

The *Other-for-Me*: The Construction of Saladin in *El conde Lucanor*¹

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The first collection of *frametales* written in a Romance language, the first part of the *Libro de los enxiemplos del Conde Lucanor et de Patronio* (= *CL*) is remarkable, largely due to its critical reformulation of a wide variety of materials, which originated in quite different literary and linguistic traditions of the ancient and medieval worlds. Juan Manuel learned from the didactic *frametales* collections popular in thirteenth-century Castile, such as *Calila e Dimna* and *Sendebar*, and wisdom literature like the *Bocados de oro* and the *Poridat de las poridades*.

As is the case with most medieval collections of exemplary prose, *CL* is a veritable treasure trove of diverse manifestations of didactic and moralizing literature, folkloric wisdom, but also of other literary genres and forms associated with education during the Middle Ages. Demonstrating the same familiarity with which he presents stories borrowed from sermon collections of the post-Lateran period, Juan Manuel also uses *historias* of the lives of Muslim rulers along with those of Christian kings of Castile and León, and delved into European, North African, and Middle Eastern folklore. Thanks to these heterogeneous source materials, *CL* illustrates the dynamics of circulation of knowledge between Latin Europe and the Islamic Mediterranean in the Middle Ages.

In this article, I focus on two episodes from the collection, *enxiemplos* 25 and 50, both tales of Mediterranean crossings that feature the Ayyubid sultan Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn (1138-93 A.D./532-89 A.H., = Saladin) as their main character. I explore the connections between these stories and relevant Mediterranean narratives that could have inspired Juan Manuel, including historical and literary accounts of Saladin's deeds and the Third Crusade, chivalric poetry, and *frametales* and wisdom literature translated in the Iberian Peninsula during the thirteenth century.

My aim is to problematize recent scholarly interpretations of the *enxiemplos* as critical representations of Saladin.² In *CL* Saladin constitutes an idealized vision of the historical Ayyubid leader, already present in the medieval European imagination, and further elaborated by Juan Manuel. Rather than using him as a polemical figure to criticize Islam and Iberian Muslims, Juan Manuel reformulates previous accounts of the sultan to create an ideal image against which Castilian nobles were to be measured, paying special attention to representations of the various educations undergone by Christians around Saladin.

Venturing into the meaning of the Mediterranean –and more broadly, the interreligious– crossings depicted in these stories, I propose that they originate in and reflect the author's life, both as a reader of a variety of Mediterranean texts and as one of the major political figures in fourteenth-century Castile. Establishing authorial intent is not an enterprise free from dangers, however, and is in fact a particularly troublesome task in light of the warnings raised by numerous Structuralist critics. This practice also has a problematic past in Juan Manuel studies.³ Nonetheless, as Alan Deyermond observed, for Juan Manuel, “el elemento autobiográfico es tan obvio en varias obras (incluso se proclama explícitamente en algunas) que una lectura que lo pase por alto resultaría gravemente defectuosa” (2001, 226).

¹ I would like to thank Michelle Hamilton, Anita Savo, and Emma Snowden for reading previous versions of this article, and for their invaluable comments and suggestions.

² For the negative portrayal of Saladin in *CL*, see Adams (2012, 163 & 2016, 415-6).

³ As Funes writes (2000, 128). See Devoto (364-5), Deyermond (2001, 226-7), and Funes (2007, 7-9) for a complete review of the dangers of biographism in Juan Manuel studies.

To understand the didacticism of Juan Manuel's works it is often necessary to read them in the context of his life, a task that does not obscure their overarching Christian didactic message. It should not be surprising that such a calculating figure, an expert in matters of war and peace with the neighboring Nasrids of Granada but also firm a defender of the politics of the Castilian *Reconquista*, used these Arabic-inspired stories to project a colonial discourse of domination over the remaining Muslim populations of Iberia.⁴ But in doing so, he was unable to conceal the other side of the colonial dynamic: the desire of the colonizer to possess and appropriate the positive attributes he perceived in the demonized other, seen as a mirror image of himself.⁵

The Mirror for Princes

Enxiemplo 25 tells the story of a Provençal count, “conde de Provençia” (102), prisoner of Saladin, “soldán de Babilonia” (102), after a failed expedition to the Holy Land. During his captivity, the count earns the sultan's trust and respect and becomes his advisor. Having been tasked with selecting the best husband for his daughter in Provence, the count turns to Saladin for help. Following the sultan's advice, the count chooses an otherwise unremarkable young nobleman rather than the a king or a great lord, whose only distinction was that he did not share the faults common to the nobility. After the marriage, the son-in-law sails with a fleet of ships from Provence to Saladin's court, with the goal of rescuing the count and reuniting him with his family. En route to the Levant, he makes an extended stop in the Armenian kingdom of Cilicia, where he learns Arabic and the rules of etiquette needed to enter the sultan's court.

Alone with Saladin during a hunt, he captures the sultan. The young man negotiates the release of the count and their safe return to Provence. Instead of showing displeasure at the trickery, Saladin celebrates the success of the bridegroom's plot, as it demonstrates that his advice had indeed led the count to select the best husband for his daughter—a man who brought him the greatest prize, freedom.

The *enxiemplo* is inspired by literary works centered on the crusades—which enjoyed a great deal of popularity in Europe thanks to their social and geographical descriptions of the Holy Land—and historical accounts of the crusades, especially those concerning Saladin and the Third Crusade.⁶ While it is always difficult to ascertain Juan Manuel's sources,⁷ there is no doubt that he found inspiration in some of these Hierosolymitan- and crusading-centered narratives: his main character is a Frankish (Provençal) nobleman who leads an expedition to retake the Holy Land, only to be captured by the forces defending Jerusalem.

The count's defeat and captivity also evoke the fate of Frankish noblemen imprisoned by Muslim forces during the Third Crusade, such as Baldwin of Ibelin and Guy of Lusignan, who

⁴ Juan Manuel's interactions with the Nasrids have been documented by Deyermond (1985, 28-29), Giménez Soler (29-118), Flory (59-63), and Orduna (250-9).

