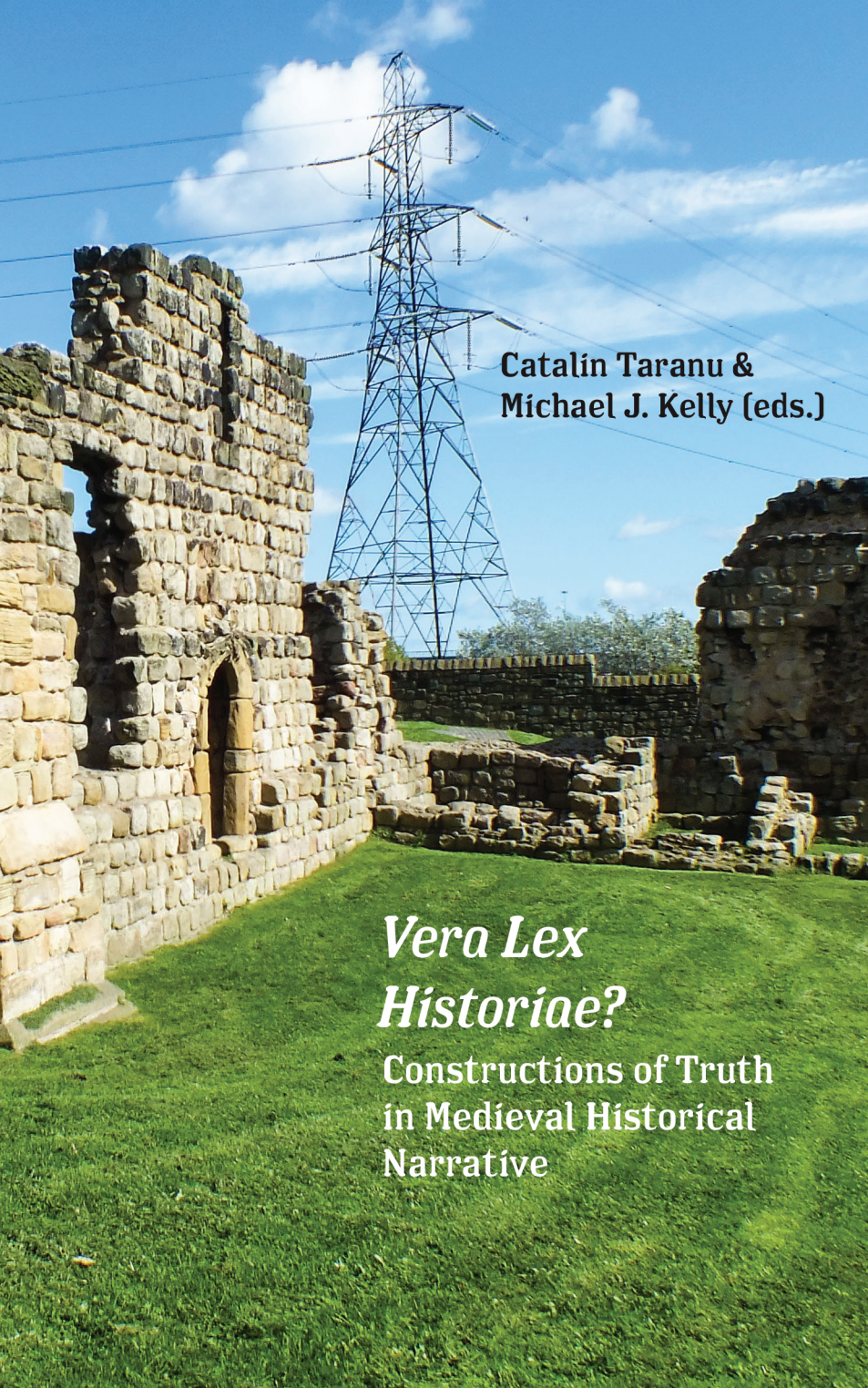
Catalin Taranu &
Michael J. Kelly (eds.)
Vera Lex Historiae?
Constructions of Truth in Medieval Historical Narrative

VERA LEX HISTORIAE?

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Fig. 1. Detail from Hieronymus Bosch, *Ship of Fools* (1490–1500)

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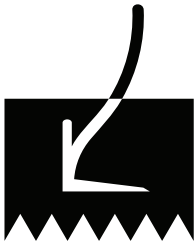

"Too many echoes, not enough voices."
— Cornel West

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Constructions of Truth in Medieval Historical Narrative

Contents

Editors' Acknowledgments

For Efrat.

— Michael J. Kelly

This collective volume has been long in the making, taking twists and turns that had not been planned, and it will keep being alive, in the making, for as long as it will have readers. It would be impossible to mention all the people and contexts that contributed to what it came to be, but a few names have to be named: the people at the University of Leeds and beyond taking part in the *Philosophies of History* seminar series (2013–2016), brought together by Michael J. Kelly et co. — the ideas for this project grew out of many conversations with Michael over cheese and wine; Alaric Hall and Jay Paul Gates, for essential help with this project; Oana Cojocaru, for her friendship and inspiration; Adrian Haret, for many invigorating discussions; my parents, Gabriela and Octavian, for keeping me fed in my times of academic precariat; all of the above, and many other friends (Hervin Fernández Aceves, Otávio Luiz Vieira Pinto, Mike Burrows, to mention only a few) for providing couches for sleeping in times of need.

— Catalin Taranu

1

The Shoemaker and the Troubadour Knight, and Other Stories: Historicity and the Truth of Fiction in Medieval Castilian Literature

Kim Bergqvist

And thus I have told you how it happened and how I knew about these three things of which you asked me. And because the words are many and I heard them from many people, it could well be that there were a few words more or less, or they are changed in some way; but believe me, surely, that the justice and the sentiment and the intention and the truth were as it is written here.
— Don Juan Manuel, "Libro de las armas o Libro de las tres razones"[1]

1 "Y así vos he contado cómo passó y cómo yo sope estas tres cosas que me preguntastes. Y porque las palabras son muchas [y] oilas a muchas personas, non podría ser que non oviese ý algunas palabras más o menos, o mudadas en alguna manera; mas cred por cierto que la justicia y la sentencia y la entención y la verdat así passó como es aquí escrito." Juan Manuel, *Obras completas,* ed. Carlos Alvar and Sarah Finci (Valencia: Proyecto Parnaseo de la Universitat de València, 2014), 757. All translations into English are mine unless otherwise credited.

