Elpha and Alamos in the *Cantar de mio Cid,* with Some Observations on Tizon

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A mysterious reference to Elpha and Alamos, persons otherwise unattested in peninsular sources, occurs in the *Cantar de mio Cid.* The reference is situated after the passage in which the Infantes de Carrión and the Cid's daughters, on their way from Valencia ostensibly to Carrión, leave the territory of the Moor Avengalvon and cross the river Jalon. The traveling party passes Atienza, which is on its left, and traverses the "Sierra de Miedes," by which appears to be meant the present-day Sierra de Pela to the northwest of the town of Miedes de Atienza (Michael 109n). It then crosses the "Montes Claros," a designation that is no longer used in the immediate region (Michael 253n), and passes to the right of "Griza":

> A ssiniestro dexan a Griza — que Alamos poblo
> —alli son caños — do a Elpha ençerro.
> (Smith vv. 2694-95)

The poet then says that the party leaves San Esteban, situated farther along, on its right, and enters the oakwood of Corpes.

The word *carlo* signifies a subterranean gallery or cave and is also used to refer to an animal's burrow, as in the *Libro de Alexandre,* v. 2007. Menéndez Pidal mentions that in Aragon *caño* is commonly used to refer to the household cellar in which food and drink are stored ("Mitología" 194). Alamos is said, then, to have founded Griza and to have confined Elpha in an underground hideaway of some kind, presumably out of sight of humankind. In any event neither Alamos nor Elpha have been identified.

Despite the construction with *a* in line 2694 that is normally used with personal names, the fact that the word "Griza" is governed by *poblo* makes it likely that it is a toponym. No trace of a place-name "Griza" is found in the area in question. Menéndez Pidal entertained the possibility that the *juglar* who was responsible for the text received from the tradition an itinerary containing place-names to the

south of Atienza, which he then shifted to the north of that town. "Griza" might then be an error for an original "Riaza," signifying the town of Riaza, situated on the river of the same name *(Cantar 1:* 52). The transformation of "Riaza" into "Griza" could be the result of a paléographie error. The two words have three letters in common, and the mistake in the name might have been made by one of the scribes intervening between the original manuscript of A.D. 1207 and the surviving fourteenth-century copy (see Duggan 14-15); either the scribe responsible for the error or a later scribe might have converted the construction into a personal one in a bungled attempt to make sense of the reference. On the other hand Griza could be an authentic place-name unattested in surviving toponymy. After all, Menéndez Pidal only succeeded in identifying Corpes with great difficulty and on the basis of a single document, a donation made to the monastery of San Pedro de Arlanza in the year 904 by Count Fernán González of Castile and his mother Mumadueña *(Cantar* 1: 54). Similarly, Griza could be an obscure but authentic place-name that is simply no longer available in documentary sources. Neither should one rule out the possibility that one of the scribes has deglutinated the *a* from the form he found in his model, which would then have been "Agriza." This solution would eliminate the difficulty of construing a as a preposition governing a place-name in an unusual construction, but unless an Agriza can be found in the region in question, this hypothesis does not get us any closer to identifying the location.

Menéndez Pidal believed that in mentioning Elpha the poem was referring to a local legend that had passed from memory *(Cantar* 636). In glossing the personal name, he noted that while he could not recall seeing it in any other work of medieval Spanish literature ("Mitología" 195), he did find four examples of the form "Elfa" as a woman's name in Spanish documentary sources, ranging in date from 1208 to 1411 (198). The corresponding name "Elbe" or "Albe" was frequently used for females in Germanic lands in the Middle Ages (195). This Germanic name would derive from Common Germanic *albiz,* "good or evil elf" (from the Indo-European root **albh-* 'to shine, be white'), as in Anglo-Saxon *ælf* 'elf,' Middle High German *alp* 'evil spirit,' Modern German *Elf* 'elf,' and Old Icelandic á*lfr* 'elf' (Peters). Among the compound feminine names in which it occurs in Germanic languages are "Elftrudis," "Alftrud," "Alphaida," "Álfhild," and "Elphilt." This hypothesis would place the legend of Elpha in the Germanic, and

specifically in the Gothic, orbit, where I think it belongs. After all, most of the anthroponyms in the *Cantor de mio Cid* are Gothic in origin; if Elpha and Alamos were not, they would constitute anomalies in this regard.