⁵ The oscillation in the colonial gaze, or “colonial dissonance,” is studied by Bhabha (102-21) and Young (21-4). Similar discussions have been brought forth in medieval Iberian studies by Barkai (13) and Rubiera (2008, 355-8), and in Juan Manuel studies by Wacks (129-57). This conception—at least in Bhabha—is influenced by Mikhail Bakhtin's description of the formation of the subject (and the author) in aesthetic activity from the gained surplus of vision provided to the self by the other (1990, 22-7). What the other sees of the me (the *I-for-Other*) is always reflected and complemented in what I see in the other (the *Other-for-Me*).

⁶ The main source for crusading material is William of Tyre's *Historia Ierosolymitana* and its many French continuations, the *Itinerarium peregrinorum et gesta regis Ricardi*, and later accounts and translations like Jacques de Vitry's *Historia Hierosolymitana* and the Castilian *Gran conquista de Ultramar*.

⁷ In relation to the *oscurecimiento* of Juan Manuel's sources, see Lacarra (297), Lida de Malkiel (1950, 181), and Macpherson (8-9).

were used as bargaining chips in negotiations for the withdrawal of troops and the surrender of cities, or alternately were ransomed or exchanged for other valuable prisoners.⁸ But in *CL*, instead of thinking in terms of military or strategic advantage, Saladin makes the count his main advisor in recognition of his lineage and good education: “sabiendo Saladín la grand bondat del conde, faziale mucho bien et mucha onra; et todos los grandes fechos que avía de fazer, todos los fazía por su consejo” (103).

The same type of interaction between Saladin and one of his Christian captives appears in the thirteenth-century French chivalric poem *L'Ordene de chevalerie*. The poem tells the story of a Frankish count, Huon de Tabarié, who was captured during the Battle of Hattin and taught Saladin the art of chivalry. In *L'Ordene*:

Autre chose si est por voir,
 que par cest dit puet on savoir
 qu'il avint au conte Huon,
 qui molt fu sages et preudom :
 Salahadins molt l'onora
 por ce que preudon le trova
 et si le fist molt honorer. (vv. 483-7)

[Another thing is truly that by this poem one can learn what happened to Count Hue, who was a very wise man, and worthy: Saladin honored him much because he found him to be a worthy man, and caused much honor to be done him. (175)]

In both stories, the positions and honors granted to the Frankish knights are signs of the sultan's deference towards them on account of their education and social status, but the knights are also paying a “ransom” of knowledge to Saladin.⁹ *L'Ordene*, unlike the *enxiemplo*, takes a strong polemical tone against Islam and, in particular, against Saladin (vv. 75-95). This tension in the portrayal of Saladin resolves itself towards the end of the poem with the veiled suggestion that the sultan has converted to Christianity in order to be knighted.¹⁰ Juan Manuel, on the other hand, avoids the thorny issue of religion in his depiction of Saladin, focusing exclusively on political and cultural matters. By naming the count his advisor, Saladin shows him even more deference than he does to his own men, putting the count in a position of privilege in the microcosm of the court.¹¹

⁸ For prisoners and ransoms during the Third Crusade, see Cipollone (203-23), Friedman (82-9), Hillenbrand (1999, 553-6), Ligato (650-2), and Richard (2003, 63-73).

⁹ Friedman suggests this debt of knowledge in relation to *L'Ordene* (227). The high regard Saladin shows for the Christian knights in both tales is the product of European self-representation rather than Muslim perceptions of the Frankish crusaders, which are studied by Albarrán (181-2), Eddé (368-70), and Hillenbrand (1999, 259-82).

¹⁰ The motif of Saladin being knighted appears in numerous works of crusading literature, like the *Itinerarium* of king Richard (I, 3).

¹¹ While Saladin was not a caliph, his court, like that of his predecessor Nūr al-Dīn, was modeled after the caliphal courts of the 'Abbasids, and to a lesser extent Fatimids ('Azzām 237-8, Eddé 414). The center of medieval Islamic courts was the caliph, who was surrounded by several concentric rings of increasing size formed by learned individuals who carried out governmental functions: well-educated aristocrats, military and religious authorities, artists and *littérateurs* under his patronage, as well as armies of servants, bureaucrats, functionaries, philosophers, and scientists (Barceló 58-63; Buresi & El Aallaoui 212-4; El Cheikh 2011, 200-2 & 2014, 84-5; Marín 472; Sourdél 213-5). Those individuals who were closer to the ruler, especially those who enjoyed a personal rapport with him, occupied a superior position in the internal hierarchy of the court (Ali 82; El Cheikh 2013, 150-3 & 2014, 86-7).

The position of the count in Saladin's court is also an acknowledgment of the universality of the condition of nobility. Taking into consideration the structure of medieval Islamic –and Christian– courts, Saladin's decision to make the count his advisor has important political implications. As a foreigner and non-Muslim in a space full of courtiers competing for the very position he had secured, his survival depended on his total allegiance to his patron, the only man capable of offering protection from courtly intrigues.

While the empowerment of a Christian figure in the *enxiemplo* might not be wholly grounded in the reality of Islamic courts, it reflects a common strategy used by rulers during the Middle Ages, that of placing individuals coming from religious minorities in positions of power to ensure their loyalty. Christian and Muslim Iberian sovereigns relied on minorities in their efforts to concentrate the power of the state in their hands and to protect themselves from their often rebellious nobles. In an attempt to curtail the powers and privileges of the Arab aristocracy of al-Andalus, the first Iberian Umayyad caliph, 'Abd al-Rahmān III, enlisted *mawālī* (clients and, in this case, recent Muslim converts) and Jews in the state bureaucracy and the military.¹² In thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Aragon and Castile, Jewish *alfaquimes* and advisors occupied important political and administrative roles, and enjoyed close contact with monarchs and members of the high nobility even as laws increasingly regulated and restricted their rights.¹³ In both periods, the clients' position and privileges depended on their continued loyalty to their patrons. Belonging to a religious minority meant they were less likely to rebel because their precarious social position prevented them from seeking the protection of another master.

