



Gregorio Cortez

*“With His Pistol
in His Hand”*

A BORDER BALLAD AND ITS HERO



by Américo Paredes

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decía en su voz divina,
—Mis armas no las entrego
hasta estar en bartolina.

27

Ya agarraron a Cortez,
ya terminó la cuestión,
la pobre de su familia
lo lleva en el corazón.

28

Ya con ésta me despedido
a la sombra de un ciprés,
aquí se acaba cantando
el corrido de Cortez.

1

En el condado del Carmen
miren lo que ha sucedido,
murió el Cherife Mayor,
quedando Román herido.

2

Otro día por la mañana,
cuando la gente llegó,
unos a los otros dicen:
—No saben quién lo mató.

3

Se anduvieron informando
como tres horas después,
supieron que el malhechor
era Gregorio Cortez.

4

Ya insortaron a Cortez
por toditito el estado,
que vivo o muerto lo aprehendan
porque a varios ha matado.

5

Decía Gregorio Cortez

"With His Pistol in His Hand"

He said in his godly voice,
"I won't surrender my arms
Until I'm inside a jail."

Now they have taken Cortez,
Now matters are at an end;
His poor family
Are suffering in their hearts.

Now with this I say farewell,
In the shade of a cypress tree;
This is the end of the singing
Of the ballad of Cortez.

Variant A

In the county of El Carmen
Look what has happened;
The Major Sheriff died,
Leaving Román badly wounded.

The next day, in the morning,
When people arrived,
They said to one another,
"It is not known who killed him."

They went around asking ques-
tions,
About three hours afterward;
They found that the wrongdoer
Had been Gregorio Cortez.

Now they have outlawed Cortez,
Throughout the whole state;
Let him be taken, dead or alive;
He has killed several men.

Then said Gregorio Cortez,

Variants of Gregorio Cortez

con su pistola en la mano: With his pistol in his hand,
—No siento haberlo matado, "I don't regret that I killed him;
al que siento es a mi hermano. I regret my brother's death."

6

Decía Gregorio Cortez Then said Gregorio Cortez,
con su alma muy encendida: And his soul was all aflame,
—No siento haberlo matado, "I don't regret that I killed him;
la defensa es permitida. A man must defend himself."

7

Venían los americanos The Americans were coming;
que por el viento volaban They seemed to fly through the air;
porque se iban a ganar Because they were going to get
tres mil pesos que les daban. Three thousand dollars they were
offered.

8

Tiró con rumbo a Gonzales, He struck out for Gonzales;
varios cherifes lo vieron, Several sheriffs saw him;
no lo quisieron seguir They decided not to follow
porque le tuvieron miedo. Because they were afraid of him.

9

Venían los perros jaunes, The bloodhounds were coming,
venían sobre la huella, They were coming on the trail,
pero alcanzar a Cortez But overtaking Cortez
era seguir a una estrella. Was like following a star.

10

Decía Gregorio Cortez: Then said Gregorio Cortez,
—¿Pa' qué se valen de planes? "What is the use of your scheming?
Si no pueden agarrarme You cannot catch me,
ni con esos perros jaunes. Even with those bloodhounds."

11

Decían los americanos: Then the Americans said,
—Si lo alcanzamos ¿qué If we catch up with him, what shall
haremos? we do?
Si le entramos por derecho If we fight him man to man,
muy poquitos volveremos. Very few of us will return."

12

Se fué de Brownsville al From Brownsville he went to the
rancho, ranch,

lo alcanzaron a rodear,
poquitos más de trescientos,
y allí les brincó el corral.

13

Allá por El Encinal,
según lo que aquí se dice,
se agarraron a balazos
y les mató otro cherife.

14

Decía Gregorio Cortez
con su pistola en la mano:
—No corran, rinches cobardes,
con un solo mexicano.

15

Tiró con rumbo a Laredo
sin ninguna timidez:
—Sígueme, rinches cobardes,
yo soy Gregorio Cortez.

16

Gregorio le dice a Juan
en el rancho del Ciprés:
—Platicame qué hay de nuevo,
yo soy Gregorio Cortez.

17

Gregorio le dice a Juan:
—Muy pronto lo vas a ver,
anda y dile a los cherifes
que me vengán a aprehender.

18

Cuando llegan los cherifes
Gregorio se presentó:
—Por la buena sí me llevan,
porque de otro modo no.

19

Ya agarraron a Cortez,
ya terminó la cuestión,

"With His Pistol in His Hand"

They succeeded in surrounding
him;
Quite a few more than three hun-
dred,
But there he jumped their corral.

Over by El Encinal,
According to what we hear,
They got into a gunfight,
And he killed them another sheriff.

Then said Gregorio Cortez,
With his pistol in his hand,
"Don't run, you cowardly rangers,
From just one Mexican."

He struck out for Laredo
Without showing any fear,
"Follow me, cowardly rangers,
I am Gregorio Cortez."

Gregorio says to Juan,
At the Cypress Ranch,
"Tell me the news;
I am Gregorio Cortez."

Gregorio says to Juan,
"You will see it happen soon;
Go call the sheriffs
So they can come and arrest me."

When the sheriffs arrive,
Gregorio gave himself up,
"You take me because I'm willing,
But not any other way."

Now they have taken Cortez,
Now matters are at an end;

Variants of Gregorio Cortez

la pobre de su familia
la lleva en el corazón.

20

Ya con ésta me despido
a la sombra de un ciprés,
aquí se acaba cantando
la tragedia de Cortez.

1

Pongan cuidado, señores,
la desgracia ha sucedido,
murió el Cherife Mayor
quedando Román herido.

2

Otro día por la mañana
cuando la gente se juntó,
unos a los otros se dicen:
—No saben quién lo mató.

3

Decía Gregorio Cortez
con su pistola en la mano:
—No siento haberte matado,
lo que siento es a mi hermano.

4

Decía Gregorio Cortez
con su alma muy encendida:
—No siento haberte matado,
la defensa es permitida.

5

Decían los americanos
con muchísima timidez:
—Vamos a seguir la huella
que el malhechor es Cortez.

6

—Si lo alcanzamos ¿qué le
haremos,

His poor family
Are suffering in their hearts.

Now with this I say farewell,
In the shade of a cypress,
This is the end of the singing
Of the ballad about Cortez.

Variant B

Gentlemen, give your attention,
The misfortune has occurred;
The Major Sheriff died,
Leaving Román badly wounded.

The next day, in the morning,
When people arrived;
They said to one another,
"It is not known who killed him."

Then said Gregorio Cortez,
With his pistol in his hand,
"I don't regret that I killed you;
I regret my brother's death."

Then said Gregorio Cortez,
And his soul was all aflame,
"I don't regret that I killed you;
A man must defend himself."

Then the Americans said,
With a lot of fear,
"Come, let us follow the trail;
The wrongdoer is Cortez."

"If we catch up with him, what
shall we do to him?"