Menéndez Pidal noted that the female elf was a type of wood-nymph or sylph with a beguiling song, seductive in her dances but terribly vengeful, that was thought to inhabit streambanks or caverns. The establishment in Spain of a myth of the nymph Elpha, he conjectured ("Mitología" 195), might have been facilitated by the cult of Diana, a variant form of whose name, "Jana," attested in Spain in a thirteenth-century gloss, gave rise to the forms *xana* and *inxana,* "radiant sylph," in Asturias. These sylphs are sometimes said to capture young women in their caves with the intention of converting them into x*anas.* Menéndez Pidal cites the existence of a number of *cuevas de xanas* in Asturias. In one local legend, a boy enters a cave with the purpose of disenchanting the sylph of the mountain and thereby enriching himself; he becomes lost, however, and is enchanted. By the time he returns to society, so many years have passed that no one recognizes him. This tale reflects, of course, the depiction of the Otherworld as a land without time or whose time does not correspond to that of the world we live in.

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If the probability that "Elpha" derives from the Indo-European root **albh-* through a proto-Germanic **albiz* makes it likely that the name has a Gothic origin, one is justified in looking in the same direction for "Alamos." The initial element of this masculine anthroponym recalls the names of figures from Gothic history. Two Visigothic kings were named Alaric: the first sacked Rome in A.D. 410; the second (484-507) ruled over a kingdom that was the largest in western Europe until he was defeated by the Franks under Clovis in 507 at the Battle of Vouillé near Poitiers. "Alaric" can be disaggregated into the Gothic roots *ala-,* 'all' (Lehmann A135), and reiks, 'ruler,' that is to say "he who rules over all" (see Lehmann A109, A114, R18). As an element in the formation of Gothic anthroponyms, *ala-* is not unknown in the Iberian peninsula. In the late seventh century in Auria (Galicia) is attested a bishop Hilarius whose name is written variously

"Alarius" and "Alaricus" (Garcia Moreno 157), showing that the Gothic form was available for confusion with the Latin name.

I believe that the Gothic anthroponym "Alamods" is the etymological source of the form "Alamos" found in the *Cantar de mio Cid.* This name was borne by a deacon mentioned in documents from Naples and Arezzo. It comes from the same root *ala-* as is found initially in "Alaric," "Alfonso," and "Alvar," plus *mōps,* "anger, spirit" (see Lehmann A109, A112, M77). This double meaning of mōpsmakes it an appropriate element in both Christian and pagan names. In the case of the deacon from Arezzo, it might have been perceived as meaning "one spirit" (see the interpretation in Lehmann M77), but it could just as well be construed as referring to anger.

In searching for the mythic connotations of elements in Gothic names, one cannot have recourse to Gothic mythology proper, which is unavailable to the modern researcher. In the absence of a body of direct sources, it is necessary to look to Old Norse and Old Icelandic legends as they appear in the sagas and in Eddie and skaldic poetry, as these constitute the major storehouse for the ancient myths of the Germanic peoples. Anger is, of course, a common theme in Norse mythology, but two types of anger are referred to almost proverbially, the anger of Thor, Old Norse á*smódr,* expressed in proper name form as *Parmódr,* and j*ötunmódr,* "giant's anger." The reference in the name "Alamods" (OSp. *Alamos),* as applied to a folkloric, or, better, to a mythological figure connected to Elpha would, I believe, be to the primary meaning of *mops.* Alamos, if I am correct, was a warrior, perhaps even a giant, and the Gothic etymon of his name, ALAMODS, signified "consuming anger."

While the folk beliefs about nymphs cited by Menéndez Pidal are of relevance to lines 2694-95 of the *Cantar de mio Cid,* in those legends the nymphs are believed to capture humans, whereas in the poem Elpha is herself said to have been held captive by Alamos. There is a tale about a captive elf-woman that may be relevant to the story the poem refers to.

Many a mythological tale that was lost by the time central and southern Germanic lore came to be written down was long retained on the northwest periphery of the culture, either in Norway or in Iceland

where an impressive quantity of medieval material was preserved in the sagas— particularly in the *Fornaldarsqgur* or "sagas of ancient times," and in Eddie and skaldic poetry. I would like to explore the possibility that the Elpha of the Cantor *de mio Cid* has her counterpart in a figure of Germanic mythology whose tale circulated in northern climes at least several centuries before the poem was composed, and that Alamos designates an abductor figure such as is also present in the ancient myth. In accord with Norse and Danish sources, I will call the figures Starkad and Alfhild, although their names in other Germanic languages could have differed from these forms. Starkad was, in fact, one of the best known of medieval Scandinavian mythological figures, and Alfhild was an elf-woman whom he abducted.