Similar dynamics of interreligious clientage and protection appear in other *enxiemplos* of *CL*. *Enxiemplo* 1 brings together a pagan or Muslim minister and his loyal captive and *consejero*, *enxiemplo* 9 is set during the period when the *infante* Enrique served the king of Tunisia, and *enxiemplo* 11 pairs a *deán* –who was promoted to the office of archbishop, bishop, cardinal, and finally pope– and his servant and teacher, the necromancer of Toledo. In *CL* this type of inter-confessional patron-client relationship also reflects the dynamic of colonial dissonance, in which the colonizer aspires to dominate the other while also becoming more like him. In the *enxiemplos*, the presence and beliefs of these clients can be criticized –as in the case of the necromancer don Yllán, whose profession is contrary to the Christian orthodoxy represented by the *deán*– but their knowledge is used by their Christian patrons as a tool to improve their *estados*.

While many critics agree that Saladin in this story is the “máximo ejemplo de la astucia, inteligencia y dignidad” (Flory 48), Ana Adams has rejected this interpretation, arguing that:

Por el contrario, Saladín ni es *omne* ni conoce el verdadero significado de la palabra. Lejos de presentarlo como el caballero ideal, ambos ejemplos [25 and 50] subrayan humorísticamente la falta de entendimiento del sultán. Saladín es así un hombre imperfecto, y consecuentemente, un líder ingenuo e inadecuado. (2012, 150)

¹² For the politics of interreligious clientage in the caliphate of Córdoba, see Fierro (2005, 216-26), Monroe (1970, 5-9), and Scales (123-7).

¹³ *Alfaquimes* in Aragonese and Castilian courts have been studied by Assis (38-40), Baer (118-37 & 306-27), Caballero Navas (337-40), García Ballester (50-3), among others. García Ballester, Ferre and Feliu rescued a valuable Aragonese document that reveals the perceptions among Iberian Jewish medics of the privileges associated with their positions: “When I lived among the Christians, I was of an inferior condition in their eyes, for there is none of our nation who is honored in their eyes except him who is a physician and who cures them of their ills; in such a case, he sits at the table of kings and remains standing before them, whether he be of humble birth or of high rank...” (110).

I would argue, however, that the representation of Saladin is not more negative than that of other main characters in the collection, and in fact conforms to the narrative arc of most of Juan Manuel's *enxiemplos*.¹⁴ The main characters in all the stories in the collection set out on a path of learning in response to an initial problem, and ultimately acquire the skills needed to resolve their problem. In each of the stories, the main characters' ability to learn and change their behavior is a positive trait and a sign of true nobility. Far from presenting Saladin as an incomplete and naïve character, these *enxiemplos* establish him among the more positive characters of *CL*, those who are able to complete their *bildung* process and maintain or improve their *estado*. Saladin's importance is also reflected by the position of his stories (25, 50) in the book. *Enxiemplos* 1, 25 and 50, occupy symbolic and symmetrical positions in *CL*, inaugurating the collection, in the middle, and at the end, and represent stories of interreligious relations between pagan or Muslim authorities and their Christian advisors.¹⁵

The representation of the sultan in *CL* also coincides with a long tradition of positive European portrayals of Saladin, which has been studied by numerous scholars.¹⁶ Soon after the Third Crusade, literary representations of Saladin moved away from the *flagellum Domini* presented in William of Tyre's *Historia*, turning the man responsible for the end of the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem and the capture the True Cross into a new "epitome of chivalry, generosity, and tolerance" (Tolan 79). In European literature of the thirteenth century, Saladin emerged as a *perfectus vir* and a new model for Christian knights and kings.

In comparison to the idealized, and often Christianized, image of Saladin that appears in late medieval and renaissance European literature, in the Arabic histories and accounts of his life his chivalric attributes are the result of the implicit connection between rulership, religion, and high culture in medieval Islam.¹⁷ Reviewing some of these portrayals will be useful in comparing the role assigned to Saladin both in Muslim and Christian traditions.

Arabic representations of Saladin follow the norms of the *madīh* (panegyric) of the *qaṣīdā* and of Arabic biographies, both literary genres rooted in the patron-client relationship of rulers and *littérateurs* in classical Arab societies.¹⁸ In panegyric poetry and historical accounts, patrons such as Saladin are often represented as models of *adab*, beacons of moral excellence and religious virtue.¹⁹ Following this tradition, Ibn Shaddād, Saladin's biographer and one of his closest advisors, portrays him in *al-Nawādir al-Sultāniyya wa 'l-Maḥāsin al-Yūsufiyya* (*The Rare and Excellent History of Saladin*) as a leader familiar with old Arab lore, knowledgeable about famous pre-Islamic battles and horses, who always follows the norms of *adab* in court (35-8).

¹⁴ The basic narrative scheme of *CL* is analyzed by Diz (6-7) and Gómez Redondo (1156-9). In these *enxiemplos* Juan Manuel is using the same narrative scheme of Iberian chivalric romances, as studied by Ayerbe-Chaux (130-1), González (111-5), and Sturcken (83). This was a structure he inherited from French romances (Zumthor 356-9).

¹⁵ The issue of the *enxiemplos*' position has been studied by D'Agostino (238), Diz (37-8), Dunn (1991, 238-9 & 1996 97-8), and Sturm (167).

¹⁶ See Castro (22-44), Eddé (541-69), England (141-76), Hillenbrand (2005, 497-505), and Tolan (79-100).

¹⁷ For the connection between kingship and high culture in Islam, see Osti (201).

¹⁸ For the classical *qaṣīdā*, see Sperl (9-27) and for Muslim biographies –in particular around the time of Saladin– Rosenthal (1968, 104-5).

¹⁹ *Adab* is a polysemic word that can refer to the knowledge and mores that any good Muslim should possess and respect in his moral, cultural, and professional life (Fierro 2009, 87), it is an Arabo-Islamic equivalent of the Roman *urbanitas*, and it includes the norms of etiquette for eating and drinking, correct forms of dressing, etc. (Gabrieli). With regard to literature, it is used to describe the body of non-religious genres of prose and poetry that form the center of the Arabic cultural archive (Rosenthal 1970, 252-3), including wisdom literature. Samer Ali indicates the limitations of modern attempts to define it given its pragmatic, and rarely static, values in medieval times (34-5 & 216-7).

