

Revista Canadiense de Estudios Hispánicos

DAVID ARBESÚ, ED. *Sendebar: Libro de los engaños e los asayamientos de las mugeres*. Newark, DE: Juan de la Cuesta, 2019. 152 pp.

Erik Ekman



Volume 45, Number 2, Winter 2021

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1100814ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18192/rceh.v45i2.6709>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

Asociación Canadiense de Hispanistas

ISSN

0384-8167 (print)

2564-1662 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this review

Ekman, E. (2021). Review of [DAVID ARBESÚ, ED. *Sendebar: Libro de los engaños e los asayamientos de las mugeres*. Newark, DE: Juan de la Cuesta, 2019. 152 pp.] *Revista Canadiense de Estudios Hispánicos*, 45(2), 509–511. <https://doi.org/10.18192/rceh.v45i2.6709>

© Erik Ekman, 2023



This document is protected by copyright law. Use of the services of Érudit (including reproduction) is subject to its terms and conditions, which can be viewed online.

<https://apropos.erudit.org/en/users/policy-on-use/>

érudit

This article is disseminated and preserved by Érudit.

Érudit is a non-profit inter-university consortium of the Université de Montréal, Université Laval, and the Université du Québec à Montréal. Its mission is to promote and disseminate research.

<https://www.erudit.org/en/>

revolutionary Mexico, and understand the complexity of disability contingencies and their effect on mediating bodily difference. Her research, writing, and analysis is challenging yet provides the reader with a clear view and new perspective on the issues of disability and race in the Global South. Antebi's book is a valuable, interdisciplinary study for any scholar who focuses on cultural representations of Mexico and for those who seek to better understand the importance of disability studies in relation to both literary and archival documents of Latin America.

APRIL KNUPP
Grove City College

DAVID ARBESÚ, ED. *Sendebār: Libro de los engaños e los asayamientos de las mugeres*. Newark, DE: Juan de la Cuesta, 2019. 152 pp.

The *Sendebār* or *Libro de los engaños de las mugeres*, a collection of framed tales translated by the Infante Fadrique, brother of Alfonso X the Wise, in 1253, is among the first works of prose narrative in Castilian. It is now available in a new edition by David Arbesú published by Juan de la Cuesta. The collection of twenty-three tales is framed by the story of King Alcos, whose son, returning to the court after years with his tutor, Cendubete, has been falsely accused by a member of his father's harem, one of his ninety wives, of raping her. In reality, the son has rejected her advances. While the court waits for the son to finish his week-long vow of silence, members of the court tell a series of tales to pass the time and to show the trickery of women and thus convince the king that he should at least wait before executing his son. When at last the son is able to speak, King Alcos realizes that he is wise and educated, and that his wife has betrayed him. She is punished and the prince is saved. The Castilian text was translated from Arabic and the text is of Indian and Persian origins. Versions of it circulated throughout Europe in a wide variety of languages under different titles into the sixteenth century. Like the *Calila e Dimna*, translated in the same decade and of similar origins, *Sendebār* sits at the crossroads between Eastern literary traditions, carried to Iberia and the rest of Europe through Arabic, and the beginnings of Castilian prose narrative. Arbesú's edition of *Sendebār* is a useful, accessible version of a very rich text and should be of interest to researchers, and also students from the advanced undergraduate to graduate level.

The editor includes a detailed introduction to the text and its textual tradition. Since the work is conserved in a single manuscript, MS 15 of the Real Academia Española, the so-called *Puñonrostro* manuscript, a fifteenth-

century codex that in addition to the *Sendebär* contains an incomplete copy of the *Conde Lucanor* and several other texts, textual variants are not important, and no stemma is necessary. Arbesú, however, does devote considerable attention to the various traditions of the text in other languages and their transmission, a nice overview of the many ways in which the story collection was adapted and translated throughout the centuries. The text of the edition has been modernized and standardized with the usual resolution of abbreviations, separation of words, punctuation, and standardization of spelling, which Arbesú documents.