Gautrek's Saga, composed by an unknown author in the early fourteenth century and surviving in several manuscripts the earliest of which dates to the fifteenth century, incorporates the following story about the birth of a character named Storvirk:

> Stórvirkr hét maðr; hann var sonr Starkað àludrengs. Starkaðr var hundvíss jötunn. Hann tók ór "Álfheimum Álfhildi, dóttur Álfs konungs. Álfr konungr hét pá á Pór, at Álfhildr skyldi aptr koma. Pá drap Pórr Starkad, en flutti Álfhildi heim til föður sins, ok var hún pá með barni. Hun fæddi son pann, er Stórvirkr héet, er áðr er nefndr. (Jónsson and Vilhjálmsson 12)
>
> *There was a man called Storvirk, the son of Starkad the Ala-Warrior. Starkad was a giant with uncanny wisdom. He'd abducted a woman called Alfhild, from Alfheim— King Alf's daughter. Then King Alf called on Thor to bring his daughter back, so Thor killed Starkad and carried Alfhild back to her father. She was going to have a child and her son was the boy Storvirk whom we've already mentioned.* (Pálsson and Edwards 33)

Alfheim was in Norse mythology the land of elves— whose god was Frey— as distinct from Mannheim, the land of men, and Jötunheim,

the land of the giants. Storvirk grew up and, following the propensity of his type, abducted the daughter of Earl Freki of Hologaland. She bore him a son, also named Starkad, before she and Storvirk were killed by Freki's sons in a retaliatory raid on their farm. When he was three years old, the younger Starkad was captured by a man named Grani Horse-hair, who was the god Odin in disguise. Grani brought up Starkad until he was twelve. Starkad was, the saga tells us, "an exceptionally big man, but he was a layabout and slept among the ashes by the fire." Later in the saga Starkad describes himself as having ugly jaws, a long snout-shaped mouth, wolf-grey hair, tree-like arms, and a bruised, rough-skinned neck.

When Starkad the younger was grown, he helped another captive, Vikar, launch a successful revolt against the local king, Herthjof. After Vikar himself became a powerful king, Starkad was his chief warrior. Vikar took his army to Hordaland in ships but was unable to put them ashore because of unfavorable winds; divination revealed that this situation would be remedied when a human sacrifice was made to Odin, the victim to be chosen by lot. Repeatedly the lot fell upon King Vikar.

That night Grani Horse-hair awoke Starkad and took him to an island where, in a clearing in the woods, they saw twelve chairs of which eleven were occupied by men. Grani Horse-hair, whom the eleven addressed as Odin, seated himself in the twelfth chair and announced that they were all to decide Starkad's destiny. One of those present was Thor, who engaged Odin in a dialogue, decreeing a series of misfortunes for Starkad each of which was then countered in some way by Odin. Thor began the dialogue by giving a version of the motivation for Alfhild's abduction that differs from that profferred earlier in the saga:

> Pá tók Pórr til orða ok mælti: "Álfhildr, módðir föður Starkaðs, kaus föður at syni sínum hundvísan jötun heldr en Ásapór, ok skapa ek Pat Starkaði, at hann skal hvárki eiga son né dóttur ok enda svá ætt sína." (Jónsson and Vilhjálmsson 25)
>
> *Then Thor spoke up and said: "Starkad's mother, Alfhild, preferred a brainy giant to Thor himself as*

> *the father of her son. So I ordain that Starkad himself shall have neither a son nor a daughter, and his family will end with him."*[1]

Odin thereupon gave Starkad the gift of three lifetimes. Thor ordained that he should commit an evil deed in each of those lifetimes, that he should be without land or estate, that he should never be satisfied with what he has, that he should be wounded in every battle, that he should never remember a poem that he composes, and that the common people should hate him. Odin, on the other hand, decreed in answer to each of Thor's curses that Starkad should have the best weapons and clothing as well as copious money, that he should win victory and fame in every battle, that he should be able to compose verses as fast as he can speak, and that he should be esteemed by the noblest and the best. In return for Odin's favorable decrees toward him, Starkad managed to sacrifice King Vikar to the god by means of a ruse.

Starkad speaks a series of stanzas in *Gautrek's Saga* in which he complains that men mock him, claiming to see on him monstrous scars showing the traces of eight arms that had been torn off by Thor (see Jónsson and Vilhjálmsson 27, Pálsson and Edwards 41). This attribute of monstrosity would appear to belong to his grandfather Starkad the Ala-Warrior, who was killed by Thor for having carried off Alfhild. In fact a number of critics, including Georges Dumézil *(Types épiques* 34), hold that both Starkads were originally one and the same person, the saga author or someone whose tale he drew upon having divided him into two characters, a grandfather and a grandson.

