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Structures from the Trivium
in the *Cantar de Mio Cid*

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Introduction

In this study of the *Cantar de Mio Cid* my aim is to discuss two major concerns of the poem: the ideas of revelation and awakening, and the manner in which the actions and behaviour of the hero can be taken as exemplary, particularly in regard to King Alfonso VI as monarch. Both these concerns are presented and articulated in terms of dialectical and rhetorical structures that were learned by anyone who underwent the basic schooling of the Middle Ages.

The student in the middle schools of medieval times, when refashioning material, applied a number of techniques besides the dialectical and rhetorical ones that I believe have been used to shape the *CMC*. The *artes poetriae*, also derived from academic curriculum exercises, are largely concerned, at least in the earlier manifestations, with *descriptio*, the portrayal and representation of the important persons in a work or the places in which an action occurred. If the *Cid*-poet experienced basic school training, we might expect to see reflections of these other techniques in the poem. But I have limited myself in this study to an explanation of those dialectical and rhetorical devices that underlie the most important themes in the work and that provide for it a structure that resembles what we moderns term plot.

Such devices are analogous to those that characterized a particular form known in Spain in the period during which the *CMC* was composed. This is the 'imaginative syllogism,' a term coined by a modern critic, O.B. Hardison (1962, 13), to apply to a device described by the Spaniard Dominicus Gundissalinus in the mid-twelfth century. A similar artifice is discussed by Hermannus Alemanus, who did translations from Arabic to Latin in Toledo about a century after Dominicus. Although unfortunately these writers provide few specific details about this imagi-

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native syllogism, they give us some information that enables us to relate this device to those ideas concerning the construction of a literary piece that were prevalent in the era.¹

To prove that the poet who was responsible for the organization of the CMC was familiar with this form is, of course, impossible. I can only produce evidence from the poem itself in an attempt to demonstrate that there are structures in it for which the term 'imaginative, poetic syllogism' is certainly fitting. I believe there are three major structures of this variety in the work, which support the themes of revelation and awakening and of the hero as exemplar.

I have devoted one chapter to the study of the function of rhetorical argument in the *cortes* episode. From the time of Aristotle the philosophical procedure that had served discourse both as subject of analysis and instrument of use had two parts: invention and judgment. The finding and setting of arguments belonged to the province of invention while the demonstration of the truth of what was suggested by the disputation pertained to judgment. In the CMC the arguments supporting the two major themes referred to above, arranged in what I think to be imaginative, poetic syllogisms, are displayed throughout the poem up to the moment of the *cortes* episode in Toledo. This confrontation between the hero and his group and the Infantes de Carrión and their entourage in the presence of the royal assemblage, which in great part literally serves as a trial, functions precisely as a final and absolute proof of the argumentative structures operative in the CMC.

In a final chapter I have analysed two sets of sophisticated arguments that occur in the poem. One group is used to persuade Raquel and Vidas to lend to the hero the funds needed to finance his campaigns against the Moors. The other is used by the hero in an attempt to justify the marriage of his daughters to the Infantes de Carrión and later the Infantes' behaviour. These false arguments adhere to or are at least analogous to accepted forms from the classical Aristotelian tradition.

Since my analysis of the CMC is an attempt to view the poem, both in parts and as a whole, as a reworking of material according to the precepts taught in the lower and middle schools of the Middle Ages, I have a problem that does not confront critics who deal with works only slightly later in date. Although the poems of Berceo or the *Libro de Alexandre* – which may also have been composed by Berceo – could not have been finished many years after the CMC, critics for many years viewed both as belonging to a very different type of poetry from that which characterizes the CMC. The *opera* of Berceo and the *Alexandre*

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were works from the schools, *mester de clerecía*, while the CMC, *mester de juglaría*, was the remnant of an oral culture, a masterpiece accidentally committed to writing, and largely untouched by the emerging scholastic culture of the period.

Although I do not agree with him in all details, the investigations of Colin Smith are extremely important to my interpretation of the CMC, and I accept the overall thrust of his argumentation. Smith has understood perhaps better than any other critic that this poem belongs far more to the learned culture of its period than it does to the folk ambience that has been suggested as its matrix.

Scholars have long suspected that logic, which, along with grammar and rhetoric, comprised the trivium, was influential in the development of the medieval literary work.² C.S. Lewis gave a definition of dialectic that, although not relating the matter directly to the literary piece, does so by implication. 'Dialectic is concerned with proving. In the Middle Ages there are three kinds of proof; from Reason, from Authority, and from Experience. We establish a geometrical truth by Reason; a historical truth by Authority, by *auctours*. We learn by experience ...' (189).

The medieval writer, in seeking to produce a work that according to the received opinion of the period should always be grounded in ethics (Allen 1982; Delhaye), was usually attempting to prove or demonstrate something concerning human behaviour. Even if such a writer did not seriously intend to do what authority demanded, he or she still tended to use those accepted structures, which at least lent an air of legitimacy and authenticity to the work.

The problem has been how to understand the presentation and interrelation in a literary work of those truths that are founded in authority and those that are drawn from experience. Reason would employ the traditional forms of definition and division, deduction and induction, handed down from Aristotle and developed and modified by his followers. But what kind of structures would convey the wisdom garnered from authority and from experience? Could deductive and inductive arguments also be used in regard to these? If so, would it be possible to understand the succinct forms these usually take – those of the syllogism and the induction conveyed in the concise structure of the debate – as structuring devices for the literary piece?

Herein lies the value of the theories of Eugene Vance in his recent book *From Topic to Tale*. Vance shows how proof from authority and experience could be used by a medieval writer in a manner analogous to that derived from reason, and he provides examples of the pertinent