The general prologue composed by Don Juan Manuel (1282–1348 CE) to introduce readers to his collected works opens with a narrative about a shoemaker and a noble troubadour. There was once a knight in Perpignan who was a great troubadour. He composed a song that was so brilliant and popular that everyone wanted to sing and hear that song and none other, and this pleased the knight greatly. Riding down the street one day, the knight hears a cobbler singing his song, disastrously erring in words and sound, so that whoever heard the song for the first time would consider it very poorly written. Consumed by rage, the knight descends from his mount, hears the shoemaker garbling his creation, thereupon snatches up a pair of scissors and goes to work cutting and destroying the fruits of the cobbler's labor. Their dispute is taken before the king, who understands the reasoning behind the knight's actions, pays the damages to the shoemaker and forbids him to sing that song in future.

This prologue to the works of the Castilian fourteenth-century *litterateur* Don Juan Manuel, that metaphorically imagines what happens to an author's works when copied into new manuscripts by less than competent scribes, recounts a story that has a similar structure to much older retellings, but one that is recast in significant ways here, in the MS 6376 of the Biblioteca Nacional de España in Madrid (fol. 1^{r}–1^{v}). As Leonardo Funes reminds us, the story the author narrates in his prologue, though a tale known from folklore, is assigned to a very specific time and place in Juan Manuel's version: in this case, the city of Perpignan, then under the dominion of the Kingdom of Majorca, ruled by King Jaume II (r. 1276–1311).[2] The Majorcan king, who was actually the father-in-law of Juan Manuel, even makes an appearance in the story. According to Funes, Juan Manuel used this strategy to transform a traditional anecdote into the semblance of a historical event, giving it an air of verisimili-

2 Leonardo Funes, *Investigación literaria de textos medievales: Objeto y práctica* (Buenos Aires: Miño y Dávila, 2009), 130–32; Ralph Steele Boggs, *Index of Spanish Folktales* (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 1930), 139 (1695 A).

tude and defending the veracity of the tale.[3] We should bear in mind, though, that according to Suzanne Fleischmann, Funes and Chris Given-Wilson historical truth did not imply authenticity of events in the Middle Ages, but rather plausibility and familiarity, "what was willingly believed" or commonly held to be true.[4]

Setting a fictional narrative — whether folklore or original invention — in a historical setting was a common way of conferring plausibility to imaginative stories. The prologue to the contemporaneous *Libro del cauallero Zifar* (*Book of the Knight Zifar*; c. 1300), a didactic, epic, and chivalric narrative ostensibly translated from Arabic, which allegorically recounts the legend of Saint Eustace, similarly places the story within a specified historical context, namely the jubilee celebrated by Pope Boniface VIII in Rome in the year 1300. A certain Ferrand Martínez, archdeacon of Madrid — who is charged with transferring the body of the deceased, prior archbishop of Toledo, cardinal Gonzalo García (Pérez) Gudiel, to Toledo — is also introduced, and has been identified as the author of the work.[5] Apart from the plausibility effect, I would like to argue in the following that there is something more at work here, in Juan Manuel's didactic fiction, than the authentication of this tale, and others in his literary output, through its historical mode of writing. The complex interactions between the historical and fictional modes in Juan Manuel's work will be addressed through an analysis of what I will call *reality elements* in some of his texts, that is, referential or pseudo-referential elements such as historical figures or epi-

3 Funes, *Investigación literaria de textos medievales,* 131.

4 Suzanne Fleischmann, "On the Representation of History and Fiction in the Middle Ages," *History and Theory* 22, no. 3 (1983): 305 (quote); Leonardo Funes, *El modelo historiográfico alfonsí: Una caracterización* (London: Department of Hispanic Studies, Queen Mary, University of London, 1997), 27; and Chris Given-Wilson, *Chronicles: The Writing of History in Medieval England* (London: Hambledon and London, 2004), 3.

5 On the prologues to the Zifar, see Fernando Gómez Redondo, *Historia de la prosa medieval castellana II: El desarrollo de los géneros. La ficción caballeresca y el orden religioso* (Madrid: Cátedra, 1999), 1380–92. Cf. Hugo O. Bizzarri, *La otra mirada: El "exemplum" histórico* (Vienna: Lit, 2019).

sodes included therein. This is of interest in the context of the present volume since we are concerned with the meanings and significance of historical truth in different textual communities and discursive practices.

Don Juan Manuel has often been credited with introducing literary fiction into Castilian prose, building on the translated and original works of his uncle, King Alfonso X of Castile-León (r. 1252–1284), in a number of genres.[6] Among Juan Manuel's early works are an abbreviated version of the Alfonsine *Estoria de Espanna* (*History of Spain*) entitled *Crónica abreviada* (*Abridged Chronicle*), and a book on hunting *(Libro de la caza*), closely modeled on previous exemplars, whereas his later production includes more sophisticated and idiosyncratic texts, didactic and fictional.[7] The first extensive works of fiction produced in medieval Castile were translations from Arabic, undertaken during the reign of Fernando III (r. 1217–1252), in part by his son, the then *infante* Alfonso. According to Francisco Márquez Villanueva, the mature Alfonso X came to regard purely fictional narratives as unprofitable, discourses from which no important lessons could be gleaned.[8] That conception was definitely not shared by his nephew, who considered stories of very diverse character and origin as salutary lessons, as evidenced by the type of narrative he included in his well-known collection of *exempla, El Conde Lucanor* (1335). This frametale collection includes fifty stories of varied origin — from animal fables to stories about real historical figures — which are all related explicitly to the situation of the fictional nobleman Lucanor and his councilor, Patronio, who offers them as advice

6 See Fernando Gómez Redondo, "Géneros literarios en don Juan Manuel," *Cahiers de linguistique hispanique médiévale* 17 (1992): 87–125.

7 See, for example, Diego Catalán, "Don Juan Manuel ante el modelo alfonsí: El testimonio de la *Cronica abreviada*," in *Juan Manuel Studies,* ed. Ian Macpherson (London: Tamesis, 1977), 50–51, and Olivier Biaggini, "Stratégies du paratexte dans les œuvres de don Juan Manuel," *Cahiers d'études hispaniques médiévales* 35 (2012): 195–232.

