

## REVIEWS

BIZZARRI, HUGO OSCAR, ed. *Diálogo de Epicteto y el emperador Adriano (Derivaciones de un texto escolar en el siglo XIII)*. Frankfurt: Vervuert; Madrid: Iberoamericana, 1995. 134 pp.

It is a telling paradox that often the most valuable work produced by literary historians of medieval Spain does not have much to do with what is commonly considered medieval Spanish literature. This work instead forces us to face facts. Among other things, it challenges us to begin to understand the profound effects of extra-Iberian literary cultures upon medieval Spain, and prods us to open the floodgates to the vast corpus of Latin *scripta* found in libraries throughout the peninsula. As the goal of such work is to provide a more global, complex understanding of medieval literary culture as it manifested itself in Spain, it openly challenges entrenched definitions of literature and culture.

In this volume Hugo O. Bizzarri presents an excellent example of such challenging scholarship. He offers compelling evidence that question-and-answer dialogues, such as the *Diálogo de Epicteto y el emperador Adriano*, belong to a literary genre that was well-developed in Castile as early as the latter half of the 13th century. Bizzarri notes that his book is "preocupado por trazar el desarrollo de una forma literaria que los historiadores de la literatura diluyen y confunden entre

otras manifestaciones similares, cuando no las desatienden”(23), and he proves that this “forma literaria” deserves individual, careful study.

In the volume’s introduction, Bizzarri outlines the development of question-and-answer dialogues from their beginnings in the Greco-Byzantine *Erotapokriseis* (literally “question-answer”) tradition to their development within Romance literature. He begins with a study of the didactic form itself, noting the prominent role that dialogues such as *Historia o capítulo de la doncella Teodor*, *Diálogo del filósofo Segundo y el emperador Adriano*, and *Diálogo de Epicteto y el emperador Adriano* had within that larger genre. He then focuses upon the *Epicteto* and its place within scholastic tradition, explaining its long and gradual metamorphosis from our earliest point of reference for it, the well-known *Joca monachorum*.

Bizzarri concludes his critical introduction with a brief analysis. He observes that these dialogues, “orientados más hacia un fin práctico que artístico,” offer an open system of questions and answers concerned not with “la construcción arquitectónica global de la obra,” but with the elaboration of the questions themselves (23). An interesting paradox that Bizzarri brings up is that although these dialogues were not popular in nature, the questions and answers that they contain exist in many variants. Only the narrative shell of the dialogues—the introductory passages, the identity of the participants and their fates—does not vary. That these dialogues contain fixed narratives alongside didactic passages which exist in variations, and that they were utilized by a learned, scholastic audience, could shed much light on the dynamic relationship between oral and written literature in medieval Castile. This fact also forcefully raises questions about our notions regarding the separation of learned and popular culture and the beginnings of

narrative.

From his introductory critical passages Bizzarri provides a detailed bibliography that should prove indispensable to anyone interested in doing further study on this subject, although this reader would add to it Charles Faulhaber's *Latin Rhetorical Theory in Thirteenth and Fourteenth Century Castile* (Berkeley: UCP, 1972). Faulhaber's volume serves as a crucial development of Edmond Faral's arguments in *Les arts poétiques du XIIe et du XIIIe siècle. Recherches et documents sur la technique littéraire du Moyen Age* (Paris: Champion, 1924; repr. 1962), which Bizzarri lists in his bibliography. Nor should works such as John Dagenais's "A Further Source for the Literary Ideas in Juan Ruiz's Prologue" (*JHP* XI, 1 (1986): 23-52), and Daniel Eisenberg's "The *General estoria*: Sources and Source Treatment" (*ZRPh* 89 (1973): 206-37) be excluded from any bibliography on the topic of "textos sapientiales" in medieval Castile, although they too are absent from this volume's bibliography.

The manuscript portions that Bizzarri studies in this volume are BNM ms. 10011 (formerly BCT ms. 98-2), f. 74r—79v; BNM ms. 17657, f. 139v—147r; British Library ms. Egerton 939, f. 19r—24r; and BNM Vit. 7-17, f. 74v. He presents these portions in transcribed form with footnotes, concordances, and excellent commentary. In his commentary he compares not only the questions and answers of each manuscript with those of the the other two, but also traces their sources in either the Latin or French *Enfant sage* tradition. This allows the reader to grasp immediately the scope of the genre and understand the relationship among these dialogues.

Questions remain however, with regard to this volume's presentation of the manuscript portions. There are benefits to extracting these question-and-answer dialogues from their manuscripts and placing

them together in one volume so as to be studied generically, but there is also much that is lost in such a study. We must keep in mind that these dialogues are themselves constituent parts of larger manuscript codices. Also, we must take into account the organizational scheme of each manuscript as a whole before we remove portions of them from their proper literary context. As an example we may use the Castilian portion of BNM ms. 10011 (a Catalan surgical treatise, written in a different hand and almost certainly bound together with the Castilian portion at a much later date, occupies the first 34 folios). It is a very large manuscript which deals with everything from ethical philosophy, astrology, metaphysics and physics, to geography, a letter from Alexander the Great's father to his son, and finally the *Epictetus* dialogue studied in Bizzarri's volume. Given the size and scope of this manuscript, the extraction of six folios from it because they satisfy modern readers' notions of "text" is risky. BNM ms. 10011 doesn't separate the *Epictetus* by rubrics or initials, and there is no indication within the manuscript that it was ever studied or read independently from the other 50-odd folios. For proof of this we need only consult what the scribe of BNM ms. 10011 has to say about why the works are gathered here and ordered in the way they are. He writes, between a lengthy exposition on natural philosophy based mostly on the physics chapters of al-Ghazali's *Maqasid al-falasifa* and a letter written to Alexander the Great by his father (the *Epictetus* begins directly after the latter):

[fol. 61v]

{CB1.

...et por aq<ue>sta Raso<n> a/uemos dicho en

p<ar>tida delas  
 c<ri>at<ur>as/ de dios asi com<m>o delos ang<e>les  
 & delos/ cielos & delos hele[me]ntos delas ot<ra>s/  
 cosas q<ue> son fechos del porq<ue> poda/ mos dezir  
 & c<er>tificar en aq<ue>ste libro/ alg<una>s cosas  
 dela natu<ra> d<e>l om<n>e et por/Rason q<ue> el  
 ordenamje<n>to de aq<ue>ste lib<ro>/sea fecho  
 segu<n>t el derecho ordenamje<n><to>...}

The scribe tells his reader in this passage that his discourse is to be seen as a seamless argument which follows the "derecho ordenamiento" of God's created universe; thus, by extracting pieces of that argument one sacrifices the context in which those portions were intended to be presented.

To this volume's credit it does present information on the rest of BNM ms. 10011. This information, however, seems to be taken wholly from José M. Millás Vallicrosa's *Las traducciones orientales en los manuscritos de la Biblioteca Catedral de Toledo*, an invaluable but necessarily limited study of 52 manuscripts from the Biblioteca Catedral published in 1941.

In conclusion, this reader feels that this volume offers a crucial first attempt at understanding these question-and-answer dialogues. Its fault lies merely in not taking the study one step further to include the overall manuscript tradition in which these dialogues are found. But such a problem also opens many doors: It serves as an invitation to future scholars to fill in more of the "hueco que la Historia literaria aún no ha llenado" (133), and begs further research into what Bizzarri has proven to be an interesting and possibly very illuminating genre

within the generous feast of medieval Spanish letters.

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