colin Smith also appreciates the Count's humiliation, and the humor in the Cid's playful taunts as he frees Ramón and his men (*Poema* 33 n1042–5; 34 n1072–3). At the time of writing *'Mio Cid': Estudios de endocrítica*, Miguel Garci-Gómez felt that the critical opinion had already turned on the Cid and his dealings with the Count, as with the Jewish moneylenders: "hoy día es muy común entre los críticos conceptuar el episodio como artificio de que se vale el autor para burlarse de don Ramón y fustigar en él a toda la nobleza" (116).

There has been steady scholarly concentration on the humor of this scene since Thomas Montgomery's penetrating reading of it was published in 1962. Harold Moon felt that the episode offers the best example of the Cid's "personal sense of humor" (702), and Ivy Corfis affirms that "the comic and satiric elements of the scene cannot be denied" (170). Anthony Espósito wrote that the Tévar episode is "one of the most humorous incidents in the entire poem" (46). Two of the most ground-breaking essays on the Count of Barcelona scene to date, from John England and Ryan Giles, point to extratextual sources and customs that the Cid poet parodies to create humor. England argues that the poet creates a travesty of the investiture ceremony of counts by their social superiors, and that the playful scene also reminds the audience of the Cid's monarchical character (103). Following up on England's note, Giles locates possible sources for the parody in texts that describe the investiture ceremony, such as the lost *Estoria theotónica* and Mósés Diego de Valera's account of the ritual in various works, most notably among them a letter that describes in some detail the eating, drinking, and dressing of a new count (124–25). Giles will conclude that the mockery in the Tévar episode is fueled by "anti-Imperial sentiments" that resist Frankish authority (134), while the Cid stands, ambivalently, as critic and model of the institutions of power that govern the poem (135).

Like Ivy Corfis, England and Giles show how the Cid poet produces multiple layers of parody that nuance the comic tone of the clash with the Count of Barcelona. Corfis points to French customary law as a possible reference for the Cid poet, who could have known of the French litigious attitudes about feasting (170), but as persuasive as all these studies of sources and parody are, they share a view of humor that relies on the inside joke. Thus, they call into question whether or not the poet's audience could have been "in the know". This is a doubt that Corfis prudently outlines in her conclusion (176), and it is equally applicable to England and Giles' erudite studies.

²⁰ I do not mean to use the term "class" anachronistically here. I refer to Thomas Montgomery's seminal essay where he describes the poet's humor and "grudge" against "non-Castilians" and "ricoshombres" in the Tévar episode (7). See Michael Harney's review of notions such as class, rank, and social mobility in the poem. Harney concludes that the *CMC* adumbrates a "society of elementary ranking [. . .], but not of finely gradated class stratification" (218). See also Diego Catalán, who questions why we should not use the term "class" to name the target of the poet's political agenda (811).

On the other hand, we do not need to know whether or not the audience would have appreciated the reference to French customary law or ceremonies of investiture to know that the poet was working with these traditions, as Corfis, England, and Giles have shown. The multiplicity of allusions and travesties are part of the poet's comic technique, and a close reading of the poem itself will show that these layers fit with the carnivalesque nature of the poet's farcical interlude.

The first, most salient feature of the poet's comic technique at the beginning of the battle is witnessed in the familiar reversal, and mockery of social positions; the debasement of the high born; the bringing down to the level of body and earth of all that is associated with institutions of power, of all that is held up in abstract, spiritual and social esteem. The audience will recall at this point in the poem that the Cid has already insulted the Count in his own court by attacking his nephew, and now he has violated the Count's protected territory (vv. 962–964). The audience can also visualize the physical positioning of the men on the battlefield, which becomes an effective poetic representation of the power inversion that has taken place: the lowly Castilian *infanzón*, exiled from his land, has taken the higher ground (v. 992), while the more noble Count, with his superior numbers and social status, fights from below to reassert his authority.²¹ This spatial orientation of bodies in the scene sets the stage for the poet's comic humiliation of the Count. In addition to these reversals, there is another unique narrative feature of the battle with Ramón Berenguer that underlines the degradation of nobility and downward movement of carnivalesque humor.