8 Francisco Márquez Villanueva, *El concepto cultural alfonsí,* 2nd edn. (Barcelona: Edicions Bellaterra, 2004), 130–31.

to solve certain issues the count encounters. According to Peter Dunn, the selection is based on "didactic usefulness in explicating a dilemma — which is verified within the book itself. None of the *exemplos* would have gained a place in it if they had not been 'found to be' true in the experience of the young Count."[9]

What will be discussed in the following is, above all, fictional texts that were perceived as "true" in the Castilian Middle Ages — and I shall return below to the question of truth-claims in medieval literature and how truth should be understood in this context. The analysis is concerned mostly with brief exemplary, didactic fictions with some historical content or written in a historical mode. The texts under scrutiny offer a means to understand how the past was represented so as to create a semblance of historical truth, in order to attain certain narrative and ideological aims.

Three main lines of argument will concern us here. The first is a discussion of the discursive common ground between history and fiction in the Middle Ages, based on the notion of plausibility as a foundational aspect. The second is a reflection about the function of historical figures, authorial or otherwise, or other reality elements in fictional texts, and their significance for the question of the autonomy and self-referentiality of fiction. Does the introduction of such characters signify added truth-value and authentication or is it a game of fiction, a way of upsetting the fiction and displacing the narrative voice?[10] Do these reality elements within fiction typically raise or deconstruct the status of fictional texts? That is, are they meant to introduce an aspect of truth to fiction? In doing so, are they (consciously) playing with the discursive common ground between fiction and history in the Middle Ages? Third, a discussion of Juan Manuel's

9 Peter N. Dunn, "The Structure of Didacticism: Private Myths and Public Fictions," in *Juan Manuel Studies,* ed. Ian McPherson (London: Tamesis, 1977), 63–64.

10 Cf. Wim Verbaal, "How the West Was Won by Fiction: The Appearance of Fictional Narrative and Leisurely Reading in Western Literature (11th and 12th century)," in *True Lies Worldwide: Fictionality in Global Contexts,* ed. Anders Cullhed and Lena Rydholm (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2014), 196–98.

work and its notions of historical and figural truth will be offered in relation to this concept of reality elements.

It is reasonable to assume that exemplary narratives, primarily intended as didactic literature, were held to be true. They were not necessarily accounts of actual historical events, but they often used historical settings to transmit general truths and wisdom, some kind of *sensus moralis.* The truth-value of didactic fictions is well-attested in medieval theories of fiction and relates closely to the integumentum theory, according to which one may transmit "a true meaning enclosed in an invented tale" (Bernardus Silvestris: "Integumentum vero est oratio sub fabulosa narratione verum claudens intellectum").[11] Even so, they were largely fictional and used various narrative devices. Our question here is, what function did the historical characters and settings of some of these didactic fictions serve?

Plausibility and Utility in Medieval History and Fiction

Fictional texts in the Middle Ages could definitely have, or be thought to have, a *plausibility* that separated them further from purely imaginary fiction than from referential historical texts. Both history and fiction had to be credible representations of plausible events, or something like it. That is, histories were fictionally embellished or developed in order to be plausible representations of the lived and experienced past (for example, dialogues invented, gaps filled in between the accepted facts, etc.),[12] whereas fictional discourse also had to meet standards

11 Walter Haug, *Vernacular Literary Theory in the Middle Ages: The German Tradition, 800–1300, in Its European Context,* trans. Joanna M. Catling (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 230. Quote from Édouard Jeauneau, "Note sur l'École de Chartres," *Mémoires de la Société archéologique d'Eure-et-Loir* 23 (1964–68): 36.

12 Ruth Morse, *Truth and Convention in the Middle Ages: Rhetoric, Representation, and Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 231, and Fritz Peter Knapp, "Historicity and Fictionality in Medieval Narrative," in *True Lies Worldwide: Fictionality in Global Contexts,* ed. Anders Cullhed and Lena Rydholm (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2014), 181.

of plausibility in order not to be disregarded as *fabulae*.[13] Consequently, plausibility characterizes medieval history-writing as well as medieval fiction, and it does not help us distinguish or delineate boundaries between them (or identify a medieval distinction between the two). In other words, there was a discursive common ground shared between historically grounded "fiction" and historiography as such.[14] Even such authors as Isidore of Seville (c. 560–636), who might seem at first to present history and fiction (*fabulae*) as entirely distinct — since the latter are "made up" (*fictae*) — do present more nuance at closer inspection. According to Martin Irvine, Isidore's definition is close to Priscian's rhetorical doctrine in the *Praeexercitamina,* stating that "a fable is a fictional statement resembling true life and showing an image of truth in its structure" ("fabula est oratio verisimili dispositione imaginem exhibens veritatis").[15] Truth was not exclusive to historical discourse, and fictional discourse was neither wholly untruthful nor necessarily less plausible or verisimilar than history.

These plausible fictions, then, were narratives which were deemed to treat events that *could* have happened. This corresponds very well to what Else Mundal, writing on medieval Icelandic literature, characterizes as the "broad sense" of historical truth, in contrast to a narrow sense, meaning true accounts of actual events.[16] In relation to Old Norse saga literature (of the

13 Mark Chinca, *History, Fiction, Verisimilitude: Studies in the Poetics of Gottfried's "Tristan"* (London: The Modern Humanities Research Association for The Institute of Germanic Studies, University of London, 1993), 100ff.

14 I wish to acknowledge my intellectual debt to Simon Gaunt, whose lecture "Romancing the Truth: Vernacular History and the Origin of Fiction" at Maison Française of New York University on November 22, 2016 aided me in developing my incipient ideas on this topic.

15 Martin Irvine, *The Making of Textual Culture: "Grammatica" and Literary Theory, 350–1100* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 239.

16 Else Mundal, "The Growth of Consciousness of Fiction in Old Norse Culture," in *Medieval Narratives between History and Fiction: From the Centre to the Periphery of Europe, c. 1100–1400,* ed. Panagiotis A. Agapitos and Lars B. Mortensen (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, University of Copenhagen, 2012), 169–75.

classical period), it has been suggested that stories that were blatantly untrue did not appeal to audiences, who preferred to hear about things that "could have happened."[17] This holds true for a range of medieval European literatures. According to Dennis H. Green, fictionality arose out of a complicity between the author and his audience to engage in a game of make-believe, to accept accounts that would otherwise have been regarded as untrue. This hinges on the ability of the recipient of the discourse to "adopt a fictive stance," and thus makes the attitude of the audience crucial, allowing for the same text to be interpreted as historical, fabricated, or fictional depending on how it was received.[18] Green also recognizes that fictional writing derived from historical writing, and for a long time lived side by side with this genre.[19]

For Juan Manuel, in a manner similar to that of the Middle-High German poet Thomasin von Zirclaere (c. 1186–c. 1235), the didactic function of his writing always took center stage, and so a historical or fictional "stance" would not have been essential to the reception of his work. The utility of good stories — albeit clothed in beautiful falsehoods — lies in their store of virtuous examples:

> I am not criticizing adventure stories — even though the message of adventures leads us to distort the truth — because they depict courtesy and reality: truth is [simply] cloaked in fabrications. […] Even if the stories are not [strictly] true, they can nevertheless indicate what a man should do if he wishes to lead a good and virtuous life. Therefore, I wish to thank those who have rendered many stories into the German language for us. A good story enhances good behavior. However, I would have thanked them even more if they had

17 Ibid., 175.

18 Dennis H. Green, *The Beginnings of Medieval Romance, Fact and Fiction, 1150–1220* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 4, 12–13 (quote on 13).

