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**Alexander the Great and Aristotle
in the *Libro de Alexandre***

(abstract)

The aim of this paper is to read the text of the medieval Spanish poem *El libro de Alexandre* from the perspective of a Classicist, focusing in particular on the relationship between Alexander the Great and his master Aristotle.

The *Libro de Alexandre* can be dated in the first half of the 13th century and it is a product of the cultural environment of Spanish schools and universities of that period. Even if scholars propose the name of Gonzalo de Berceo, there are no strong elements to identify the author of the poem, whose work demonstrates a great knowledge and the access to a rich library with a lot of material on Alexander.

The content of the poem covers the whole life of the great Macedonian leader, from his birth to the burial in Alexandria, passing through his military campaigns in Asia and devoting space to mythical tales about him and erudite digressions. Even if the poem clearly reveals a process of medievalization of the content and the presentation of the material, the author shows how many elements of the story of Alexander were preserved intact across the centuries. The image of the son of Philip II that emerges from the poem is as complex and contradictory as it is depicted by Classical authors, whose message went through later expansions and revisions until the two main sources of the author of our poem: the *Roman d'Alexandre* and the *Alexandreis* by Gautier de Châtillon.

After the tale about Alexander's childhood and his alleged birth from Nectanebo, the poem centers stanzas 32-86 on the relationship between Alexander and Aristotle. The scene is set before Alexander's departure for his expedition and it is represented as a very evocative dialogue between the learned teacher and the young scholar, who are deeply bound as if they were father and son (cf. Plutarch, *Alexander* 7-8).

The great figure who affects Alexander's approach to knowledge is Homer, whose *Iliad* was always the companion both to his studies and exploits. In the *Libro de Alexandre* Aristotle's reference to Hector and Achilles (s. 70) is the turning point between the image of Alexander as a pale scholar reading by an oil lamp and the medieval representation of the knight ready to leave and follow the example of the Homeric heroes.

These are just some of the fascinating aspects of the *Libro de Alexandre*, which can be considered as a sort of mirror of fragments of Classical literature reflected from a medieval surface, where echoes of the past live again in a chivalry scenario. Accordingly, the poem's image of Aristotle with his outstanding pupil offers interesting elements for exploring the complex phenomenon of intertextuality that interrelates sapiential statements (Aristotle's teaching and guidance) and exemplary literature (Alexander as a scholar and warrior).