Another important saga deals with Starkad. *Heidrek's Saga* tells the story of the Goths and ends with "The Battle of the Goths and the Huns," which has been called "perhaps the oldest of all the heroic lays preserved in the North" (Tolkien viii). The *U* version of this saga (also known as *Hervarar Saga)* is found in a seventeenth-century manuscript (see Tolkien ix, 66-68) but goes back at least to before 1600 and shares with the saga's *H* version an ancestor that was reworked in the early fourteenth century on the basis of now unattainable earlier versions (Tolkien xxx). The *U* version reports that the elder Starkad

[1] Author's translation. —Ed.

had eight arms (Tolkien 2). According to this text, he lived at Álufossar, 'Aly's waterfalls.' He was betrothed to a certain Ogn whose epithet was á*lfasprengi,* 'burster of elves,' but while he was absent she was carried off by the berserk Hergrim. Starkad killed Hergrim in a duel in which he attacked the berserk with four swords simultaneously. Ogn thereupon committed suicide. Hergrim had had a son with Ogn, whose name was Grim; in his fury over his loss, Starkad seized Hergrim's son and property.

> Álfr hét konungr, er réð fyrir Álfheimum; Álfhildr hét dóttir hans ---- Eitt haust var gort dísablót mikit hjá Álfi konungi, ok gekk Álfhildr at blótinu; hon var hverri konu fegri, ok allt folk í Álfheimum var fríðara at sjá en annat folk pvi samtída. En um nótinna, er hon rauð horginn, nam Starkadr áludrengr Álfhildi í burt ok hafði hana heim med sér. Álfr konungr hét pá á Pór at leita eptir Álfhildi, ok síðan drap Pórr Starkað ok lét Álfhildi fara heim til foður síns ok med henni Grim son Hergríms. (Tolkien 66)

> *There was a king named Álfr, who ruled over Álfheimar; he had a daughter named Álfhild.... One autumn a great sacrifice to the Dísir [female guardian spirits] was held at the house of King Álf, and Álfhild conducted the rites; she was more beautiful than any other woman, and all the people in Álfheimar were fairer to look on than any others in those days. But during the night, when Álfhild reddened the altar with blood, Starkad Áludreng carried her off, and took her home with him. King Álf called upon Thór to seek for Álfhild; and afterwards Thór slew Starkad and allowed Alfhild to return home to her father, together with Grim the son of Hergrim.* (Tolkien 67)

Heidrek's Saga says no more of Starkad. It does, however, provide information about his progeny that is of prime importance for my argument and will be invoked below.

Scattered references to Starkad occur in a number of other Norse sources (see Ciklamini 169n), but the euhemerizing Saxo Grammaticus, who was born around the middle of the twelfth century and died after 1216, is the earliest author to draw upon the legend discursively. Saxo expatiates on Starkad's life in three books of his *Gesta Danorum*— book VI, chapters 5-8, book VII, chapters 5 and 11, and book VIII, chapters 6 and 8— each referring to one of Starkad's three lives. As in *Gautrek's Saga,* Starkad commits three heinous crimes: he kills his friend and lord the Norwegian King Vikar, he flees the battlefield, and for 120 pounds of gold he kills the Danish King Oli. Incredulous, Saxo reports on the notion that Starkad was a giant:

> Tradunt enim quidam, quod a gigantibus editus monstruosi generis habitum inusitata manuum numerositate prodiderit, asseruntque Thor deum quattuor ex his affluentis naturæ vitio procreatas, elisis nervorum compagibus, avulsisse atque ab integritate corporis prodigiales digitorum eruisse complexus, ita ut, duabus tantum relictis, corpus, quod ante in giganteæ granditatis statum effluxerat eiusque formam informi membrorum multitudine repræsentabat, postmodum meliore castigatum simulacro brevitatis humanæ modulo caperetur. (Olrik and Ræder bk. 6, ch.5, par. 2)
>
> *For some folk tell how he was born of giants and revealed his monster kind by an extraordinary number of hands. They assert that the god Thor broke the sinews which joined four of these superfluous extensions of freakish Nature and tore them off, plucking away the unnatural bunches of fingers from the body proper; with only two arms left, his frame, which before had run to a gigantic enormity and been shaped with a grotesque crowd of limbs, was afterwards corrected according to a better model and contained within the more limited dimensions of men.* (Fisher 1:170)

According to Saxo, it was Odin who imposed the curses upon Starkad while Thor was favorable to him. Saxo's is the most extensive

of the Scandinavian versions. He makes it clear that the tale of Starkad was known beyond Scandinavia proper:

> Neque enim solum apud nostros egregiis operum titulis coruscabat, verum etiam apud omnes Sueonum Saxonumque provincias speciosissima sibi monumenta pepererat. (Olrik and Ræder bk. 6, ch.5, par. 2)
>
> *The role of his achievements not only scintillated in our own country but gained him brilliant repute even through all the provinces of Sweden and Saxony.* (Fisher 1:170)

Saxo does not, however, mention Starkad's abduction of Alfhild, nor does he show any awareness that Starkad had a grandfather of the same name.

Starkad is mentioned in the *Landnámabók (Book of Settlements)* in which Ari the Learned (1067-1148) provides information about the identities, deeds, and genealogies of those who settled Iceland in the ninth and tenth centuries. Starkad is said in that source to have been at the court of a Swedish king who lived around the middle of the eighth century, but this is unlikely to be an accurate historical reference and in any case there is no means to verify it.