19 Ibid., 201.

> composed tales completely devoid of lies: they would have derived even more honor from that.[20]

This quote indicates the existence of a demarcation between truth and lies, yet also of untrue stories bearing a deeper truth, cloaked in lies, that could be profitable. The fact is that the same kinds of stories could be perceived as pure entertainment — even a sign of depravity — or as instruments of moral instruction and edification, depending on the context. That is, both historical and fictional narratives could further the moral edification of readers or hearers of those discourses.[21] For Juan Manuel, the didactic function of the *exemplum* needed to be married to the narrative mode; and so, more than a historical or fictive stance in the reader, the text needed an exemplary mode of articulation.[22] He did not display a fear of or anxiety about fiction. On the contrary, he used it to the best of his ability to further his didactic purposes:

> If it happens one night that he cannot sleep when he goes to bed, or that after having slept for a while he wakes up and cannot return to sleep, he should take care to do those things that aid and save his soul, and increase his honor, and his

20 Thomasin von Zirclaere, *Der Welsche Gast (The Italian Guest),* trans. Marion Gibbs and Winder McConnell (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2009), 69. The edition of the Middle High German text reads: "[I]ch schilt die âventiure niht,|swie uns ze liegen geschiht|von der âventiure rât, wan si bezeichnunge hât|der zuht unde der wârheit;|daz wâr man mit lüge kleit. [… S]int die âventiur niht wâr,|si bezeichent doch vil gar,|waz ein ieglîch man tuon sol,|der nâch vrümkeit wil leben wol.|dâ von ich den danken wil,|die uns der âventiure vil|in tiusche zungen hânt verkêrt.|guot âventiure zuht mêrt.|doch wold ich in danken baz,|und heten si noch groezer êre." Thomasin von Zirclaere, *Der Welsche Gast,* ed. Eva Willms (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2004), 45–46. Cf. C. Stephen Jaeger, *The Origins of Courtliness: Civilizing Trends and the Formation of Courtly Ideals, 939–1210* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 266.

21 Jaeger, *The Origins of Courtliness,* 232–33.

22 Jesús Montoya Martínez, "Juan Manuel (1282–1348)," in *Key Figures in Medieval Europe: An Encyclopedia,* ed. Richard K. Emmerson (London: Routledge, 2006), 385.

> wellbeing and his estate. [… I]f he cannot sleep, he should bid someone to read him some good (hi)stories, from which he can take good example. […] It is good to have them read those (hi)stories to him, because he will then leave those cares behind, which are unprofitable, and turn towards sleep; and if he cannot sleep, he will learn some things that will be beneficial.[23]

This passage echoes closely a section in the *Segunda Partida* of the legal code of Alfonso X, the *Siete Partidas,* dealing with chivalry and the knighthood, where it is suggested that while the knights eat, or if they cannot sleep, one should read histories to them or otherwise *cantares de gesta* (*chansons de geste*), i.e., epic songs.[24] To a modern reader, this might primarily signal two different genres of text, historical (*estoria*) or fictional (*cantar*), but the important function of these texts here is shared: that of providing examples in the form of good deeds done by outstanding men of the past.[25]

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23 "Y si acaeciere que alguna noche non puede dormir luego cuando se echa en la cama, o después que á dormido una pieça y despierta y non puede dormir, deve cuidar en las cosas que deve fazer para [a] provechamiento y salvamiento de su alma, y acrecentamiento de su onra y de su pro y de su estado. [… S]i non pudiere dormir deve mandar que leyan ante él algunas buenas estorias, de que tome buenos exemplos. […] Y por ende es bien que lean ant'él las dichas estorias, porque salga d'él aquel cuidado, que es sin provecho, y torne a dormir; y en cuanto non pudiere dormir, que aprenda algunas cosas que sean aprovechosas." Juan Manuel, *Obras completas,* 404 (*Libro de los estados*). The word *estoria* was likely meant to signify "history" (*res gesta*) in this context, but increasingly came to represent "story" (*res ficta*) as well: Carmen Benito-Vessels, *Juan Manuel: Escritura y recreación de la historia* (Madison: Hispanic Seminary of Medieval Studies, 1994), 93.

24 *Las Siete Partidas del rey Don Alfonso el Sabio,* 3 vols. (Madrid: Real Academia de la Historia, 1807), Part. 2, Tit. 21, Law 20.

25 Emily S. Beck, "'Porque oyéndolas les crescian los corazones': Chivalry and the Power of Stories in Alfonso X and Ramon Llull," *Bulletin of Spanish Studies* 88, no. 2 (2011): 171–72. On Juan Manuel's preference for history over trivialities (*fabliellas*), see Barry Taylor, "La fabliella de Don Juan Manuel," *Revista de poética medieval* 4 (2000): 197–98.

Medieval Autofiction and the Case against Self-Referentiality

Geoffrey Gust, in his 2009 monograph *Constructing Chaucer,* defines autofiction as "a story of the self" which is creative, unreliable, and essentially unreal, the main point being that the authorial persona created in medieval fictional works is not a representation of the "true" author.[26] In his *Libro de los estados* (*Book of the Estates*; 1330), Juan Manuel introduces a figure bearing his own name: Don Johán. This character is used only sparingly, mentioned by one of the two main characters, Julio, as a friend of his. This figure appears to act in support of the truth-value of the stories presented in the work.[27] References to an authorial "I," Don Juan ("yo, don Johán"), appear in the prologue to several of Juan Manuel's works and can be read as authorial assertions in line with those of his royal uncle ("Nos, don Alfonso"), as Manuel Hijano has shown.[28] They are thus analyzed as a discursive strategy used to legitimate the act of writing. Hijano argues that mentioning the life and work of this "don Johán" acts to indicate the authority of the enunciative "I," projecting an ideal image of its referent and establishing the *auctoritas* of the author function (in the Foucauldian sense).[29] However, when these self-references appear in relation to clearly fictional characters in the *Libro de los estados* and as judge of the value of the *exempla* in the *Conde Lucanor,* they serve further functions. Here, they become autofictional and metafictional

26 Geoffrey W. Gust, *Constructing Chaucer: Author and Autofiction in the Critical Tradition* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 2.

