

The novel seems to be intended as a study of the recurrence of similar personalities, events, and relationships from generation to generation. Andrew's father, Duncan McPherson, thought himself a good father and was "proud he never beat his children in the heat of anger" (p. 14). Once, nevertheless, in anger, Duncan whipped Andrew around the neck with a razor strap, an act for which his son never forgave him. In his own judgement Andrew is a patriarch who has devoted himself to his family. The judgement of his descendants, gradually revealed as the novel progresses, is less complimentary.

The reader is left free to judge Andrew as his descendants do, or according to his own view of himself. Only Soderstrom's dedication of the *Descent* to two men "who were nicer than Andrew" suggests her own negative judgement of her character, a judgement which perhaps she intends the reader to share. The emphasis on the similarities in personalities and events in succeeding generations is not accompanied by a consideration of the causes of these similarities—genetic factors, or the uncomfortable family environment that repeats itself from generation to generation. A more philosophical exploration of this question, and increased authorial control over the reader's judgement of the characters, would have added depth to this novel whose strength lies in the development of its characters.

Nevertheless, Soderstrom does create characters who are real and living people, and the novel is an interesting one. The *Descent* presents a panorama of events in a variety of places and times, and can offer its readers a good evening's entertainment.

Emma Kafalenos

DON JUAN MANUEL

The Book of Count Lucanor and Patronio. A Translation of Don Juan Manuel's El Conde Lucanor.

Trans. and Intro. John E. Keller and L. Clark Keating.
Lexington: The University of Kentucky Press, 1977. Pp. 201.

The Book of Count Lucanor and Patronio, Don Juan Manuel's masterpiece, is a delightful collection of some fifty tales. It was finished in all probability around 1335. This version, in a modern, lucid style, is, with rare exceptions, a model of what should comprise a good translation. There is a long introduction (pp. 1-33) in which sources are outlined, background information is given, and a brief biography is set out. There are historical notes at the end of each tale and there is also a brief bibliographical essay (pp. 198-99) which details the major editions of *El Conde Lucanor* and provides a short list of "books and articles pertinent to the study of Don Juan Manuel" (pp. 200-01). It is worth mentioning, perhaps, that the two previous English translations of this important work seem to have come from the French version of Puybusque rather than from the original Spanish.

Many of the tales which appear in *El Conde Lucanor* form part of the long medieval tradition of *exempla*. Several tales have become famous in other contexts; for example, "What Happened to a Fox and a Crow Who Had a Piece of Cheese in His Beak" (pp. 57-59) is probably of Aesopic origin and is possibly better known from the fable of LaFontaine. The story of Doña Truhana (pp. 61-62) can be related to that of the milkmaid and her pot of milk. "What Happened to the King and the Tricksters Who Made Cloth" (pp. 130-33) is an early Hispanic version of the fairy tale of the Emperor's new clothes. Finally, the tale of "What Happened to a Young Man Who Married a Strong and Ill-tempered Woman" (pp. 137-41) is an early version of Shakespeare's more famous play *The Taming of the Shrew*.

Although medievalists in general seem primarily interested in sources, it is Don Juan Manuel's style and manner of storytelling which makes this collection relevant (even in translation) to the modern reader. Perhaps the most renowned and the most

charming tale (from the Hispanist's viewpoint) is that of what happened to "a Dean of Santiago and Don Yllán, the Grand Master of Toledo" (pp. 67-71). This example was glossed by Azorín and remembered more recently by such illustrious moderns as Enrique Anderson-Imbert and Jorge Luis Borges. Unfortunately, the translators do themselves less than justice in their version. For example, "entraron dos omnes" (Don Juan Manuel, *El Conde Lucanor*. Ed. J. M. Blecua. Madrid: Clásicos Castalia, 1969, p. 95) becomes "two men appeared" (p. 69). "Pero puso en su coração de non dexar aquel estudio tan ayña" (p. 95) is rendered as "But he decided not to leave his most interesting study" (p. 95). "Et en estas fablas estudiaron desque ovieron yantado fasta que fue ora de çena" (p. 95) has for its translation "Now they continued to talk from lunch time till dinner time" (p. 68). And finally, "et fueron descendiendo por ella muy grand peça, en guisa que paresçia que estavan tan vaxos que passaba el rio de Tajo por çima dellos" (p. 95) is translated as follows "and descended for such a distance that it seemed as though they were down far enough to be below the river Tagus" (p. 69).

Keller and Keating have decided, quite justifiably, to avoid a phony medieval style. There is every reason to shy away from an English fourteenth-century rendering of *omnes* (modern *hombres*), *coraçon* (modern *corazón*), *dexar* (modern *dejar*), *et* (modern *y*) with their changes in both spelling and pronunciation. However, it is less justifiable to replace a concrete word *entraron* with an abstract one "appeared," or to translate *puso en su coraçon* (with its overtones of greed and desire) by "decided" (which suggests a current of rational, logical decision making). The rendering of the clause *desque ovieron yantado fasta que fue ora de çena* as "from lunch time till dinner time" is also deficient as the translation weakens the time structure which plays such an important part in this particular tale. Again, whereas the image of the river Tagus which *passaba . . . por çima dellos* is, to a certain extent, symbolic of the river of death which takes away memory, the English version in which "it seemed as though they were down far enough to be below the river Tagus" loses that symbolism.

Keller and Keating have opted for a twentieth-century English translation

which is consistent and by no means unpleasing. Their positive achievements outweigh any negative criticism, and they have produced a reliable, well documented, modern translation of an important Spanish work that was previously remarkably unattainable in English. Don Juan Manuel enthusiasts will be pleased as *The Book of Count Lucanor and Patronio* will now be made available to a much larger English speaking public.

Roger Moore

MARIE-CLAIRE BLAIS

Une liaison parisienne

Montréal: Les Editions Internationales Alain Stanké et Les Editions Quinze, 1975. Pp. 175.

The Québec of Marie-Claire Blais's earlier works may be described as a hellish stage of unreason on which are enacted the horror-filled scenes of human bestiality, rendered in the manner of the *Grand Guignol*. *Une liaison parisienne* appears to present us with quite another Québec, as seen from a European perspective. The events of the novel, however, eventually reveal that this madness projected as outer setting, though somewhat refined by the muses of Parnasse, has merely been transposed to another geographical setting. The tale's protagonist, Mathieu Lelièvre, a Québécois aesthete proud of his rationality ("sa vigilance rationnelle le sauverait toujours de tout péril," p. 12), flees from a Québec "virginal de coeur et d'esprit" (p. 9), where he has been raised by loved and loving parents, to Paris, where he assumes that the cult of art and intelligence is practised scrupulously, and that, as a consequence, his first novel, to be published there, will be received with enthusiasm. His first work, a volume of poetry published in Québec, had been roundly condemned by his countrymen for its febrile disinterestedness. This inexperienced young man of twenty undertakes the voyage to Paris in the hope of coming to a deeper knowledge of life and art as refined in the ancient crucible of Gallic culture.