He is also described as an orthodox leader, echoing the titles and responsibilities he received from the 'Abbasid caliph al-Mustaḍī in his diploma of investiture: *al-Malik al-Nāṣir* (the victorious king), *al-'alīm* (the wise), and *al-'ādil* (the just).²⁰ Another of Saladin's courtiers, the celebrated Syrian poet and emir Usāmah ibn Munqidh, wrote a eulogy for him in the *Kitāb al-I'tibār* (*Book of Learning by Example*) which echoes this vision:

...our lord the Victorious King Salah al-Dunya wa'l-Din, Sultan of Islam and the Muslimin! Unifier of the creed of faith by his light, subjugator of the worshipers of the cross by his might, raiser of the banner of justice and right. The reviver of the dynasty of the Commander of the Faithful... [...]. The sultan who restored the example of the Rightly-Guided [caliphs]; a new pillar of religion and state he installed. (179-80)

In the eulogy, Saladin's perfection is the result of his military and political activities, which can only be understood from a religious standpoint. He is the unifier of Islam and reviver of the dynasty of the Commander of the Faithful (*amīr al-mu'minīn*, i.e. the 'Abbasid caliph) because he ended Shi'i Fatimid rule over Egypt, restoring and unifying, at least theoretically, Sunni Islam. He fought against Frankish and Christian crusaders and captured the Holy City of Jerusalem (al-Quds), becoming "the sword" of the Commander of the Believers and *al-mujāhid*, the one who wages *jihād*.²¹

Most of the virtues attributed to Saladin –generosity, piety, orthodoxy, justice, and clemency– are indebted to Arabic hagiographical literature and contribute to creating the image of a holy man and perfect leader in the Arabo-Islamic world in terms equally religious and political.²² During his early career he adopted the *laqab* (honorific) *Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn*, meaning "the rectitude of religion," by which he was known in Latin Christendom. This title would later be expanded to *Ṣalāḥ al-Dunyā wa-l-Dīn*, "the rectitude of the world and the faith." Neither aspect, religion or worldly politics, can be detached from his Islamic representations.

These accounts differ substantially from the Christian tradition that inspired *CL's enxiemplos*. Instead of being a model of Arabic *adab*, Saladin is turned into a leader of universal virtue through his cunning intelligence and knowledge, aspects that transcend any religious association. Jacques de Vitry portrays Saladin in a somewhat positive light in the *Historia orientalis*. This thirteenth-century text, which made its way to the Iberian Peninsula by the end of the same century, could be one of the possible sources for Juan Manuel's portrayal, as it also emphasizes Saladin's military expertise, wit, and generosity.²³

...aqueste Saladino, de sutil ingenio, osado en las armas, proveydo et acuçioso en las fazendas. Muy liberal et dadivoso, non solamente a los suyos, mas a algunos de los nuestros que por dones et promesas [fue] allegando a sí. (ff. 195r_b-195v_a)

The universalization of Saladin's knowledge and wisdom in his passage of the *Estoria*, as in other European *historias* and fictional accounts, is the result of Saladin's practical experience

²⁰ For his diploma of investiture, see Albarrán (148), Eddé (183-5), and Lyons & Jackson (98).

²¹ The commitment of Muslim officials to *jihād* during the crusades and its reflection in their titles is discussed by Frenkel (34-8).

²² Eddé discusses the influence of hagiographic literature in Saladin's portrayal at length (177-87).

²³ I quote from its oldest Spanish translation, the fourteenth-century *Estoria general de Gerusalem abreviada* (BNE MS/684), which has been studied by Cioba (1996 & 2003), and Muñoz Jiménez. The *Estoria* text closely follows the Latin *Historia* (422, lines 70-5).

and education, rather than his religious zeal. John Tolan maintains that this is the result of an effort to domesticate Saladin for European audiences (94). In the aftermath of the measures taken by the church to better define the doctrinal and juridical status of the crusades, and to address the situation of Muslims in Christian lands, materialized in the canons of the Council of Lateran IV and Innocent III's bull *Ad liberandam*, it is unlikely that Christian European audiences would have accepted a sultan as an exemplary figure without some adaptations.²⁴ Because of this, Tolan argues that there is "a tension in many of these texts between the desire to paint the ideal ruler in non-Christian, non-European colors and the need to squeeze him into more familiar canons of behavior" (94). Rather than a crusading symbol, the *historias* emphasize his universal virtuosity as a role-model. *Ab uno, disce omnes*.

However, in *CL*, the universality of his chivalric attributes is toned down. Rather, he is used as a model of practical values for fourteenth-century Castilian courtiers, "a lens through which his kingdom could scrutinise itself" (England 145). But in a story by Juan Manuel, an author perpetually concerned with how he was portrayed in his narrative, Saladin's character is, above all, a reflection of the author. At the closing of the story Saladin, the count, and the bridegroom are welcomed back to the court:

Et el soldán et el conde et cuantos esto sopieron loaron mucho el entendimiento et el esfuerço et la lealdad del yerno del conde. Otrosí, loaron mucho las bondades de Saladín et del conde et gradescieron mucho a Dios porque quiso guisar de lo traer a tan buen acabamiento. (108)

This celebration is the first of two comparisons of characters in the *enxiemplo* and confirms the intelligence of the young bridegroom, measured against that of Saladin. Patronio's closing comments in the *enxiemplo* take the reader back to the framing narrative of the story, which started with Lucanor asking Patronio for advice:

Patronio, un mío vasallo me dixo el otro día que quería casar una su parienta. Et assí commo él era tenuto de me aconsejar lo mejor que él pudiesse, que me pidía por merced quel consejasse en esto lo que entendía que era más su pro... (101-2)

In closing the story, a second comparison arises, that of Lucanor and Saladin, men who face similar dilemmas and occupy mirroring positions in the story: one in the framing narrative, and the other in the *enxiemplo*.²⁵ When Patronio's narration concludes, Count Lucanor—as an *alter ego* of Juan Manuel—sees a better version of himself in the mirror of Saladin's honesty and intelligence, which he can use to take a decision on the issue of his *vasallo*. Saladin serves as a model for the actions of Count Lucanor and proves that, while the men are separated by time, geographies, politics, and religion, this Muslim figure is able to teach a valuable lesson to the Christians, including Count Lucanor, Juan Manuel, and the Castilian readers of *CL*.