In one of the poet's most impressive manipulations of narrative speed, the use of summary stresses the physical positioning of bodies, and the topsy-turvy comic tone of the entire episode.²² Most critics have called attention to the battle scene (vv. 985–1011) for its lack of descriptive detail, and the impression it creates of a disconnection between the narrated and the narration, or story time and discourse time, especially when this confrontation is compared with the rhythm of other combat narratives in the poem.²³ By condensing the narrated so abruptly, the poet fixes the imagination of his audience on the images of the Cid bearing down on the Count, and the toppling of the Barcelonans. The lack of action and blood also alerts us to the fact that this is not so much a battle scene as it is a comic interlude, as Thomas Montgomery claims (9), with a number of humiliating jokes played at the expense of Don Ramón, beginning with the aggressive, insulting discourse and gestures of phallic display with which the Cid's speech to his men begins:

—¡Ya cavalleros, apart fazed la ganancia,
 apriessa vos guarnid e metednos en las armas!

 Pues adelant irán tras nós, aquí sea la batalla;
 apretad los cavallos e bistades las armas.
 Ellos vienen cuesta yuso e todos traen calças,
 e las siellas coceras e las cinchas amojadas;
 nós cavalgaremos siellas gallegas e huesas sobre calças,
 ciento cavalleros devemos vencer a aquellas mesnadas.
 Antes que ellos lleguen al llano presentémosles las lanças:

²¹ I accept here the nearly unanimous critical judgment about the Cid's lineage and station within the ranks of the lower nobility, but not all scholars agree. See, for example, the provocative essay by Eukene Lacarra Lanz who argues that "lejos de ser un simple infanzón, estaba excelentemente emparentado con todas las monarquías hispanas" (124).

²² I use the term "summary" above according to one of its commonly accepted meanings in narratology, as a kind of narrative speed, or rhythm, that obtains when "discourse time is (taken to be) smaller than story time, when a narrative segment is (felt to be) too brief for the narrated it represents" (Prince 94).

²³ See, for example, Garci-Gómez (120). On narrative rhythm, see Mieke Bal (99–111).

por uno que firgades tres siellas irán vazias. (vv. 985–997)

These verses are famous for the Cid's mockery of the Barcelonans' lack of military know-how, and the insult follows the downward movement and concentration on the lower extremities that Bakhtin identifies in so much medieval folk humor, festivals, billingsgate, and grotesque realism (*Rabelais* 370-71). Here the insult looks down at saddles, cinches, and shoes. The joke about the Barcelonans' footwear will be echoed in the Count's remarks on the Castilians' boots during the banquet (v. 1023), creating a comic allusion to, and parallelism with the battle. The most noticeable element of humor in the Cid's orders to his men, however, is created by the abusive language itself, and the contrast of military strength with weakness; with the Cid's superior masculinity, and the Count's feminized characterization.

Louise Mirrer has shown how in Spanish epic and ballad traditions military prowess is equated with masculinity (172). Mirrer outlines a series of symbolic links in her study of "other" men between masculinity, military conquest, violent speech, and sexual aggression, and she points to European folk culture as a possible source for these associations: "of masculine with military values, of military with sexual conquest, and of powerlessness with women" (171). Homologous metaphorical associations stand out in the struggle with the Count and his men precisely because of its compact narrative rhythm. The poet concentrates on body positions, and draws the audience's attention to the most symbolic images of military masculinity contrasted with feminine weakness; on the manly *siellas gallegas* with powerless racing saddles; on tall, strong riding boots, with weak, feminine *calças*.²⁴ Among the symbols of military and masculine superiority which are compared and contrasted in the verses cited above, the most forceful and familiar are clearly the long, phallic lances that will nail the Count and his men in the open *llano* (vv. 1003–1007), thus creating the first power inversion and physical debasement of authority in the battle scene.

Completing Ramón's emasculation, the poet reduces the victory narrative to the Count's symbolic castration when the hero captures his sword, Colada, which is poetically associated with the Cid's victory on the battlefield, and his most famous symbol of honor and virility, his beard: "Y gañó a Colada, que más vale de mill marcos de plata, / y benció esta batalla, por o ondró su barba. / Prísolo al conde, pora su tienda lo levava" (vv. 1010–1012).²⁵ Now that the conquering hero has carried off his prize, the poet can create a comic battle of wills that resonates with the military clash in the pine forest, but this time the conflict will be fought with the polysemic discourses associated with food rituals and alimentary imagery.

Once inside the Cid's tent, the "grant cozina" is prepared (v. 1017), but, as is well known, the Count arrogantly refuses to eat, hurling his impotent insult aimed at the Castilians' lack of status and fashion sense:

—Non combré un bocado por cuanto ha en toda España,
antes perderé el cuerpo e dexaré el alma,
pues que tales malcalçados me vencieron de batalla.— (vv. 1021–1023).