If the Elpha of the Cantor *de mio Cid* has her counterpart in Alfhild, and if the latter's name still bore the suffix *-hild,* it would not be difficult to account for the passage from one name to the other. If one is to conceive of the transformation as taking place in a Hispanic context, a useful analogy is found in the tradition of the *romance La muerta ocultada.* In the Scandinavian analogue of that ballad the name of the hero is Olaf, but he is called "Olalbo" in the Catalan version (Mariscal 56, 81).[2] Olaf is not, of course, a name that fits well into the nomenclature of Hispanic languages. "Olalbo" is constructed out of two components: the three initial phonemes of the Scandinavian name, fused with the element *-albo* that confers on it a properly

[2]I am grateful to Samuel G. Armistead for providing me with this reference.

Catalan configuration. So it was with Elpha: the morpheme *-hild* "battle, combat," has yielded few Spanish offspring, none of them common (Fagilde, Gomide, Ramilde, etc.; see Sachs 109); perceived as an alien element, it would have been replaced by *-a,* the most common ending for a woman's name. The Germanic root would be **albi,* 'elf, demon,' as in "Albarico," "Albila," and "Alboinus" (Piel and Kremer 68-69). Other forms with umlaut are possible, but umlaut is typically unrepresented in Gothic orthography. Alternately, Elpha could have resulted from processes of name formation in a Germanic context.

Starkad's correspondence to Alamos is, of course, another matter, as there is no etymological link between the forms of the two names. The giant's name as found in Old Norse would itself descend from a Germanic etymon. One possibility is that in Gothic it might have taken on a form designating all-consuming anger, the giant's anger, perhaps under the influence of some variant of the enigmatic epithet borne by Starkad, á*ludrengr* (Tolkien 67). Pálsson and Edwards render this epithet as "Ala-warrior," as we have seen, thereby tacitly acknowledging the difficulty scholars have had in interpreting it. The second element of the word is undoubtedly *drengr, 'bold,* valiant, worthy man; champion.' The first element is, however, obscure, probably because of its very archaicness. In *Heidrek's Saga* it is implied that the first element is derived from Álufossar, the waterfalls of Aly, which is thought to be Ulefos in Lower Telemark (Tolkien 66). Á*ludrengr* would in that case signify *'Aly's* warrior.' Le Roy Andrews stressed, however, that Old Norse á*la* simply meant 'a deep channel in a water-course,' and that the author of *Heidrek's Saga* might have invented the place-name Álufossar to explain the epithet. Bugge proposed, following Svend Grundtvig, that á*lu-* was an error for á*la-,* and that the epithet originally signified 'Ali's champion,' Ali being Ali the bold, the Swedish king whom Starkad is said to have killed in *Ynglingasaga,* ch. 25, and, under the names Oli and Olaf, in Book 8 of Saxo's narrative (see Andrews 155, Bugge 350). In any case it is possible that the sense of Starkad's epithet was just as obscure to the Visigoths as it is to modern scholars, and that they substitued for the name of the person who bore it a Gothic name of similar nature, namely "Alamods."

Alternately, Alamos may simply represent the abductor figure, and his relation to Starkad may be much more tenuous than would be suggested of a direct link were perceived.

Menéndez Pidal, who apparently never considered the possibility of a Germanic etymology for the form "Alamos," conjectured ("Mitologia" 194) that its last letter was probably the flexional *-s of* the nominative case, which would give the word a learned cast such as one finds in the ecclesiastic forms "Cristos," "Longinos," or "Pilatos," or in the epic forms "Carlos," "Oliveros," "Reinaldos," and "Gaiferos," a somewhat incongruous trait with a name whose transparent sense in Spanish is as common as *alamo* 'poplar.' This led him to hypothesize that the proper name might have had nothing to do with the dendronym, but might rather have borne a tonic accent on its final syllable. I suggest rather that Alamos is the Gothic name "Alamods" modified by the effacement of the voiced dental before -s, a transformation perhaps facilitated by popular etymology involving *alamo,* 'poplar.' If this is the case, the Old Spanish name, like the dendronym, would have been accented on the first syllable.