A Knight, a Minstrel and the *mejor omne*

In *enxiemplo* 50 Saladin falls in love with the wife of one of his knights. Deceived by the devil, and advised by a bad counselor, he promotes and sends the knight away to secure access to

²⁴ See Purcell (23-31) and Richard (1996, 269-75).

²⁵ For the ever-present analogy between the *enxiemplo*'s characters and Count Lucanor and Patronio, see Devoto (358).

his wife. Seeing herself prey to his advances, the wife devises a plan to preserve her reputation and delay the undesired consummation. She asks Saladin to tell her the best virtue a man could possess.²⁶

Saladin returns to his court and summons his advisors, but their responses do not satisfy him. Realizing that what he seeks cannot be found in his territories, he decides to search for it across the sea. He summons two minstrels, and disguising himself as one of their trade, he sails with them to the Papal Court.²⁷

Desde Saladín non falló qui le dixiesse et diesse recabdo a su pregunta en toda su tierra, traxo consigo dos jubglares, et esto fizo por que mejor pudiesse con estos andar por el mundo. Et desconoçidamente pasó la mar et fue a la corte del Papa, do se ayuntan todos los christianos. (209)

His attempt to discover the best virtue is as unsuccessful in the Pope's court as it was in the Levant. He continues his travels to France, where his luck does not improve. After two failed attempts, the sultan wanders for a long period of time in Europe, visiting the remaining courts in vain and losing hope. One day, he comes across a young squire who takes the men to see his father, an aged and wise knight. After hearing the question, the knight realizes that the person in front of him is not an itinerant musician, for no minstrel would seek such information. After this anagnorisis, the knight recognizes the sultan (211). He then tells Saladin that the most valuable thing a man could possess is *vergüença*:

...la mejor cosa que omne puede aver en sí, et que es madre et cabeça de todas las bondades, dígovos que esta es la vergüença. Ca por vergüença suffre omne la muerte, que es la más grave cosa que puede seer, et por vergüença dexa omne de fazer todas las cosas que non le parescen bien, por grand voluntat que aya de las fazer. (211)

Just before departing, the knight takes Saladin aside and tells him that he has seen through his disguise. He confides in the sultan and explains to him that many years before he had been welcomed into Saladin's house and received great gifts and honors.

Back in his domains, Saladin returns to the *buena dueña* with the correct answer and engages her in a brief conversation. She asks him if there is a better man in the world than him (212), to which he replies that there is none. The wife argues:

...avedes aquí dicho muy grandes dos verdades: la una, que sodes vós el mejor omne del mundo; la otra, que la vergüença es la mejor cosa que el omne puede aver en sí. Et señor, pues vós esto conoscedes et sodes el mejor omne del mundo, pídivos por merced que querades en vós la mejor cosa del mundo, que es la vergüença, et que ayades vergüença de lo que me dezides. (212)

²⁶ This story has European parallels in Breton narratives of concupiscent monarchs –Marie de France's *Equitan* and "The Franklin's Tale" in the *Canterbury Tales*. However, it comes to *CL* from the *Sendebär*. It is a folk motif known as "The Lion's Track," which originated in the Biblical episode of king David and Bathsheba of 2 Sam. 3-27 (Ruffinatto 19-24, Palafox 393-8).

²⁷ It is unclear from the text of the *enxiemplo* where the Papal Court is, in Rome, as it was during Saladin's life, or in Avignon, where it was located during Juan Manuel's time. This, however, does not affect the story.

Helped by her reasoning, Saladin realizes that his past actions have shown a lack of the very virtue in search of which he had traveled the world and which could make him a perfect man. He repents for his immoral actions and rewards the wife and her husband.

This time, Saladin's ultramarine quest is not driven by linguistic or cultural needs, like those of the bridegroom to Cilician Armenia, but by the search for pure knowledge. The answer is not to be found in his domains in the Levant but deep within Europe. While the absence of this specific piece of knowledge in Islamic lands could be seen as a criticism by Juan Manuel of the inferiority of Arabo-Islamic cultures, it is also true that Saladin is unable to find it in the religious center of Latin Christendom, the Papal Court, or in any other Christian court. It is only to be found in the house of a former crusader. This points to the superiority of the practical wisdom of the knight over the kind of knowledge that is inherited but untested in real life.²⁸

The implicit similarity between the Juan Manuel and the knight of the story, each the last wise noble in Europe, is evocative of another character in the *infante's* works, the *cavallero ançiano* in the *LCE*. Both knights serve as Juan Manuel's *alter egos*, and their virtuosity and knowledge are manifestations of his political and personal project of constructing a dissident history in which he played a central role.²⁹ Instead of transporting the reader to the mythical *illo tempore* that was often used to legitimize the didactic messages of medieval *exempla* and folklore, Juan Manuel uses the same technique in *enxiemplos* 25 and 50, placing them both in the not-too-distant historical past. Their political messages are thus more likely to be understood in a concrete historic chronotope, from whence they can be translated to the historical present.³⁰

Adams argues that the representation of Saladin in this *enxiemplo* is an attempt to sustain the superiority of the knight, an analog to Juan Manuel, over the Muslim sultan. Thus, Juan Manuel "reafirma su superioridad sobre el musulmán cuyo saber, por muy cultivado que sea, no se canaliza como el saber práctico del autor para alcanzar la salvación" (2012, 163). While it might seem that the story indicates that the knowledge of the virtue sought by Saladin is a product of European culture because it lies in this continent, guarded by no less than a *bellator*, I would like to explore a different interpretation of the source of the knight's exceptional knowledge, one which could suggest an alternate understanding of the story.