²⁴ On the image of the shoe in Spanish literature, see John R. Burt (56–59). E. C. Graf finds a Freudian meaning in the sexualized image of the foot in the *CMC* (117).

²⁵ On phallic imagery in the *CMC*, including lances, swords, posts, arms, and the Cid's beard as symbols of power, see Graf (115–20). See also the excellent article by Juan Carlos Conde, who eloquently shows how the beard as symbol in the poem transcends its meanings in the socio-historical context of the poem, taking on a larger, literary and aesthetic function in the poem.

Once again the Count challenges the Cid and attempts to reassert his superior status by disdainful the hero and his food (“él non lo quiere comer, a todos los sosañava” v. 1020), but his gesture, like his battle tactics, is laughable. The ironically backfiring insult about being ill-shod humorously links the banquet scene with the militarized discourse of dominance and defeat, of masculinity and emasculation that informs the battle between the Count and the *Campeador*.

With the repeated joke about footwear that contrasts the virile, conquering Cid and his men with the ineffectual and effete Count of Barcelona, the poet’s humor also exposes the coexistence of anxiety and laughter that Bakhtin identifies as a basic element of the medieval worldview (*Rabelais* 94–96). While the comedy unmasks the arrogant Count and calls to mind the cultural relativity of his manners (the social customs that are so important to Ramón are the source of ridicule for the Cid poet), the humor of the scene can also expose a deeper fear of inadequacy, even impotence. As I have argued, the battle scene and banquet are comic inversions of the social order, and as such they recall how the official social order truly operates.²⁶ In that order, the Count of Barcelona is one of the most powerful men of his time, and his lineage and Frankish customs are held in high esteem, while the Cid is still an *infanzón* and Castilla is an emerging frontier kingdom.²⁷ In the Tévar episode, the poet’s comic interlude creates a liminal, poetic space in the border *taifa* kingdom of Lérida in which the audience can imagine itself as culturally and militarily superior, even as it senses its own lack of cultural prestige.²⁸

Back at the table, the Count’s refusal to eat sets off a series of menacing threats and abusive speech directed at the Count, beginning with what are probably the most cited words of the entire confrontation:

—Comed, conde, d’este pan et beved d’este vino;
si lo que digo fiziéredes saldredes de cativo,
si non, en todos vuestros días non veredes cristianismo.— (vv. 1025–1027)

The contingencies laid out in the Cid’s threat (i.e. “eat this bread, drink this wine and you will go free; otherwise you’ll never see your people again”), tie it to other contracts with the Cid throughout the poem that rely on a character’s ability to recognize and trust in the Cid’s inherent, even spiritual merits, as Ter Horst has shown. This point should be kept in mind here when the Count first refuses to eat, and later when he is released, but first the series of events and the positioning of the Cid and the Count throughout the food ritual should be plotted.

With few exceptions, scholars accept that the Cid repeats his demand that Ramón eat, but regardless of exactly how many times the Cid offered food to the Count, the poet again makes use of summary to condense time and concentrate his audience’s attention on bodies, and the symbolic

²⁶ Julio F. Hernando also calls attention to the reversal of the social order in the Tévar episode, although he does not study it as an element of humor. Hernando argues that the Count serves as a symbolic double for King Alfonso, and that the reversal of roles in the scene is designed to portray the hero as worthy of royal status (*Poesía y violencia* 56–57).

²⁷ Catalán reminds his readers that at the time of the performance of the *CMC*, the descendants of the Count and other *ricos-hombres* from the poem still formed the most prestigious, and powerful political class (810).

²⁸ In support of the argument that the battle and feast with the Count of Barcelona can remind the audience of the social status of the Count, see the important emendation to Bakhtin’s dualistic view of medieval culture by Umberto Eco, who argues that there is no real transgression or subversion in carnival reversals. On the contrary, Eco concludes that comedy and carnival “remind us of the existence of the rule” (6). Bakhtin himself seems to recognize a similar phenomenon in world literature, where the comic inversion of genre styles can be “sanctioned by tradition” (“From the Prehistory” 53). See also, Bayless, who points out that among anthropologists, carnivalesque inversions can be subversive in some cases, but “that there is no universal law of carnival” (188).

act of eating.²⁹ Most readers accept that the Count starved for three days (vv. 1030–1032), but if the method of measuring time and counting days in the Middle Ages is as Alberto Montaner explains, then the Count may have only abstained for one day (153 n1533). The first day would be the day of the battle itself, the capture of the Count and the Cid’s first threatening invitation to eat. The next day the Count does not eat, and on the third day he breaks his fast. This is a potentially important reading, since it can nuance how we interpret the Count’s enthusiastic acceptance of food on the third day.