Because there is only one extant manuscript of the *Sendebär*, it is not possible to compare variants of the Castilian text. Arbesú does use the texts of other linguistic traditions of the text to resolve some of the more enigmatic sections of the Castilian version. He places these sections in brackets so that readers are aware of his intervention. As he states, his goal has not been simply to produce an edition of the text, but rather a *reading* of it:

El objetivo fundamental de esta edición crítica es doble. Por un lado, he querido presentar un texto – una propuesta de lectura – que surge de una profunda reflexión sobre el mismo. Acercarme de manera crítica al *Sendebär* me ha permitido comprender aspectos de la obra que al principio no eran tan evidentes y que – con cada revisión – se han ido esclareciendo poco a poco. En otras palabras, mi intención no ha sido solo la de editar (o transmitir una vez más) el *Sendebär*, sino la de *comprender* el *Sendebär*, aun teniendo en cuenta las dificultades que plantea el códice de la Real Academia Española. (43)

I believe the editor has been successful in this endeavor. He has produced a well-ordered and readable text, the provenance of which he lays out in detail in the introduction. Perhaps the greatest value of this edition are the annotations. In addition to abundant footnotes that explain difficult lexical and grammatical points, Arbesú provides an extended analysis of each story that includes its appearance and variation in other languages, its meaning, and its use of folkloric tropes. These commentaries attempt to resolve enigmatic sections of the text, usually the result of textual transmission, by referring to examples of the story in other textual traditions. They often also include references to other studies and other folk traditions. These notes are an invaluable head start to researchers, and, I believe, especially to students, who are likely to write short papers on individual stories. With the fairly detailed introduction to some of the basic problems of textual transmission, variants in other language traditions, and bibliographic references to the most important studies, students will start their research with an idea of the key issues of any of the *exempla* that interest them. Students will appreciate

the accessibility of the text and the aids to research found in the notes, and the systematic philological analysis should be useful to scholars for generations to come. This is a fresh edition of a truly fundamental text and as such, Arbesú's edition of the *Sendebarr* is a welcome addition to the research library and, especially, the classroom.

ERIK EKMAN

Oklahoma State University

JULIO BAENA. *Dividuals: The Split Human and Humanist Split in Early Modern Spanish Literature*. New Orleans: UP of the South, 2020. 380 pp.

Dividuals is not, nor does it attempt to be, a conventional academic monograph, and that is, precisely, its best quality. Julio Baena's text is a complex and consciously fragmentary exploration of modern subjectivity. It reads as a juxtaposition of snapshots that move between scholarly essay, linguistic and philological analysis, anecdote, political op-ed, philosophical treatise, and sometimes even the angry rant (and I say this as a compliment). The author, loyal to his very personal style, jumps from the past to the present, forcing the reader to re-consider what it is and was to be human and a humanist. Baena, a self-defined "unrepentant leftist," is unapologetic about his beliefs, and whether or not the reader agrees with his principles, it is undeniable that he manages to create a book that captures the reader's attention, something that cannot always be said about traditional scholarly pieces.

Dividuals opens with a jarring statement: "We seem to have moved from individuality to identity" (1). After convincing the reader that, in fact, we have abandoned our own individuality in a mediated world, the author reviews the process that has taken us to this situation. He situates the emergence of the individual as subject and agent (an organic unity of soul and body) in the Renaissance, and the split of the individual in the Modern era with the emergence of Freudian and Marxist thought. According to Baena, the splits that occurred because Marxism (pure dialectical materialism) and Freud (pure psychoanalysis) are incompatible lead to the irreconcilable division of body and soul (the dividual). Moreover, he argues that capitalism has been fundamental to the rise of the subject and its subsequent split.

The core of the book explores early modern Spanish literature, taking as a point of departure the following formula: "*Lazarillo* is to Marx as *Diana* is to Freud" (8). The anonymous picaresque novel *Lazarillo de Tormes* (1554) is used as the example for all Renaissance texts about the materiality of man,