27 Dunn, "The Structure of Didacticism," 66.

28 Manuel Hijano Villegas, "Historia y poder simbólico en la obra de don Juan Manuel," *Voz y letra: Revista de literatura* 25, nos. 1–2 (2014): 71–110.

29 Ibid., 87–89. Michel Foucault developed the idea of the author as a function of the discourse in a 1969 lecture, printed in English as "What Is an Author?," trans. Donald F. Bouchard and Sherry Simon, in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews,* ed. Donald F. Bouchard (Oxford: Blackwell, 1977), 113–38. Cf. Leonardo Funes, "Don Juan Manuel y la herencia alfonsí," in *Actas del VIII Congreso Internacional de la Asociación Hispánica de Literatura Medieval,* ed. Silvia Iriso and Margarita Freixas (Barcelona: AHLM, 2000), 788.

because of the complexity of the fictions and fictional structures in which they appear. Most of Juan Manuel's works do contain some autobiographical references, representing him as an expert in matters of knighthood and war against the Muslims,[30] but in line with Gust's reading, we can determine they are not a simple reference to the "real" Don Juan Manuel. On the other hand, reading them solely as an exponent of an author function risks separating the fictional discourse, as an autonomous entity, from its historical context.

One might wonder, in this case, if the introduction of referential or historical figures signifies an attempt to avoid the implied self-referentiality of fiction.[31] For if fictional narratives are characterized by their autonomy, by only referring to things contained within the fictional world created by the narrative, then the possibility of using fiction to comment on social reality would be questionable. On this theory, the separation of (implied) author and narrator — e.g., the works of Chrétien de Troyes or Wolfram von Eschenbach — is crucial;[32] it means that a narrator who is in himself fictional and separate from the author who composed the work has been created.[33] The Don Juan

30 Germán Orduna, "La autobiografía literaria de don Juan Manuel," in *Don Juan Manuel: VII centenario* (Murcia: Universidad de Murcia/Academia Alfonso X el Sabio, 1982), 245–58.

31 This was identified as a characteristic and defining feature of fiction by Green in *The Beginnings of Medieval Romance,* and has been explored also by Verbaal in a couple of articles. Green's argument takes the romances of Chrétien de Troyes as the ultimate exponent of fiction in the Middle Ages.

32 Roberta L. Krueger, "The Author's Voice: Narrators, Audiences, and the Problem of Interpretation," in *The Legacy of Chrétien de Troyes,* 2 vols., ed. Norris J. Lacy, Douglas Kelly, and Keith Busby (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1987), 1: 115–40; Linda B. Parshall, *The Art of Narration in Wolfram's "Parzival" and Albrecht's "Jüngerer Titurel"* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 164.

33 Fleischmann, "On the Representation of History and Fiction in the Middle Ages," 295–96. Cf. Laurence de Looze, *Manuscript Diversity, Meaning, and Variance in Juan Manuel's "El Conde Lucanor"* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 262, on the implied author Juan Manuel as recipient of the fifty stories of Part I of *El Conde Lucanor,* which the real Juan Manuel wrote.

character in Juan Manuel's works is a fictional character who by implication of its referent ties the fiction to its socio-historical context of composition. Correspondingly, the selection of historical figures included in the fictional discourse of *El Conde Lucanor* follows political criteria, according to Carmen Benito-Vessels, and thus demonstrates the close ties between literary discourse and socio-political context.[34]

According to some scholars, the introduction of historical figures into fictional narratives does not transform the narratives themselves, but rather transforms these historical personages into devices within the fictional world. In other words, they become part of the fiction.[35] For example, Charlemagne in the *Chanson de Roland* (*Song of Roland*; eleventh century) is not the historical figure we meet in a biography of him; he is a literary character. This description of the function of referentiality has some merit; yet we could distinguish between at least two different models for interpreting these aspects of fictional literature: the *supposed* intention of the text and the *assumed* reception by the audience(s). Surely, while some fictional narratives could be "received as history" in certain contexts, historical figures were most likely received as fiction in other literary contexts. Ramón Menéndez Pidal consequently argued that historical elements present in an epic poem are not incorporated because of their historicity, but because they serve a fictional poetics.[36] The difficulty here lies in distinguishing textual strategy from the potential reception of the work and its different aspects. Historical elements in a fictional discourse could serve different ends, depending upon the context of reception. The inclusion of a historical figure could serve mainly literary ends for the author while being received as a true story of a real person by certain

34 Cf. Benito-Vessels, *Juan Manuel,* 87–88.

35 See, for example, Alberto Voltolini, "Probably the Charterhouse of Parma Does Not Exist, Possibly Not Even That Parma," *HUMANA.MENTE: Journal of Philosophical Studies* 6, no. 25 (2013): 235–61, and Ioan-Radu Motoarca, "Fictional Surrogates," *Philosophia* 42, no. 4 (2014): 1033–53.

36 Ramón Menéndez Pidal, "Poesía e historia en el Mio Cid: El problema de la poesía épica," *Nueva Revista de Filología Española* 3, no. 2 (1949): 113–29.

audiences, or vice versa. For while Johán in the *Libro de los estados* may have been read as a character analogous to either of the fictional characters in the same work by a contemporaneous or latter-day reader, we should still be sensitive to its intended function within the text, in terms of literary strategy. The intention of the work on the whole — in this case a question of didactics rather than diversion or entertainment — then becomes crucial to the interpretation.

The autonomy of fiction has previously been questioned by Laura Ashe,[37] Robert Stein,[38] and others.[39] Ashe argued the case that insular romances of the late eleventh century shared an ethos with histories and embodied both the events of history and the pattern of romance. As well, they exercised (or enjoyed) "both the freedoms of fiction and the referentiality of history," occupying a space between the two.[40] We may compare these romances to the medieval *Íslendingasögur,* or Icelandic family sagas, which were also referential in terms of many historical events and characters, but followed a fictional pattern of discourse or mode of storytelling.[41]

Several scholars have argued that certain fictions were accepted as true in specific contexts.[42] So whereas a modern conception of fiction entails the ontological separation between the domains of fact and fiction[43] — where the latter is completely self-referential and even in reporting true facts does not bear any relation to actual persons or events — I would argue this dis-

37 Laura Ashe, *Fiction and History in England, 1066–1200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 24–26.

38 Robert Stein, *Reality Fictions: Romance, History, and Governmental Authority, 1025–1180* (South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 2006).