Ramón happily gives up his protest when the Cid promises him that he will release two other Barcelonans (vv. 1039–1040). Water is quickly provided for the Count to wash his hands (vv. 1049–1050), and the comic feast begins:

Con los cavalleros que el Cid le avié dados,
 comiendo va el conde, ¡Dios, qué de buen grado!
 Sobr’él sedié el que en buen ora nasco:
 —Si bien non comedes, conde, don yo sea pagado,
 aquí feremos la morada, no nos partiremos amos.—
 Aquí dixo el conde: —¡De voluntad e de grado! —
 Con estos dos cavalleros apriessa va yantando;
 pagado es mio Cid, que lo está aguardando,
 porque el conde don Remont tan bien bolvié las manos. (vv. 1051–1059)

The Cid’s language is threatening (“Si bien non comedes, conde don yo sea pagado, / aquí feremos la morada, no nos partiremos amos”), and as such it is another display of the hero’s superior masculinity.³⁰ Ramón must submit and stuff himself until the Cid is satisfied—“don yo sea pagado”—not until the Count’s appetite is sated. As Thomas Montgomery argued years ago, the Cid is not attempting to reconcile with his prisoner, and the Count has to “make a spectacle of himself” (5); indeed, I would argue further that the last verse cited above paints a comic, grotesque image of a frantic, gobbling orifice.³¹ Moving beyond the Cid’s threats, the poet positions the bodies in this scene in such a way that it creates another image of dominance mounting that contributes to the burlesque atmosphere of the feast. The Cid is above Ramón, looking down on him. The poet describes his anxious eating, and how the Cid is pleased to watch him give in to his command. The hero is figuratively “on top of” the Count —“Sobr’él sedié”— just as he and his men were mounted on their horses during the battle: “las armas avién presas e sedién sobre los cavallos” (v. 1001). Once again, the Count is forcefully dismounted from his arrogant posture, and again the Cid bears down on the Count physically and verbally, echoing the defeat in the pine forest. Ramón must assume a submissive position, eating the food, or the very essence of the *Campeador* until the Cid is satisfied.³²

By contrasting the Cid’s manly speech with the Count’s impotence, and by moving their bodies into positions of dominance and submission, the poet successfully overlaps discourses of

²⁹ See John Gornall, who argues that the Cid makes his offer only once (71–72).

³⁰ On aggressive speech as a characteristic of manliness, see Mirrer (169). Drawing on Mirrer’s essay, cited here, Jill Ross also shows how the Cid uses gesture and speech “to call attention to his assertive virility” (97).

³¹ Alberto Montaner clarifies “tan bien volvié las manos” as meaning the Count moves his hands from plate to mouth (121 n1059).

³² I refer here to Marcel Mauss’ description of the function of gift exchange in societies of “total prestation” where “to receive something is to receive a part of someone’s spiritual essence” (10). Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht has argued that in the Middle Ages eating is “the most direct way of becoming one with the things of the world in their tangible presence” (87).

military conquest that feminize the defeated, and feasting rituals that interpolate their participants into rigid social hierarchies. The symbolic, and carnivalesque discourses of food and violence are drawn together to create a comic scene that may seem strange or distasteful to modern readers. Nevertheless, ritualized food practices, and discourses of violence have always been symbolically linked in carnivalesque humor, as Louise Vasvári explains in a study of “gastro-genital rites of reversal” in the *Libro de buen amor* (“Battle” 3). The poet’s humor in this comic forced feeding builds on the overlapping discourses of military conquest, masculinity, and food rituals to humiliate the high-born Don Ramón in a final oral gesture of submission to the more powerful hero.

When the Count thinks the Cid may be satisfied, he humbly asks that he and his men be allowed to leave, and just as in the previous verses, the poet calls attention to the Count’s risible, nervous haste:

—Si vos ploguiere, mio Cid, de ir somos guisados;
mandadnos dar las bestias e cavalgaremos privado.
Del día que fue conde non yanté tan de buen grado,
el sabor que dend é non será olvidado.— (vv. 1060–1063)

The dramatic irony here is patent. The audience must know that the whole experience has left a very bad taste in his mouth. Rather than reading the Count’s eagerness to eat as a sign of his starvation—after all, he may have only skipped a couple of meals all together—we could read these verses as a description of the Count’s fear and frantic desire to eat and run.