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How might a reflex of the legend that I refer to as that of Alfhild and Starkad have become available to the poet of the *Cantar de mio Cid?* That the myth of Starkad goes back to a period long before the saga age is shown by the fact that he is mentioned in the single extant stanza ascribed to the skald Vetrliði Sumarliðason, which would have been composed around the year 1000 in the context of the struggle over Iceland's conversion to Christianity (Lindow). That stanza is an address to Thor that invokes, among other achievements, the god's overthrow of Starkad (Dumézil, *Types épiques* 34). Skaldic poetry in general draws upon an ancient fund of mythic and legendary lore the knowledge of which is necessary for the understanding of the poetry itself. One reason for this relationship between poetry and myth is the widespread use in skaldic verse of the convolutedly allusive metaphors known as "kennings." Although a production of one of the earliest skalds, Vetrliði's stanza represents "a long and rich tradition of religious poetry" (Turville-Petre 86), a tradition that could well go back to a time when the Visigoths shared a system of belief with other

Germanic tribes. Since Thor's hostility to Starkad was motivated, according to *Gautrek's Saga,* by Alfhild's preference for the hero over himself, presumably the tale of the elf-woman's abduction must also be ancient.

The Goths began to migrate southeastward from Gotland in southern Sweden in the first century B.C., settling first in eastern Russia, then in the vicinity of the Black Sea where they established an empire. Under pressure from the Huns, the Western Goths, that is to say the Visigoths, were displaced to the area of present-day Bulgaria, then moved into Italy. They were converted to the Arian heresy in A.D. 376, and by the fifth century had settled in Aquitania. They entered the Iberian peninsula early in that same century, establishing their capital at Barcelona and later at Toledo. The earliest surviving historian of the Goths is Jordanes, whose *Getica,* written toward the middle of the sixth century, is, according to his own statement, based on oral traditions ("maiorum dicta": Mommsen 121) as well as numerous written sources the principal of which was Cassiodorus's history of the Goths. Jordanes refers to a story that the Goths told which "in priscis eorum carminibus perte storicu ritu in commune recolitur" (Mommsen 61). He specifies that the Goths "antiquitus etiam cantu maiorum facta modulationibus citharisque canebant, Eterpemara, Hanale, Fridigerni, Vidigoiæ et aliorum, quorum in hac gente magna opinio est, quales vix heroas fuisse miranda iactat antiquitas" (Mommsen 65, as corrected by Mierow 149). Later Jordanes mentions Gothic songs sung "adhuc odie" (Mommsen 75). Referring to a battle fought in the year 377, Ammianus Marcellinus also notes that the Goths sang "laudes maiorum," and Isidore of Seville refers in his *Institutionum Disciplinæ* to their "carmina maiorum," sung to the accompaniment of the cithara (both authors quoted in Menéndez Pidal, "Los godos y el origen" 64n, 70). The Goths still performed heroic songs of an historical nature about their ancestors at least as late as the sixth century, that is to say long after they were firmly established in Spain. The tale of Alfhild and Starkad or an analogous tale could have been transmitted through this medium.

Even after they were converted to Roman orthodoxy under King Reccared in A.D. 589, pagan beliefs must have remained alive among the Visigoths. The Third Council of Toledo and the synod of Narbonne in that year called upon Gothic officials to look into the problem of

pagan practices; their inquiry must have been among the Gothic population, since at that date they had no jurisdiction over Roman inhabitants of Spain or southern France (Thompson 55-56). In 693, King Egica had his bishops deal with those who worshipped stones, fountains, and trees (Thompson 310), a practice that conjures up essential elements of Germanic religion.

Although the tales of the Goths to which Jordanes and Isidore are witnesses were heroic in nature, they must have incorporated important elements of mythic beliefs as well, such as tales about the foundation of the Gothic people. Evidence for the process by which an isolated mythic element could be preserved for centuries beyond the time when it ceased to function as such is found in the context of the Franks. Although they were converted to Christianity under the rule of Clovis, the name of a character from their pagan mythology, Weland, the blacksmith of the gods, was preserved into the late middle ages in over a dozen *chansons de geste* as the renowned blacksmith Galant.

This would not mean, of course, that the *Cid* poet would have grasped the deep mythic significance of the story of the abduction of Elpha, or even less that he understood that her counterpart and that of Alamos were characters from a tale that touched on the relationship between pagan gods and mankind. Much more probable is that he would have thought of these figures as demons or preternatural creatures of one kind or another— typical fate of the pagan gods in later medieval Christianity. As we have already seen, the name of the goddess Diana survived in medieval Asturias in the common noun *xana,* and the Old French words *nuiton, luiton* "malicious spirit" and *net un* "devil" derive from the Latin *Neptunum.* With Elpha and Alamos it is not a question of the transformation of proper names into common nouns, it is true, but Thor, for example, was conceived in Christian Scandinavia as a devil.