39 But cf. Green, *The Beginnings of Medieval Romance,* 142.

40 Ashe, *Fiction and History in England,* 26.

41 Cf. Mundal, "The Growth of Consciousness of Fiction in Old Norse Culture"; Theodore M. Anderson, *The Growth of the Medieval Icelandic Sagas (1180–1280)* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 207–10.

42 Cf. Paul Strohm, *Hochon's Arrow: The Social Imagination of Fourteenth-Century Texts* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).

43 Tzvetan Todorov, *Genres in Discourse,* trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 25.

tinction was not generally in place in the Middle Ages. Stating that a historical novel about "Charlemagne" containing information drawn from history still only makes claims about this fictional character that bears a resemblance to the historical Frankish Emperor may be correct for modern fiction and the modern awareness of fictional discourses, but it seems a weak proposition in terms of explaining the functions and modalities of medieval literature.

Historical and Fictional Truths in the Works of Don Juan Manuel

In Juan Manuel's best-known work, *El Conde Lucanor,* it is possible to discern a difference in the treatment of fables on the one hand and historical *exempla* on the other. While the former are presented as useful or good *examples* (*enxiemplo bueno*), and both can be deemed *buen seso* (good reason), some of the latter are also judged as true or as reporting the truth (*verdat*). For whilst fables can contain *allegorical* or *figurative truths,* this aspect is distinguished from *historical* truth in the frametale narrative encapsulating these *exempla*. This is somewhat in contrast to the idea that the facts of history are subordinate to a higher truth which must be interpreted by the recipient of the text, in the sense of the *sensus moralis* of medieval romance.[44] Suzanne Fleischmann contends, based on the attitudes of Jean Bodel and Alfonso X of Castile-León, that there existed a distinction between historical and fictional discourse in the minds of originators and recipients of medieval texts, but that "this distinction cuts across different lines from our own."[45] However, Fleischmann goes so far as to state that "the distinction between the historical deeds of kings and heroes on the one hand, and the legendary embroidery on those deeds, or their invention out of fertile poetic imagination, on the other, was at best blurred

44 Fleischmann, "On the Representation of History and Fiction in the Middle Ages," 289–90.

45 Ibid., 299–300.

and probably nonexistent in the minds of intended audiences," and that "historical truth was anything that belonged to a widely accepted tradition."[46]

It appears Juan Manuel did distinguish between good stories and true stories, and that the latter were often deemed true due to some idea of historical referentiality. These judgments come into play in the final comments of each *exemplum* in *El Conde Lucanor,* where the diegetic levels of the narrative are transcended, insofar as they report that the count was pleased with the advice given him by Patronio, and acted upon it, and then that "don Johán" deemed it a good example, had it written in "this book", and composed a verse to summarize the lesson.[47] The few tales in *El Conde Lucanor* that are given the epithet of true are almost exclusively based on actual historical people.[48] This is not likely an attempt to wrest these narratives out of their wider (fictional) context, but rather a means of demonstrating how historically true accounts and fables can be both profitable stories, if understood and acted upon correctly by the intended audience, and, as principally, a mode of overstepping the boundaries of genre and modality.

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46 Ibid., 303, 305.

47 Cf. James Mandrell, "Literary Theory and Medieval Texts: Authority and the Worldly Power of Language in *El Conde Lucanor,*" *South Central Review* 8, no. 2 (1991): 10: "what was initially to seem real becomes part of the fiction proper. The inclusion of Don Juan Manuel at this point not only brings into the body of the fiction the putative author, it also details the authorial process by which El Conde Lucanor was composed. […] El Conde Lucanor shows Don Juan Manuel not as an author or a compiler or even merely a scribe, but, rather, as a kind of 'commentator' […]."

48 Ex. 18, Don Pero Meléndez de Valdés (doubtful) ("El conde tovo que Patronio le dezía la verdat," 584); Ex. 25, Saladin ("El conde plogo mucho d'estas razones que Patronio le dixo, y tovo que era verdat todo assí como él le dizía." 605); Ex. 27, Alvar Fáñez ("El conde plogo mucho d'estas cosas que Patronio le dixo, y tovo que dezía verdat y muy buen seso." 616); Ex. 40, a Seneschal of Carcassone ("El conde tovo que era verdat lo que Patronio le dizía," 640); Ex. 42, a false Beguine ("el conde tovo que era verdad esto que Patronio le dixo y puso en su coraçón de lo fazer assí." 645); Ex. 44, Pedro Núñez et al. ("El conde tovo este por buen consejo y por verdadero." 652).

The story of the three knights in example 15 — Lorenzo Suárez Gallinato, Garci Pérez de Vargas, and a third whose name the author cannot recall (*non me acuerdo del nombre,* 578), though they were the best in the world — uses an historical episode and a setting that was recognizable to its intended audience. It is set during the siege of Seville by King Fernando III (Juan Manuel's grandfather) in 1247–1248. The brave and saintly king in the example is implicitly contrasted with the powerful but hostile king who seeks an excuse to attack the count Lucanor, his erstwhile enemy, which in the frame of the narrative is recounted to Patronio. This hostile relationship, which causes the count to seek his councilors' advice, echoes Juan Manuel's own contentious experiences with Alfonso XI (r. 1312–1350), and thus becomes a commentary on his own life as well as a profitable example for others in a similar situation. The story Patronio uses to illustrate why Lucanor should be patient and suffer the fear and anxiety of the situation without acting rashly, recounts how the knights in a test of courage went up to strike the gate of the city with their lances, provoking the attack of ten thousand defending Muslim soldiers. When the defenders attack, the knight who waits longest to clash with the multitude, Lorenzo Suárez, is deemed the bravest, since he quietly withstood the fear and did not panic. The narrative marries an anecdote about historical figures to literary structural principles in order to present the didactic message of the fiction in an appealing way.[49] The historical account is not represented mimetically, in full detail, but rather a single aspect of that narrative is used to symbolically illustrate a moral, determined by Juan Manuel.[50]

In another example (28) using the knight Lorenzo Suárez as protagonist, Juan Manuel seems to exculpate him for his disloyalty, for which he was exiled by Fernando III, perhaps in an attempt to excuse his own recurring conflicts with Alfonso XI. This rebellious trait is a recurring characteristic in several of the

49 Reinaldo Ayerbe-Chaux, *El Conde Lucanor: Materia tradicional y originalidad creadora* (Madrid: J. Porrúa, 1975), 91–95.