In the story there are only two individuals who know the most valuable *bondad*, the faithful wife and the knight. While the buena *dueña* –who is also Muslim!– is not a fully developed character, the knight is. Unlike other stock figures of *CL*, the knight who has retired from active life is a complex character, inspired by similar knights in the *LCE* and Ramon Llull's *Llibre de l'orde de cavalleria*. At some point in his life –perhaps during the crusades– the knight was

²⁸ Juan Manuel's preference for practical experience has been studied by Lida de Malkiel (1950, 176-84), Morón (206-9), and Seniff (94-8). Anita Savo pointed me to the possibility of considering the *escudero* and *cavallero* from this story, just as their equivalents from the *Libro del cavallero et escudero* (= *LCE*), as Castilian characters –establishing a parallel between the Castilians fighting the Nasrids and the crusaders fighting in the Holy Land. If this is the case, the didacticism of the story and its political message are amplified because only a Castilian character, familiar with both crusades against the Muslims is able to teach the real value of knighthood and honesty to the most virtuous figure of crusading literature.

²⁹ Juan Manuel construction of a dissident history is proposed by Funes & Qués (77-8).

³⁰ For chronotope, see Bakhtin (1981, 84-5). Deyermond (2001, 233) and Funes (2007, 7) have the studied the introduction of historical events in Juan Manuel's fiction and its implications. Stories like *enxiemplos* 9 (where the exile of infante Enrique in Tunisia serves as a metaphor of the tensions between Alfonso XI, Juan Manuel, and the sultan of Morocco) and 33 (which describes the fight between the eagle and infante Manuel's falcon, an allegory of the animosity between the infante and his nephew the king) are illustrations of Juan Manuel's predilection for autobiographism (Deyermond 2001, 226).

received in the court of Saladin for a significant amount of time (“el visquiera muy gran tiempo con él en su casa”, 211).

When he meets Saladin again, the knight reminisces about their shared past. Now blind, he has to rely on his memory to recognize the sultan by his manner of speaking (“conosció en la palabra que aquel era Saladín”). Having visited Saladin before this moral failure, the knight still remembers learning from this model for princes when they converse: “et contól cuánto bien dél avía recebido.” He recalls a past when he “recibiera dél mucho bien et mucha merced.” (211) Rather than material *dones*, like the ones received by the bridegroom and count in *enxiemplo* 25, the knight received *mercedes* (favours) and *bienes* (goods), not material goods, but intellectual ones.³¹

The knight’s memories allude to his education in the sultan’s court, which, like most medieval courts, included all sorts of wise men and scholars. The reference to these past events, although brief and not completely elaborated in the narrative, opens the door to a different conclusion. Rather than asserting the moral superiority of Christians over an exemplary Muslim, by dismissing the education and erudition of Saladin the story echoes the dissonant reality of Castilian colonialism (Wacks 130). Only a Christian who had come into contact with the idealized Islamic court of Saladin and learned from this experience could educate the most remarkable historical figure of Arabo-Islamic history—at least from Juan Manuel’s perspective.³²

Juan Manuel’s military and literary career leave no doubt about his numerous objections to the persistence of any form of Islamic government in the Iberian Peninsula: he saw it as a political threat to Castilian colonial and imperial aspirations, and a religious threat to Christianity.³³ His objections were grounded in theological and moral concerns, explained in the *Libro de los estados* (= *LE*, II, III-VII, 299-320) and made manifest by his active role in the Castilian campaigns against Granada. This is why *enxiemplos* 30 and 41 offer critical representations of two important Andalusí monarchs, Abenabet (= al-Mu‘tamid ibn ‘Abbād, king of Seville) and Alhaquem (= al-Ḥakam II, caliph of al-Andalus).³⁴ From Juan Manuel’s perspective, these rulers were the predecessors of the Nasrids of Granada and a reminder of the continued presence of Islamic kingdoms in the Peninsula.

But on the other hand, Juan Manuel’s representation of Muslim characters from outside the Iberian Peninsula, like Saladin and the wise Muslim king from *enxiemplo* 24, indicates that it is possible for Christians to learn from them. Saladin was not a Nasrid, but instead “un moro de allende el mar” (*CL* 125). This difference in origins makes possible a positive portrayal, as they do

³¹ For *merced* as a favor related to the *estado* of the individual, see *enxiemplo* 10: “Patronio, bien conosco a Dios que me ha fecho muchas *mercedes*, más quel yo podría servir...” (50), and XI: “...et pues Dios tanto bien le fiziera, quel pedía por *merced* que el deanadgo que fincava vagado que lo diesse a su fijo” (55). For *bienes* related to wisdom and knowledge, see the prologue to the *Libro de la caza*. “Non podría dezir ningun omne quanto *bien* este noble rey [Alfonso X] fizo sennalada mente en acresçentar et alunbrar el saber” (520).

³² The voyage and education of the knight in Saladin’s court—like that of the bridegroom in Cilician Armenia—coincides with the Mediterranean travels of European scholars, like Adelard of Bath and Hermann of Carinthia, to be educated by Arab *magistri* (Mantas 199-207).

³³ For the relationship between Juan Manuel’s political career and his representation of Muslims and Islam, see Cacho Bleuca (8) and Wacks (140).

