

DON JUAN MANUEL, *Libro del cavallero e del escudero*. Edición y estudio de Mario Cossío Olavide, prólogo de Carlos Heusch. Madrid: Iberoamericana/Frankfurt am Main: Vervuert. 2022. xcix + 129 pp.

The annotated critical edition of the *Libro del cavallero e del escudero* that Mario Cossío Olavide has published for *Medievalia Hispánica* represents a solid contribution to the study of Don Juan Manuel's creative works. Cossío Olavide, whose dissertation confronted Juan Manuel's *mundo cortesano* (University of Minnesota, 2020), is an up-and-coming scholar who has already contributed in significant ways to the study of this seminal author. Not surprisingly then, he has been named a co-editor of the forthcoming *Companion to Don Juan Manuel* which is to be published by Brill. This edition, with its focus on one of Juan Manuel's earliest and more problematic texts, should find a receptive audience among specialists in Medieval Iberia.

The edition contains a Prologue by Carlos Heusch followed by a thorough and detailed Introduction by Cossío Olavide. In the Prologue, entitled 'La insólita "primera" obra de Juan Manuel', Heusch defines the different periods in Don Juan Manuel's literary career, discusses the fundamental position that the *Libro del cavallero e del escudero* holds within Juan Manuel's literary production, and highlights important aspects of the text. The Prologue, however, makes no apparent reference to Cossío Olavide's edition so readers should not expect it to dialogue with or provide context for the edition itself.

The Introduction itself takes up such topics as the biographical profile of Don Juan Manuel, this work's role as a 'pequeña enciclopedia aristocrática' (xxxv), the manuscript transmission of the work, its editorial history and Cossío Olavide's criteria for the edition. The first of these is particularly elucidating as it describes in great detail how Juan Manuel learned the ephemeral nature of power at the age of fourteen, how he sought to cultivate his own influence through political alliances and his role in educating Alfonso XI, and was then spectacularly betrayed by the young king. Combined with other instabilities, this reversal of his personal situation in 1325–1326 provides a crucial context for Juan Manuel to turn to writing as a means of responding to these challenges. The first work Juan Manuel produced was the *Libro del cavallero e del escudero*, written between 1326–1327. Cossío Olavide effectively suggests that the work is not simply designed to educate the nobility, but to establish Juan Manuel as an author and gain the favour of his brother-in-law and the Archbishop of Toledo, Juan de Aragón. As Cossío Olavide observes, Juan Manuel 'encontró en la escritura una herramienta para solucionar el caos imperante en Castilla' (xxx).

This context is important because the *Libro del cavallero e del escudero* is not the most engaging or accessible of Juan Manuel's works. There are several reasons for this. On the one hand, it is an often contradictory text that is both critical of Alfonso el Sabio even as it betrays clear influence from him. It seeks to communicate wisdom to the young *escudero* even as its author often eschews book learning in favour of practical experience. The book acknowledges the importance of kings even as it ultimately seeks to empower the aristocracy. As a result, the text itself provides a problematic education for the *escudero*. Cossío Olavide effectively describes these tensions in the Introduction, but, in many cases, leaves the reader to discover these tensions without the benefit of extensive annotations to the text itself.

The second challenge is that the one surviving manuscript of the *Libro del cavallero e del escudero* contains numerous lacunae. They range from the occasional missing word to a long lacuna that begins in Chapter 3 and ends in Chapter 16. To the edition's credit, Cossío Olavide seeks to bring the reader closer to an accessible and accurate version of the text. To do this, he incorporates as much modern criticism on Juan Manuel as possible in order to privilege what the author intended over what was actually transcribed. Through careful study of the existing manuscript, Cossío Olavide corrects many of the errors in the editions published by scholars over the last two centuries and, where possible, seeks to reconstruct the lost literary material using Juan Manuel's own source material or other works by the author. While certainly helpful in reconstructing the textuality of the text, these actions could be more transparent through the use of bold, italicized or bracketed script.

These minor critiques aside, the edition represents an important update to and correction of earlier editions of the *Libro del cavallero e del escudero*. It includes a thirty-page Bibliography listing primary and secondary sources and previous editions of this work and other works by Juan Manuel. In addition, Cossío Olavide supplies many enlightening annotations that provide insight into Juan Manuel's thought, ranging from his criticism of the intellectual decadence of the nobility and his views on the education of young aristocrats, to his support for practical knowledge and even his total disinterest in fishing!

JOHN C. PARRACK

*University of Central Arkansas.*