50 Benito-Vessels, *Juan Manuel,* 97.

historical figures represented in *El Conde Lucanor* (among them Fernán González).[51] In all this, Juan Manuel uses a historical mode — in contrast to other instances, for example, those based on fables — wherein an aspect of a reality element is adapted to the moral-didactic intention of the text. Unlike Reinaldo Ayerbe-Chaux, who points out the entirely imaginative character of this example, history subsumed into fiction, Carmen Benito-Vessels does not defend the autonomy of the fictional narrative, but rather signals its pseudo-referentiality. Referentiality here is not representational (mimetic) but illustrative (symbolic): Juan Manuel chose to represent those aspects of the history or legend of a historical figure that he considered exemplary.[52] Reality elements serve to upset the autonomy of the fictional and reinforce its (pseudo-)referentiality, serving the didactic aims of the text but resulting in a form of modal instability. The text reimagines an episode from the *Estoria de Espanna,* retaining the historical setting but recreating its significance in a new discursive context. In so doing, Juan Manuel is able to appropriate the truth claims of the historical genre (having presented his biased selection of history in the abbreviated version of the *Estoria de Espanna,* the *Crónica abreviada*), the modalities of which he incorporates into his story, while using the exemplarity inherent in the structure of the *exempla* genre, thus making possible the elevation of rebellion and political ambition to the status of praiseworthy example.[53]

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51 Ayerbe-Chaux, *El Conde Lucanor,* 87–88; María Cecilia Ruiz, *Literatura y política: el "Libro de los estados" y el "Libro de las armas" de don Juan Manuel* (Potomac: Scripta Humanistica, 1989), 110, 118–19. Cf. Olivier Biaggini, "Histoire et fiction dans l'œuvre de Don Juan Manuel: de la *Crónica abreviada* à *El Conde Lucanor*," *e-Spania* 23 (2016), https://journals.openedition.org/e-spania/25253

52 Ayerbe-Chaux, *El Conde Lucanor*, 91; Benito-Vessels, *Juan Manuel,* 97–101, 108. Cf. Robert Scholes, James Phelan, and Robert L. Kellogg, *The Nature of Narrative* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 84.

53 Benito-Vessels, *Juan Manuel,* 108–9.

When the fiftieth and final *exemplum* of *El Conde Lucanor* — which uses Saladin as its protagonist[54] — is presented as a means of knowing the truth of what is the most important virtue for a man to possess, Patronio is not referring to historical truth.[55] Neither was Juan Manuel interested in this story for its historical accuracy but rather because of its ability to demonstrate in a pleasing and entertaining manner a perpetual truth. The memory of things that have happened (i.e., the events of history), are essential to what Juan Manuel considered knowledge (*saber*) and that the ancients recorded in books, but they are valuable because of their utility and exemplarity.[56] Similarly, John of Salisbury defended "the notion that the truth of a thing lies more in its moral utility than in its actual relation to 'reality.'"[57] Thus, historical truth need not be a matter of fact.

Nevertheless, apart from the fact of a consciousness of fiction, or a boundary — however porous — between history and fiction, there exists the question of the presence of a playfulness in overstepping that boundary. The *Libro de las tres ra-*

54 Ayerbe-Chaux, *El Conde Lucanor,* 124–37; María Cecilia Ruiz, "Theft in Juan Manuel's *El Conde Lucanor,*" in *Crime and Punishment in the Middle Ages: Mental-Historical Investigations of Basic Human Problems and Social Responses,* ed. Albrecht Classen and Connie Scarborough (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2012), 263–70.

55 Juan Manuel, *Obras completas,* 666–73.

56 "Comoquier que entre Dios y los omnes á muy pequeña comparación, como puede seer entre criador y criatura, pero porque tovo nuestro señor Dios por bien qu'el omne fuese fecho a su semejança, y esta semejanza es la razón y el saber y el libre albedrío que Dios puso en el ombre, y porque los omnes son cosa fallecedera muy aína, tan bien en la vida como en el saber, que fue una de las señaladas cosas para que Dios nuestro señor lo crio, tovieron por bien los sabios antiguos de fazer libros en que posieron los saberes y las remembranças de las cosas que pasaron, tan bien de las leyes que an los omnes para salvar las ánimas (a que llaman Testamento Viejo y Testamento Nuevo), como de los ordenamientos y posturas que fizieron los papas, y los emperadores y reyes (a que llaman decreto y decretales y leyes y fueros), como de los saberes (a que llaman 'ciencias' y 'artes'), como de los grandes fechos y cosas que pasaron (a que llaman 'crónicas')." Juan Manuel, *Obras completas,* 46 (*Crónica abreviada*).

57 Siân Echard, *Arthurian Narrative in the Latin Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 32.

zones (*Book of the Three Reasons*; 1345),[58] often interpreted as the political testament of Don Juan Manuel, is a singular work of fictional history writing. This late work is also highly characterized by his own personal experiences, both in terms of his interactions with kings and experiences in his daily life.[59] In the text, Juan Manuel sets out to present to the reader his rights to the Castilian throne, representing himself as the culmination of a lineage characterized by the fulfilment of Christian, aristocratic, and warrior virtues. In so doing, he creates a narrative that is intended to be historically accurate, based on eyewitness accounts, and which explicitly aims to convey historical truths; yet to modern scholarship his text appears highly fictionalized, influenced by folklore and marked by a conscious distortion of facts.[60] Why? It can be related to the idea of plausibility.

David Wacks has analyzed Juan Manuel's complex relationship to Andalusī culture as a colonizer's experience.[61] His works were influenced, to some degree, by Arabic storytelling, not least the frametale structure of the *Sendebar* and *Calila e Dimna,* and "[i]n the *maqāmāt* of the Andalusī author al-Saraqusti, the anecdotal frame of performance suggests a continuity between the world of the tale and that of the audience, with the narrator linking the two through first person perspective (i.e., 'I saw x happen and now I relate it to you'). It heralds the introduction of plausible fictionality to medieval narrative."[62] This speaks to the discursive common ground shared with historiography.

58 Previously known as the *Libro de las armas.*

59 Alan Deyermond, "Cuentos orales y estructure formal en el Libro de las tres razones (Libro de las armas)," in *Don Juan Manuel: VII centenario* (Murcia: Universidad de Murcia/Academia Alfonso X el Sabio, 1982), 75–87.