If we limit our interpretation of the poet’s art and the Cid’s behavior in this scene to what we know about the historical practice of ransoming prisoners, we would have to admit that the Cid makes a generous concession for the Count by adding two more of his men to join him, and by allowing them all to go free of charge; but if we accept that the poet is attempting to create humor in the entire encounter with the Count of Barcelona, and we understand that the Count is a comic figure here (as opposed to the historical Berenguer Ramón II), we can argue that the poet is only adding to the Count’s comic humiliation, and to the Cid’s own satisfaction, by having more men (the Count’s own men!) watch as Ramón submits: “Con estos dos cavalleros apriessa va yantando; / pagado es mio Cid, que lo está aguardando” (vv. 1057-1058). Furthermore, by bringing in the new prisoners, the poet creates a corporate character, where one man stands for an entire group: the Barcelonans. Thus, the poet creates a comic anti-epic hero in the Count; he is an effeminate, powerless aristocrat who stands for a group of powerless men.

The humor of the Count’s humiliating departure has been carefully studied by many of the scholars cited above, and although the final verses of the *cantar* move beyond the banquet scene proper, some of their most salient features should be recalled in order to support my reading of the comic feast. The Count and his men are given palfreys and dressed in furs (vv. 1064–1065), which may seem like an act of generosity and respect for the Count’s station when taken out of the farcical context of the poem, but by comparison with the Count’s laughable defeat, caused by his absurd lack of combat experience, and the comic banquet scene, the choice of palfreys is more likely a final emasculation of the Barcelonans. I have already argued that the defeated and the weak are associated with femininity, and the Barcelonans are especially impotent in this episode. As is well known, the palfrey is a docile horse used for travel by both men and women, but it is a mount often associated with ladies. Since the Count and his men did not know how to dress for war or ride their chargers in battle, gentle palfreys and courtly garments are more appropriate for them. Finally, like Minaya Álvar Fáñez, the Count is by no means “free” when he leaves the Cid, and the play on the

word “franco” (v. 1068) reminds the audience that he has been forced to accept his new, inferior place in the symbolic food chain of the poem. The Count has left behind more than just the spoils of war, he has lost his manhood and his authority, physically stripped from him in the battle when he lost Colada, and ritualistically in the banquet when he was forced to give up his strike and submit to the Cid until the hero was satisfied.³³

Returning to the Count’s departure, his last flinch (vv. 1077–1081) serves as an opportunity for the poet to insist that Ramón was not able to perceive the Cid’s inherent superiority and honor. This last display of cowardice, when Ramón turns to see if the Cid has changed his mind, is an effective punch line for the comic humiliation of the Count, but I would like to hypothesize, by way of conclusion, that these verses resonate with multiple layers of parody and humor in the comic feast.

A basic trait of the characters in the poem that do not trust the Cid, according to Ter Horst, is an inability, or resistance, to interpret his “spiritual abundance” accurately (220). The Count of Barcelona is shown to be this sort of distrusting character at the end of the first *cantar*, and the poet states directly that Ramón has seriously misjudged the hero (vv. 1080–1081). Back in the Cid’s tent, the Count was also unable to accept the Cid’s ordained superiority when his contract of freedom was first offered, so he had to be coerced.

If we continue to accept my reading of the clash with the Count of Barcelona as a comic interlude, then the famous words spoken by the Cid in verse 1025, demanding that the Count “eat this bread” and “drink this wine”, may also place the banquet scene within the carnivalesque tradition that travesties the Lord’s Supper. This should not be surprising, since as Bakhtin has demonstrated, the parodic elements in comic banquet scenes that target the Sacrament of the Eucharist are ubiquitous, even in works that may have a more “narrowly satiric” focus (*Rabelais* 296).³⁴ The Tévar episode is first a carnivalesque, comic humiliation of the Count himself, and probably a burlesque critique of his aristocratic class and Frankish cultural identity, but the poet also makes use of a parodic allusion to the Eucharist to create humor in the scene that can remind his audience that the Cid is the perfect prince. The comedy in the encounter with the Count of Barcelona, therefore, is in no way transgressive of the larger social order that the poet artfully recreates throughout the poem. The poet’s humor may lampoon the behavior of one count, but it also caps the episode’s potential to produce social satire, since the institutions of power themselves in the poem are never undermined.