The Spanish Visigothic kingdom was overthrown by the Arab invasion of 711. Even at their most populous, the Visigoths made up no more than a tenth of the population (Thompson 3), but their leading families had displaced the native nobility. It is well known that the Spanish nobles who led the Reconquest considered themselves to be descended from the Visigoths, and to this day the Spanish word *godo* is synonymous with *noble.* The names and patronymics of the principal characters in the *Cantar de mio Cid* are in fact of Germanic, and mostly

of Gothic, origin: Albar, Alfonso, Asur, Beltran, Elvira, Fernando, Fruella, Galind, Gomez, Gonzalo, Ramiro, Remont, Rodrigo, Tellez, Verenguel, Vermudez (see Sachs). Even Fariz, the name the poem assigns to a Muslim leader who is unattested in history, is a Suebian name (Sachs 50). The Germanic customal law that one sees at work in the poem (see Duggan 63-67) descends from Visigothic law as promulgated by kings Chindaswinth and Receswinth in the seventh century. Gothic may have been spoken as late as Receswinth's reign (Thompson 314-15; Gamillscheg 126), that is to say into the mid seventh century. Menéndez Pidal, in summarizing his theory that the the Castilian epic descends from the Gothic ("Los godos y el origen..."), cited as analogous Gothic literary relics the legends of Walter of Aquitaine— surviving in the *romance* "Gaiferos"— and of Rodrigo, last king of the Spanish Goths.[3]

It is not incongruent, then, that the legend of Starkad á*ludrengr* and Alfhild is be a Gothic foundation myth. From the union of Alfhild and Starkad, *Heidrek's Saga* reports, was born Bauggerd. She married Grim, Starkad's son by Ogn, and they had a son, Arngrim the berserk, who conquered with his fabulous sword Tyrfing the kingdom of Svafrlami (thus in the late version of *Heidrek's Saga;* in the earlier versions he is called Sigrlami), killed its king, and married his daughter Eyfura (Tolkien 67-68). They had twelve sons, all berserks. The eldest of these, Angantyr, married Svafa, daughter of Bjarmar, who after her husband's death in battle bore a daughter, Hervor. Angantyr was buried with the sword Tyrfing. Hervor dressed as a man and did battle as a viking, calling herself Hervard; she was also renowned for her great beauty. She bravely journeyed to her father's grave and recovered from him the sword Tyrfing, which she passed on to her son Heidrek. With the sword, Heidrek achieved a great victory and married the daughter of Harald, king of Reidgotaland, who was soon killed fighting a battle instigated by Heidrek. Heidrek became

[3]Considerable speculation surrounds another possible Visigothic myth in Castilian heroic literature, that of the kingdom obtained for the price of a horse. It is found in the *Poema de Fernán González,* stanzas 577-84, and in the *Estoria de España.* The possible Visigothic identity of the myth is based on the fact that it appears in section 38 of Jordanes's *Getica.* See Menéndez Pidal, "Los Godos y el origen," Harvey, "Fernán González's Horse," and Harvey and Hook, "The Affair of the Horse and Hawk."

king of Reidgotaland (Tolkien 26), that is of the land of the Goths. As Christopher Tolkien explains (xxvi), the term *Hrædas* in the Old English poem *Widsith* means 'Goths,' and it is this same element that one finds as the first syllable of Reidgotaland. Since the Gothic royal families, including later both the Ostrogoths and the Visigoths, are said to descend from Heidrek, and since the farthest point back to which Heidrek's genealogy can be traced is the union of Alfhild and Starkad, the mention in *Cantar de mio Cid vv*. 2694-95 of Elpha who is being held prisoner by Alamos, who founded Griza, may represent a reflex of the foundation myth of the Visigothic people, although unfortunately the evidence is insufficient to draw definite conclusions.

This genealogy of the progeny of Starkad is only found in *Heidrek's Saga,* but of course only *Heidrek's Saga* traces the descent of the Goths. In contrast, according to *Gautrek's Saga* the younger Starkad had no offspring, and no mention is made in it of the elder Starkad's union with Ogn.

Another element of the story told in *Heidrek's Saga* may have been preserved by the Visigoths. As Christopher Tolkien puts it:

> In the works of Roman writers two names make their appearance very early in connection with the Goths, *Tervingi* and *Greutungi,* and these have been almost universally equated with the Visigoths and the Ostrogoths respectively; it has often been said too that Gizur Grýtingalidi in *Heidrek's Saga* was originally Gizur of the Greutungi, and that the sword Tyrfing derives from the name *Tervingi.*

In the great *Icelandic-English Dictionary* of Cleasby, Vigfusson, and Craigie, the name of the sword Tyrfing is said to have been named "from its flaming like resinous wood" (s.v. *Tyrfingr).* An appropriate Old Spanish equivalent to Tyrfing, then, would be "Tizon," the name of one of the Cid's precious swords in the *Cantar de mio Cid* which Menéndez Pidal, following Covarrubias and Sanchez, interprets as "la ardiente espada" *(Cantar* 3:662). In the poem the sword Tizon takes on an almost numinous quality (see Duggan 98). Although Tizon is said in the poem to have been acquired from Bucar, the king of Morocco (see vv. 2425-26), there is no indication where Bucar acquired it. If Tizon

represents the ancient sword by which Heidrek became king of the Goths, its acquisition by Rodrigo of Vivar would reinforce his role as a mirror image of that other Rodrigo who lost the Visigothic kingdom to the Arabs.

