



Review

Reviewed Work(s): Manuscript Diversity, Meaning and Variance in Juan Manuel's "El Conde Lucanor" by Laurence de Looze

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narratives outside of their generic restrictions. Juárez makes sure her work is understood within the general critical perspective and carefully recapitulates the progression of criticism in each chapter. The great number of external references in her work is an advantage for those researching the topic and looking for a well-documented starting point. Consequently, those who have acquired extensive familiarity with such debate will have to deal with a great amount of repetitive materials. For instance, the chapter dedicated to the analysis of clothing the subject in the *Lazarillo de Tormes* offers very little innovation on the part of the author. Her conclusions often reaffirm and confirm those of previously acclaimed works that have now become references in the field. But it is hardly avoidable given the amount of scholarship on the interpretation of clothing and its central function in the novel, particularly in the *Tratado Tercero* where Lázaro finds himself serving the *escudero*. But as Juárez underlines, *Lazarillo* is the “modelo” for the body she has selected. As we progress in her work, we find more innovations on her part, with the exception of her chapter of Quevedo’s *Buscón*. Her discussion of identity construction in relation to the economy of clothing in the *Guzmán*, however, offers enlightening interpretation concerning the conflictive nature of clothes and the perception of the “undressed” body as a negated entity. In the second part of the work, the author offers more personal input as she does not have to deal with the weight of a critical tradition such as that of the picaresque novel.

The synthetic nature of her chapters is extremely appreciated, as well as her clarity and straightforwardness.

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Looze, Laurence de. *Manuscript Diversity, Meaning and Variance in Juan Manuel’s El Conde Lucanor*. Toronto: U of Toronto P, 2006. Pp. 358. ISBN 0-8020-9057-5.

Laurence de Looze’s study on *El Conde Lucanor* reminded me of a fond moment from a medieval survey class in graduate school. My teacher, the indefatigable and generous Brian Dutton, explained how he had resolved a problem that plagued previous editions of a Berceo text. He knew the original could not have been “*más sabrosas me saben que unas espinacas*” [they are tastier to me than spinach], but must have been “*más sabrosas me saben que uvas espinaças*” [they are tastier to me than gooseberries]. By working from two eighteenth-century manuscripts, Dutton used his knowledge of medieval botany and Spanish medieval texts to reconstruct the original wording because the medieval manuscript was lost.

Laurence de Looze begins his study departing from that same common problem that many medievalists must face. The original manuscript does not exist. De Looze’s point of departure for studying *El Conde Lucanor*, though, is radically different from Dutton’s. In his study de Looze is not interested in reconstructing the lost manuscript. de Looze does not reject the deft linguistic detective work that characterizes traditional medieval philology, but does make a concerted argument that the modern editor of the medieval text must not assert an authoritative original where none exists. Of the early manuscripts of the *El Conde Lucanor* none should be privileged as the most authoritative since each is equally an important witness to aspects of medieval culture and legitimate as a medieval performance.

De Looze’s highly original, evocative study is geared most especially for scholars and graduate students with a general interest in Spanish medieval literature. *Manuscript Diversity* contains a chart that summarizes the salient features of nine different pre-seventeenth-century versions of *El Conde Lucanor*, an appendix that includes nine reproductions of representative pages from those versions, an appendix that includes the manuscript orderings of the exempla, endnotes, works cited and an index. De Looze’s descriptions of the different manuscripts are intended to situate the text within the differential relations of the manuscript world. One manuscript for instance is an aesthetic object, perpetuating the literary heritage of the author, Juan Manuel. The appearance of one manuscript as a private letter and the presence of doodlings in another, in turn, suggest quite different medieval ideologies from that of an untouchable

officially-sanctioned art book.

El Conde Lucanor contains five books: Book I contains fifty exempla; Book II contains 100 proverbs; Book III contains 50 proverbs; Book IV contains 30 proverbs; and Book V interprets the world as a text to be read for one's salvation. De Looze divides *Manuscript Diversity* in four parts. Part One introduces the different manuscripts and modern editions of *El Conde Lucanor*. Part Two examines Book I of *El Conde Lucanor*. Book I of *El Conde Lucanor* is the part of *El Conde Lucanor* with which readers are most familiar: the count Lucanor seeks advice from his wise counselor Patronio. De Looze focuses on a discussion of meaning in Book I. His principal position is that the didacticism of the text is drastically different from an eighteenth-century enlightenment model in which neat answers are given with logical clarity and concision. Instead, the didacticism of *El Conde Lucanor* is to make the reader a hermeneutician who must undertake a slow, arduous process of interpretation.

Critics have for the most part treated only Book I. Part III and Part IV of *Manuscript Diversity* cover fresh, uncharted territory since they treat Books II through V of *El Conde Lucanor*. With the comfort of narration gone after Book I, de Looze argues that *El Conde Lucanor* slides deliberately toward obscurity. The proverbs become more and more difficult, challenging the reader even further. De Looze sees Book V as a final stage for the hermeneutical challenge presented throughout *El Conde Lucanor*. Paralleling Dante's *Paradise*, Book V is the culmination of an increasingly difficult interpretative path that brings one to realize that one must take responsibility for meaning in one's life text.

Some medievalists may shun de Looze's non-literal reading of the Book V salvation motif and will label his description of the didacticism in *El Conde Lucanor* as a postmodern imposition on a medieval text. Indeed, de Looze opens himself to that criticism by suggesting that, like Jacques Derrida, Juan Manuel meditates on language and signification and that *El Conde Lucanor* works in a similar way as the twentieth-century metafictional novel. But de Looze daringly challenges solidified assumptions about *El Conde Lucanor* and medieval studies more generally. Hispanic studies have been enriched by the work of the careful eye of those like Brian Dutton who work to reconstruct the original lost text. Likewise, and paradoxically, Hispanic studies is also enriched by de Looze's pioneering study of *El Conde Lucanor*. De Looze adroitly critiques approaches that reduce the text to an "ideal original" when fertile variations exist.

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Mónica, Maria Filomena. *Eça de Queiroz*. Woodbridge, U.K.: Tamesis, 2005. 429 pp + xviii. ISBN 1-855-6611-52.

A first-rate biography that traces the life of Portugal's most important nineteenth-century novelist, Maria Filomena Mónica's *Eça de Queiroz* provides an English-speaking audience with an important and accessible resource on one of Portuguese history's most complex intellectuals. Mónica's approach includes facets of Eça's life beyond that of the novelist for which most of us know him, shedding light on his activities as a political commentator, consul, traveler, essayist, father and illegitimate (or rather legitimized) son.

Mónica divides her work into three parts. The first, "The Early Years, in Portugal," deals with the peculiar circumstances surrounding Eça's birth—the unwillingness of his parents initially to acknowledge him—and subsequently traces the childhood and adolescent influences on the writer, his formative years as a student at Coimbra, his discovery of the Portuguese capital, and his time spent in what he considered Portuguese backwaters. It also tackles Eça's trip to the Middle East, in the company of his future brother-in-law, the Count of Resende, as well as the famous Casino Lectures which first brought Eça to national prominence as a member of the "Generation of 1870."

The second part, "The Wider World," documents Eça's deployment as Portuguese consul in Cuba, Newcastle and Bristol, and intertwines résumés of Eça's most famous literary creations