Imagining that the Cid and his family can be viewed as chosen people, “favoured in the process of sacred history” (Burke, *Structures* 73), and keeping in mind that the comic feast also contains popular parodic elements that may travesty the liturgy of the Eucharist, it could be helpful to remember Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians, as it addresses the judgment, even sickness and death, that will befall those who eat, but do not recognize the body of Christ (*The New English Bible*, 1 Cor. 11. 29–30). The biblical allusion can enrich the joke, since the Count did not

³³ Jesús Rodríguez Velasco has argued that the Cid’s swords represent the allegorical division of temporal (Colada) and spiritual (Tizón) authority, so that when the Cid captures Colada from Ramón, the blade not only symbolizes the Cid’s victory, but also his authority over the entire region: “Con Colada en manos del Campeador, ya se sabe que todos los territorios son de Rodrigo: la espada lo significa” (46). Hernando claims that the sword is a symbol of royal power in the poem, that it can symbolize a warrior’s very essence, and that when the Count loses Colada he suffers a kind of symbolic death (*Poesía y violencia* 56–57).

³⁴ Miguel Garci-Gómez noted that these verses allude to the sign of Christian communion in the sharing of bread and wine (122). Germán Orduna observes in Spanish literature from the *CMC* to the *Celestina* that the bread/wine reference becomes a literary commonplace that can be a learned or religious allusion, or a verisimilar index of material and economic realities (23).

acknowledge his superior, the true prince favored by God, and he is judged accordingly. As with the presumptuous guests in the parable of the wedding feast in the Gospel of Luke, the audience could have been reminded that “everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted” (14. 7–11). The Count is removed from his place of honor, and the Cid, who accepts his exile with humble loyalty, will be exalted by the end of his trials when he is offered Alfonso’s seat (a gift from the Cid himself) in Toledo (vv. 3114–3116). The hero refuses his lord’s offer in typical self-deprecating style, but the desired effect is achieved; the Cid has been favorably compared to Alfonso, and the entire court sees the respect their king has for his loyal vassal.

One may feel that my conclusion is taking these jokes too far by turning the Cid into a parodic, threatening Christ-figure in the Tévar episode, but as Smith has argued, it is not impossible that the poet employed biblical and liturgical elements in his work that have been overlooked by scholars (*The Making* 153–54, 185).³⁵ I would argue that these elements could also be put to use to create humor, and that these texts, along with a familiarity with popular comic banquet scenes would have informed the poet’s repertoire. Furthermore, the liturgical reference to the Eucharist ties nicely with the other “themes and images of awakening, manifestation” and “revelation” that Burke uncovers in the poem (*Structures* 113). Finally, the allusion to the Eucharist is not an obscure one at all, since the Mass is arguably the most familiar food ritual of medieval culture, so access to the humor of this travesty would be available to the broadest of medieval audiences. This kind of humor may feel out of place for modern readers accustomed to studies that have lionized the hero, or who feel that this sort of folk humor is out of place in an epic poem, but the humor of this episode need not be as enigmatic as some scholars have suggested.

Recalling the first banquet in San Pedro, the comic feast at Tévar is also ambivalent in the final analysis, and its humor should not be interpreted as sacrilegious or subversive to any particular social order, since medieval laughter is ultimately aimed at the whole world in a never-ending process of death and rebirth (Bakhtin, *Rabelais* 165–66). As in the feast of fools, the laughter heard in a carnival feast stems from the “theme of bodily regeneration and renewal” (Bakhtin, *Rabelais* 75). The Cid’s feast does symbolically violate the Count with alimentary discourses of dominance and submission, but it also celebrates the coming of a regenerated and Castilianized aristocracy that will be revealed through the Cid and his descendants. Thus the poet’s comic technique also accomplishes what England and Giles have shown in his use of parody; namely, that the traditional Frankish aristocracy and their customs are ridiculed, while the social hierarchy Ramón represents is preserved, even legitimized in the Cid as epic hero and model prince. Finally, the comic interlude at the end of the first *cantar* creates laughter at the expense of the Count, but it also has the potential to expose social anxieties surrounding the perceived lack of traditional cultural prestige associated with the Castilian hero and his clan that were in ascendancy at the beginning of the thirteenth century.

³⁵ Following up on another note by Smith regarding a possible biblical allusion in the poem, Hernando demonstrates that the parable of the Good Samaritan informs the meaning of the Cardeña episode and the *afrenta de Corpes* (“Por muertas las dexaron”).

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