60 Ruiz, *Literatura y política,* 108–11; Leonardo Funes, "Entre política y literatura: estrategias discursivas en don Juan Manuel," *Medievalia* 18, no. 1 (2015): 9–25.

61 David A. Wacks, "Reconquest Colonialism and Andalusī Narrative Practice in the 'Conde Lucanor'," *Diacritics* 36, nos. 3–4 (2006): 87–103.

62 David A. Wacks, *Framing Iberia: "Maqāmāt" and Frametale Narratives in Medieval Spain* (Boston and Leiden: Brill, 2007), 49. See also Rina Drory, *Models and Contacts: Arabic Literature and Its Impact on Medieval Jewish Culture* (Boston and Leiden: Brill, 2000).

But Juan Manuel's debt to Arabic storytelling in the form of the frametale genre also affects the message, since, as Wacks highlights, it "juxtaposes the explicit didactic program of the author with the more ambiguous lessons expressed by the tales themselves and decoded by the reader. This juxtaposition opens a space between our author and his narrative."[63] Again, Juan Manuel's strategic use of reality elements need not correspond to his audience's reading of the *exempla,* since these polyphonously are open to multiple interpretations. The type of discourse suggests that the truth present in the narratives is exterior and prior to the composition of the work, and that this truth is thus not created by its author, but merely revealed to its audience.[64]

Nonetheless, plausible fictionality can be achieved without the need to introduce "reality elements" or autobiographical details. The use of personal details and the creation of autofiction in this period must be explained by reference to other aspects of the discourse. One suggestion is that personal details and self-naming would have worked to establish precisely a means of contact and a specific relationship to the intended audience.[65] It might also be a play on the discursive common ground between history and fiction, sharing their pursuit of plausibility, a way of grounding the fictional world in the lived experience of the audience. Correspondingly, Boccacio's Decameron — another frametale narrative akin to *El Conde Lucanor* — is set in a context that would have a very direct relevance to its audience

63 Wacks, *Framing Iberia,* 133. Mario Cossío Olavide, "*Algunos moros muy sabidores*: Virtuous Muslim Kings in Examples 30 and 41 of *El conde Lucanor,*" *Bulletin of Spanish Studies* 97, no. 2 (2020): 127–38, analyzes a couple of narratives from the *Conde Lucanor* to demonstrate how Juan Manuel, using the example of two Muslim kings — al-Mu'tamid of Seville and al-Ḥakam al-Mustanṣir, the Umayyad caliph — offers positive models of virtuous kingship by adapting Andalusī historical and folkloric traditions.

64 Marta Lacomba, "Escritura, ética y política en la segunda parte de El libro del Conde Lucanor," *e-Spania* 21 (2015), https://journals.openedition.org/e-spania/24747.

65 Haug, *Vernacular Literary Theory in the Middle Ages,* 135.

in their social and historical situation. This would speak against the autonomy of the fictional world.[66]

Did these reality elements then raise or deconstruct the status of the discourse as fiction — turning it into something akin to history or historically based didactic fiction? Did they unsettle the reader's sense of what was real and what was make-believe? If we look to similar literary elements in modern literature, they signal an acute awareness of generic boundaries. The play on these boundaries destabilizes them and gives rise to questions about the nature of reality and the stories we tell. For Juan Manuel, the primary motivation was to create plausible and convincing exemplary stories. He was determined to write effective didactic tales. The reality elements that he sometimes used, some of them based on the introduction of an authorial alter ego, others on episodes or figures from historiography, must be read in line with his overall didactic aims. This upsetting of the narrative voice can be compared to Mundal's discussion of how saga authors played with the boundaries between the real and the fantastic. The play on the borderline between realism and fantasy marks an awareness of that line rather than a lack of consciousness and so complicates our understanding of history and fiction in the Old Norse context.[67] Likewise, the conscious playfulness with the boundary between the fictional world of the *exempla* and the lived experience of the author and audience in fourteenth-century Castile is a literary device that demonstrates the complexity and multivalence of medieval fiction.

66 According to Mandrell, "Literary Theory and Medieval Texts," 9: "at the level of narrative organization, the diegetic and situational repetitions tend towards the commonality of everyday existence. It is the nature of *El Conde Lucanor* to extend outwards in an increasingly generalized way and not to close in upon itself, either as a function of its being read or of its being the embodiment of the author who created the fiction and the role that he plays."

67 Mundal, "The Growth of Consciousness of Fiction in Old Norse Culture," 192–93.

Conclusion: Reality Elements in Medieval Fiction

Factual and fictional discourses were distinct, but there was significant discursive common ground, and authors quite consciously played with this aspect of literary discourse. In effect, Juan Manuel and other medieval authors had a sophisticated grasp of what they and their audiences would expect from a historical or a fictional work of literature. This does not imply that these discourses were entirely distinct or wholly stable. On the contrary, there is research on several medieval European literary contexts that strongly suggests that the discursive common ground shared between historical and fictional modes of storytelling was continuously in effect during several centuries after the "invention" of medieval fiction — a process that in itself was not a sudden revolution but rather a gradual and processual development.[68] There is good reason to believe that authors wrote fictions that used reality elements not principally to *verify* the authenticity or historicity of their tales, but to embrace the discursive common ground between the two modes — foregrounding plausibility, embracing pseudo-referentiality, destabilizing the vague distinctions between history and fiction — ultimately to enhance the fictional mode as an interpretation of lived reality. It was a model for commenting on society in the guise of literary play. The aim was to achieve the balance between *entertainment, example,* and *history* that Lars Boje Mortensen argues for in relation to twelfth-century historical culture.[69] To be sure, the further investigation of these traits in medieval fiction might augment our knowledge of another kind of *historicity* in medieval fiction: not its potential connection to actual events in the past, but rather the condition of fictional narratives as historically and socially situated cultural objects that vary and

68 See Kim Bergqvist, "Truth and Invention in Medieval Texts," *Roda da Fortuna: Revista Eletrônica sobre Antiguidade e Medievo* 2, no. 2 (2013): 229–30.

69 Lars Boje Mortensen, "The Glorious Past: Entertainment, Example or History? Levels of Twelfth-Century Historical Culture," *Culture and History* 13 (1994): 68–69.

transform in their movement between spatial and temporal contexts.[70]

70 Cf. Francisco Bautista, "Pseudo-historia y leyenda en la historiografía medieval: la Condesa Traidora," in *El relato historiográfico: textos y tradiciones en la España medieval,* ed. Francisco Bautista (London: Department of Hispanic Studies, Queen Mary, University of London, 2006), 96.

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