³⁴ Juan Manuel’s portrayal of these kings follows the lines of negative stereotyping of the Muslims developed during the *Reconquista* and studied by Barkai (273-4). However, their lives bear similarities to the *infante*’s intellectual career. Al-Mu‘tamid, known for his love of I‘timād (=al-Rumaykīya/Ramayquía), was the most famous poet of his time (Garulo 127; Rubiera 1992, 87). Al-Ḥakam, an early model for Alfonso X, is famous for his patronage of knowledge. He is also remembered for his monumental royal library, the catalog for which filled forty-four volumes, and which was expurgated by al-Manṣūr (Sa‘īd al-Andalusī 142-3, al-Maqqarī 249-50, Ribera 43-9, Touati 201-2, Wasserstein 99-103).

not pose a threat to the Castilian territorial and political interests.³⁵ In the story, the knight says to Saladin:

–Amigo, la primera cosa que vos respondo, dígovos que cierto só que fasta el día de hoy que nunca tales juglares entraron en mi casa. Et sabet que si yo derecho fiziere, que vos debo cognoscer *cuánto bien de vós tomé*, pero desto non vos diré agora nada fasta que fable conbusco en poridat, por que non sepa ninguno nada de vuestra fazienda. (211, emphasis mine)

As Corominas points out, the verb *tomar* comes from early Castilian legal texts and was often used in late medieval literature to refer to the act of taking possession of something, rather than receiving it (5: 539-43). The use of this term to refer to the knight's education in the Levant indicates that it is an active process of gaining possession of knowledge, rather than passively receiving it from those who possess it. This description highlights Saladin's passivity during the same scene, as he is incapable of learning by taking and must instead resign himself to being educated by the knight. The roles outlined in the scene illustrate a colonial dynamic in which "the conqueror occupies the physical and cultural spaces of the conquered" (Wacks 133), with the knight having appropriated and cultivated the knowledge he gained from Arabo-Islamic civilizations (148).

Cross-cultural experiences also mark Saladin's sojourn and the disguise he uses in the story. As a knight errant, Saladin embarks on a long journey across the sea to the Christian kingdoms of Europe. His adventures in these lands correspond to the universal theme of the journey of initiation, in which a hero travels across the world to complete a quest.³⁶ Medieval quests manifest themselves outwardly in the geographical displacement of the hero and his participation in battles and other tests of his physical prowess. But they are always accompanied by an internal process of self-discovery and moral education. Saladin's displacement across the Mediterranean and Europe fulfills the material criteria of these quests, and his education by the knight and the *buena dueña*, the moral.

His voyage also falls into the category of travel in search of knowledge (*al-riḥla fī ṭalab al-ilm*), a common practice during the Middle Ages, rooted in prophetic tradition, and represented in diverse literary genres, such as the *riḥla* (travelogue), poetry, and historical accounts.³⁷ But it owes a great deal of its popularity to the early development of didactic and sapiential literature in Arabic, originating in Greco-Latin, Sasanid, and Indian sources translated into Arabic during the Umayyad and 'Abbasid periods. The *Alexander Magnus Arabicus* corpus describes Alexander's voyages to India and China and includes different versions of the famous golden epistle on the government of the people sent by Aristotle to Alexander, a tradition present in the Iberian Peninsula in the *Sirr al-asrār* (*Poridat de las poridades*). In the Arabic redaction of *Calila*, the court physician Burzōy (Berzebuey) is sent to India by king Khusrōy (= Khosrow I/Sirechuel) on a journey to find the book of *Kalīla wa-Dimna*, rumored to contain all the knowledge a king needs to govern his people. In the shorter Arabic recension of *Kalīla*, on which all the Castilian and Latin translations are based,

³⁵ This is argued by Cacho Blecua (7). While the fourteenth-century context of Castilian military hegemony over the Nasrids makes possible a positive portrayal of ultramarine Muslims, a quite different representation is found in the thirteenth-century *Cantigas de Santa María*, as García-Arenal has noted (134-51).

³⁶ The classical journey of the hero is studied by Campbell (45-82). Moorman (1-8) focuses on chivalric initiation voyages, and Haro (69-70) on initiation voyages in Castilian wisdom literature.

³⁷ For the origins and characteristics of the search for knowledge in Islam, see Goldziher (164-8) and Gellens (50-64).

Berzebuey's quest is driven by his desire to find the herbs that hold the secret of immortality.³⁸ It is likely that Juan Manuel drew on the tradition established by such texts when he employed the trope of the travel in search of knowledge.

In this manner, Saladin's thirst for wisdom resembles that of other characters in Arabic sapiential and didactic narratives known to Castilian readers. Saladin's voyage, like Sirechuel's, is misguided. With the help of Indian philosophers, Sirechuel comes to understand that the herbs that revive the dead are an allegory of the wisdom contained in books, which enlightens those who are ignorant, and awakens them to true intellectual life. Saladin's motives are morally reprehensible, but because of the length of his adventure and thanks to the intervention of the knight and the *buena dueña* he awakens to a virtuous life, recognizing how his misguided behavior affected his image. He thus uses the knowledge he has gained to become, in effect, "el mejor omne."

Another interesting aspect of the *enxiemplo* is the false identity assumed by Saladin during his travels. While his costume plays an important role, it is not until he meets the young squire that the reader is reminded again of this *habitus*. Just like the rest of the unnamed European characters in the story, the squire is unable to see past Saladin's disguise and mistakes him for a real minstrel ("Saladín, a qui el escudero tenía por joglar," 210). After dinner, the men perform for the entertainment of the squire and the knight: "Desque los manteles fueron levantados et los joglares ovieron fecho su mester..." (210).

During Juan Manuel's lifetime, many Castilian towns received large numbers of Muslim and Jewish musicians and minstrels from recently conquered territories. As a member of the Castilian high nobility, he was familiar with the world of minstrels from his patronage of and contact with them in court.³⁹ By clothing him as a minstrel, the author can exploit the benefits enjoyed by those who took up this profession in the Middle Ages. In the *enxiemplo*, Patronio says that Saladin adopted the disguise "por que mejor pudiesse con estos andar por el mundo" (209).⁴⁰ Unlike the bridegroom in *enxiemplo* 25, who needed to learn Arabic to enter Saladin's court, the minstrels that accompany him seem to be polyglot already, as is Saladin. Moreover, the high geographical mobility of medieval troubadours and jongleurs, and the appreciation of their work among the ruling classes, granted them access to the courts of Europe.⁴¹

Even before the dinner, the knight was already suspicious of the identity of one of the men, having heard the story of their quest in Europe. After their performance, when the knight hears Saladin's question, unable to see him due to his blindness, he recognizes the voice of his interlocutor. Thus the only individual able to see past the disguise and discover Saladin's true identity is blind. The blindness of the knight is a motif built on the tradition of classical sages and prophets, such as Phineus and Tiresias, who are unable to see the present but are able to see the

³⁸ The manuscript tradition of *Kalīla* is studied by De Blois (40-3).