Just how important the myth of Starkad was is indicated by Georges Dumézil, who devoted to it his study "L'enjeu du jeu des dieux: un héros," which is the first part of *Types épiques indo-européens— un héros, un sorcier, un roi,* itself volume 2 of *Mythe et épopée.* Dumézil interprets the tale of Starkad as an aspect of an ancient Indo-European myth of the hero who is the stakes in a game played between gods. In addition to Starkad, the Herakles of Diodorus Siculus and the Sisupala of the *Mahabharata* committed three great sins, for which they were punished. Starkad and Herakles in particular share certain characteristics: both are wandering heroes, both pay a younger friend to help them die in the way they desire, and both are the pawns of gods who represent the first two of the three Indo-European functions, in Starkad's case Odin and Thor, in Herakles's Hera and Athena. Dumézil has discovered an analogue in the Indian tradition for the aspect of the myth of Starkad and Alfhild that interests us here in the rivalry of the king Sisupala and the god Krishna over Rukmini *(Types épiques* 111-13).

In *Heidrek's Saga,* Gudmund is the name of the lord of Jötunheim, which as we have seen is the land of the giants. This Gudmund, who in the saga is said to have been worshipped as a god after his death, is also one of the giants in Saxo's *Gesta Danorum,* under the form Guthmundus. Saxo tells of the journey that a certain Thorkillus undertook to reach the land where Guthmundus lived.

> Ambitorem namque terrarum Oceanum navigandum, solem posponendum ac sidera, sub Chao peregrinandum ac demum in loca lucis expertia iugibusque tenebris obnoxia transeundum expertorum assertione constabat. (Olrik and Ræder bk. 8, ch. 14, par. 1)
>
> *Those who tried [the journey] declared that it was needful to sail over the Ocean that goes round the lands, to leave the sun and stars behind, to journey down into chaos, and at last to pass into a land where no*

> *light was and where darkness reigned eternally.*
> (Tolkien 84)

Jötunheim was thus situated in a land devoid of sunshine. Speaking of the geography of variant accounts of the journey to the giants" kingdom in Norse literature, Christopher Tolkien remarks: "...The relations of the legendary localities were differently interpreted by different writers. One must not think in terms of a great mythological atlas of the northern world, with legendary lines of latitude and longitude" (85). In the geography of the Iberian peninsula, far from northern climes, it would be natural to situate a giant's abode under ground, in subterranean passages such as the *caños* in which the *Cantar de mio Cid* places Alamos and Elpha. It is appropriate in this context to think of the gigantic cyclops Polyphemos of the *Odyssey,* who inhabits a cave.[4]

A tale analogous, in greater or lesser detail, to that of Alfhild and Starkad could have migrated with the Visigoths to the region near Corpes, where it would have become attached to a particular locus, eventually dying out and leaving no trace except for lines 2694-95 of the *Cantar de mio Cid.*

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The fact that I posit the Goths as the possible conduit for a tale from which the reference to Elpha and Alamos would have resulted in the *Cantar de mio Cid* should not be taken to imply that I am proposing that the *cantar de gesta* as a genre is of Germanic origin. The question of origins is extremely complex, and different aspects of a genre may not share the same etiology. Surely nothing is to prevent tales that have their source in one tradition from being propagated in a genre that has its origin in quite another. The Castilian epic is by and large about

[4]An analogue to the tale of the elf-woman's abduction by a giant is found in the fragment of the archaic Welsh "Ymddiddan rhwng Arthur a Gwenhwyfar" [Conversation between Arthur and Guinevere], in which Arthur's wife Gwenhwyfar, lit. 'white phantom', is said to have been abducted by the giant Melwas. See Rejhon, "Hu Gadarn" 204-05. In other Celtic versions of this abduction, the giant figure bears names that mean 'warrior' (209).

characters who bear Germanic names, but it is couched in a Romance tongue and is generically cognate with the *chanson de geste*. The versification of the latter most probably derives, like its language, from Vulgar Latin. The reason why the exploits of descendants of the Gothic invaders of the sixth century were sung about in the epic is most likely not that those invaders introduced the genre itself into Spain. Rather it is that the subject of epic in most societies is typically the exploits of the ruling castes and the Visigoths" progeny ruled Spain until the Arab invasion, ruled the Christian refuges in the north after the Arab conquest, and ruled the lands retaken from the Arabs after the Reconquest.

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Appendix: References

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