

10. The Integration of Form

Don Juan Manuel “Count Lucanor” (1335)

Here I will introduce “Count Lucanor” (El Conde Lucanor), which is a representative work by Don Juan Manuel (1282-1348). The form of this work is exhaustively consistent. Without any exception, all 51 stories develop as follows. First, a nobleman called Conde Lucanor comes to his advisor called Patronio for consultation on various problems in his life saying, “Actually I am in trouble with something...” Patronio cites adequate examples and leads him to a conclusion convincing him of his point of view. Furthermore, the author Don Juan Manuel closes the story with a short poem with a lesson. Although there are some varieties, this form is basically kept.



【Picture 1: Don Juan Manuel】

This is similar to some TV programs in which every episode has the same beginning and ending. I wonder whether the author’s intension of integrating the form is a monotonous story device or a comfortable repetition for the readers.

●Author’s Character

The seriousness of the author’s character appears in many parts of his works. For instance, we can see his awareness as an author when we read the following preface. “Don Juan knows from his experience that when books are copied, there may be many errors from the misreading of similarities in letters. As a result, the meanings are misunderstood, and sometimes confusion occurs, and later generations blame the author for these errors. As he always worries about this, he requires those who read the manuscript of each book not to put the blame for these errors on the author even if they

find some inappropriate words in his works, until they have read the original work in which the author himself had made many corrections.” (Japanese translation; Nobuaki Ushijima and Hiroto Ueda) In those days, it was quite rare for an author to worry this much about how his writings were edited or copied.

As the author writes these tales he does not create freely, but seeks the topics from stories of Arabic allegories, the lives of the saints, occidental classic literature, Spanish tradition and so on. While he pursues intelligibility and pleasure like a typical scholar, he shows morals to his readers in a careful style. “El Conde Lucanor” is a “serious” work with a coherent form and contents. Strict and religious aristocratic life and thoughts in Castilla seen in this work make a clear contrast from the unrestrained pleasure in the contemporary “The Book of Good Love” (Libro de Buen Amor) by Juan Ruiz. The picture shows the author praying devoutly (picture 1).