³⁹ In *LE* he advises emperors and kings: "oír, si quisiere, juglares quel canten et tangan estormentes ante él, diziendo buenos fechos, que mueban los talantes de los que los oyeren para fazer bien" (I, LIX, 177). In May of 1303, after finalizing the arrangements for his marriage with Constanza of Aragón in Xàtiva, he participated in a celebration organized by king James II and enlivened by "juglars et juglaresses moros qui foren en la cort per fer solàs" (González Hurtebise 233, also in Menéndez Pidal 261-2 & Gómez Muntané 1998, 84). Gómez Muntané points to Juan Manuel's patronage of Christian and Jewish minstrels (1979, 66-7; 1998, 84 & 2001, 195-6).

⁴⁰ Bertran de Born is also able to visit Saladin's court in the first tale of the *Conti di antichi cavalieri* thanks to his profession.

⁴¹ The high mobility of minstrels and the presence of Muslim minstrels in Aragón and Castile has been studied by Menéndez Pidal (121-42), Gómez Muntané (1979, 63-5; 2001, 331-2 & 2009, 238-47), and Reynolds (2009, 243-5 & 2017, 91).

destiny of men and the machinations of the gods.⁴² While the knight is unable to physically see Saladin, he is able to recognize him. In contrast to this, the rest of the European characters of the story have sight but are unable to see past Saladin's disguise, either due to their lack of familiarity with him specifically or because of they do not possess the necessary education to recognize a truly educated man. Only a real knight could recognize a virtuous individual worthy of the order of chivalry and repay his past generosity by returning some of the knowledge he learned in Saladin's court, allowing the sultan to regain his virtue.

Un moro de allende el mar quel devía yo mucho amar et presçiar. Conclusions

The purpose of this study has been to examine the positive representation of Saladin in *enxiemplos* 25 and 50 of *CL*, and to highlight their scattered indications of the circulation of knowledge and its reception in Castile during the fourteenth century. Modern scholars like Fernand Braudel and Shelomo Dov Goitein have demonstrated that a vast majority of Mediterranean cultural exchanges were facilitated by the voyages of merchants and pilgrims. Their work has been complemented by the studies of José María Millàs i Vallicrosa, George Makdisi, Dimitri Gutas, and Charles Burnett in relation to intellectuals and itinerant scholars.

CL offers a new layer to these dynamics of exchange and circulation, one driven by the medieval readers of the Mediterranean world. Given *CL*'s didactic purpose and its intended audience, and in keeping with Juan Manuel's *estado*, his stories focus on knights and kings. Reflecting real life, but to a certain extent also an idealized vision of these crossings, these characters are endowed with a great thirst for knowledge and a keen awareness that the *sapientia* they pursue might reside outside of their own political or religious community. This thirst for knowledge is shared by Count Lucanor, who at the beginning of each story is educated by his faithful *ayo* Patronio. It is also shared by some of the historical individuals used by Juan Manuel as models, wise kings like Frederick II and Alfonso X –and even the negatively-portrayed al-Mu'tamid and al-Hakam II– whose intellectual curiosity drove them to *acresçentar el saber* as much as they could.

While it can be argued that the world through which the bridegroom and Saladin move in these *enxiemplos* is political and culturally homogeneous, as in most exemplary narrations, aiding their didactic purpose and universality (England 147), I have brought forth textual evidence that points to quite the opposite. Juan Manuel chose highly specific moments in history that enabled his readers to draw political connections between the exemplary content and the lived reality of fourteenth-century Castile. Contributing to this concreteness, both *enxiemplos* show a concern for precise details that explain how cultural differences were surmounted and that add to their verisimilitudes, such as the education of the son-in-law in Armenia and the disguise adopted by Saladin. While this attention to detail does not alter their didactic message, it does change how we understand the representation of these characters.

The purposeful linguistic and cultural immersion of the son-in-law contradicts the argument that the quest to liberate the Provençal count and trick Saladin is an easy endeavor, rendering the story a mere orientalist tale.⁴³ On the contrary, the bridegroom has to grow and become more like his model, receiving a lengthy education in Arabo-Islamic etiquette in Cilician Armenia,

⁴² The knight's blindness is a positive characteristic that allows him to recognize his interlocutor, a departure from less favorable medieval associations of blindness with moral or spiritual deviance (see Metzler 92-154 & Wheatley 63-89).

⁴³ For Juan Manuel's –ill-named– *maurofilia*, see Adams (2012, 146 & 2016, 407-8), Devoto (432-4), and Lida de Malkiel (1960, 354-6).

familiarizing himself with the culture as well as the language of the court. The opposite occurs when Saladin traverses the sea to visit Europe. Thanks to his education and familiarity with the courtly environment, and aided by his disguise, he enters all the courts of Europe and deceives the kings and ministers of Latin Christendom. The mirrored relationship between the stories and reality shows that rather than making an argument about the intellectual superiority of Christians over Muslims (or vice-versa), the *enxiemplos* emphasize the importance of a good upbringing, proper education, and moral rectitude, all regal attributes that Saladin possesses at the end of both narratives.

While other *enxiemplos* of *CL* employ a clear polemical tone against Islam, in these stories that is not the case. Rather, Saladin is represented through a lens that magnifies his virtues and the attributes of leadership, identified in the story with kingship, but ignores his religion. The coexistence of both strategies of representation of Muslim kings in *CL* reflects a colonial and a narrative dissonance that allows for the critical portrayal of some Muslim figures while also acknowledging the merits of others. Going beyond purely orientalist exoticism, Juan Manuel's representation of Saladin becomes a didactic tool with which to defend the colonial aspirations and political and military hegemony of the Castilian crown.

The only immutable truth in these stories lies in what they teach. As Juan Manuel wrote in the *Libro infinido*:

...la mejor cosa que omne puede aver es el saber. Ca por el saber conocen los omnes lo que se puede alcançar de Dios (...). Ca por el saber es el omne apartado de las animalias, et por el saber se salvan las almas. Et por el saber se onran et se apoderan et se enseñorean los unos omnes a los otros. (113)

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