

MARÍA ROSA MENOCAL. *The Arabic Role in Medieval Literary History: A Forgotten Heritage*. (The Middle Ages.) Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987. Pp. xvii, 178. \$27.95.

The late María Rosa Lida de Malkiel, the distinguished exponent of the classical tradition in Spanish literature, once told a Berkeley friend how much she regretted not knowing Arabic. That so great a scholar felt a deficiency in her mastery of the foundations of Western medieval and Renaissance literature is a humbling thought, and one imagines how delighted she would have been with the present young generation of Hispano-Arabist scholars, on this side of the Atlantic, whose study of Arabic has opened new vistas in the understanding of Spanish literature and who have finally begun, as a matter of course, to encompass the full range of the literary heritage of medieval and Renaissance Spain. The Romance Arabists I am, in particular, thinking of are Luce López-Baralt, author of *San Juan de la Cruz y el Islam* and *Huellas del Islam en la literatura española: De Juan Ruiz a Juan Goytisolo*, both published in 1985; Consuelo López Morillas, *The Qur'ān in Sixteenth-Century Spain: Six Morisco Versions of Sūra 79* (1982); and María Rosa Menocal, whose recently published book is *The Arabic Role in Medieval Literary History* (1987).

The challenging subtitle of Menocal's book, "A Forgotten Heritage," may raise some eyebrows among medievalists who, at least since the publication of Charles Homer Haskins's *Renaissance of the Twelfth Century* (1927) and A. R. Nykl's *Hispano-Arabic Poetry and Its Relation with the Old Provençal Troubadours* (1946), not to speak of V. Rose's pioneering study of the school of translators at Toledo ("Ptolemaeus und die Schule von Toledo," *Hermes* 8 [1874]), have been fully aware of the importance of Arabic influences in the literature and thought of the Christian Middle Ages. Menocal's gauntlet is hurled at Romance scholarship, in particular, though not wholly, at the petty "territorialism" and narrow-mindedness of Spanish scholars, however eminent, like Claudio Sánchez-Albornoz, whose ambivalence about their Arab and Hebrew heritage does not shrink from anti-Semitic insinuation, as the author forcefully shows in her elaborate notes. It is something of a shock for the non-Hispanic reader of Asín Palacios, Millás Vallicrosa, Américo Castro, classics in any attempt to trace Arabic literary, scientific, and cultural influences on medieval Europe, to learn that the late Samuel Stern, the discoverer of the Mozarabic *kharjas* attached to Andalusian Hebrew and Arabic *muwashshahs*, and James Monroe, an American pioneer in the study of Hispano-Arabic strophic poetry, were subject to personal attack by various scholars including Emilio García Gómez, "the paterfamilias of Hispano-Arabic literary studies." A second front against which Menocal launches a vigorous defense is the view of "mainstream" Arabists, some of whom consider the stanzaic Arabic poetry of medieval Spain, including the classical *muwashshah* and its colloquial *kharja* (the final strophic "envoi" of the *muwashshah* commonly spoken by a young woman), as part of the canon of classical Arabic poetry rather than a uniquely Andalusian phenomenon and the prototype of Romance lyric.

Here I find the author's partisanship blinds her to the usefulness of the debate itself, that is, the contribution, in spite of occasional acrimony, made by the critique of Alan Jones and Richard Hitchcock, her bêtes noires, in subjecting the *muwashshahāt* and especially the *kharajāt* in macaronic Arabic/Romance vernacular to intensive palaeographical, linguistic, thematic, metrical, musicological, and historical scrutiny. The urging of caution in the reconstruction of the Romance *kharjas*, when the reading of the Arabic manuscript texts is fraught with ambiguities and lexical uncertainties, is not only directed at Armistead and Monroe but also at García Gómez, José María Sola-Solé, and transliterated versions which depend on a "plethora of emendations" (Jones) and problematic scansion.

The much-discussed question of the influence of Hispano-Arabic poetic forms on the first troubadours was given its first serious accreditation by Julián Ribera's and Nykl's editions of Ibn Quzmān (c. 1160), whose rhymed colloquial Arabic verse, the *zajal*, is a "sister-genre" (Stern) of the *muwashshah* and is sprinkled with Romance words. The comparative metrical studies of the *zajal* by Ramón Menéndez Pidal traced its pattern in the strophic forms of Romance lyric and in the *cançiones zejelescas* of the fourteenth-century Castilian *Book of Good Love*. However, Wolfram of Eschenbach's Provençal poet Kyot, who, according to Wolfram, took the story of Parzival from an Arabic account at Toledo, continues to mystify scholars. More importantly, the entire question of the relationship between Andalusian Arabic poetry and Romance lyric has been affected by the skepticism of Stern.

Menocal's call for "a new type of comparative textual analysis" — especially with regard to the *scuola siciliana* — that deals with Hispano-Arabic poetry as part of the whole European tradition of courtly and popular lyric and the relationship between the two is a reiteration of long-standing theories in the light of modern literary and sociohistorical approaches. In her book statements like that of Gustave von Grunbaum, "there can be little doubt as to the influence of Arabic poetry on the songs of the troubadours" (*Medieval Islam*, 1946, p. 340), are supported by thematic and structural analysis of "the newest discovery," the love poetry of the *muwashshahāt*, and by the author's stubborn conviction that the etymology of "troubadour" is Arabic *tarraba* 'to sing'. Menocal also believes that the application of modern literary theory and textual method to medieval texts, that is, the primacy of synchronic over diachronic studies, will end the "academic conceptual banishment of the Arab from medieval Europe" (p. 93).

The literary chapters are preceded by a clearly set forth and skillfully organized "Rethinking the Background" (chap. 2). Its separate sections prepare the way for the subsequent discussion of courtly love (chap. 3) and Dante (chap. 5), especially the opening section on the troubadour William IX of Aquitaine (c. 1100), who is placed in a lively, reconstructed environment of Andalusian culture including servants and singing girls, and the last section on Frederick II (c. 1240), whose Arabic milieu at Palermo is generally well documented and known, though an anthology of poets compiled by the eleventh-century Sicilian Ibn al-Qaṭṭā' "did not survive to be neglected in the twentieth century" (*sic*; p. 118). With regard to Dante, an intriguing observation on page 75 is fully developed in chapter 5 ("Italy, Dante and the Anxieties of Influence") concerning Dante's "startling" lack of preoccupation in *De vulgari eloquentia* with the poetic roots, Andalusian and Siculo-Arabic, of the Provençal and Sicilian poets who were "his revolutionary ancestors."

In viewing Menocal's book as a whole and the fervor with which she confronts us with her single argument (the neglect of the Arabic component in the portrayal of European medieval culture), we still remain, in poetry, with the complex question of the transmission of thematic and metrical conventions. The transmission of a work like Petrus Alfonsi's *Disciplina clericalis*, whose Hebrew and Arabic analogues were thoroughly examined by the late H. Schwarzbaum, presents no special difficulty, since we know that Alfonsi, a converted Jew born in Huesca, emigrated to England and, in 1126, collaborated with Adelard of Bath in the Latin translation of al-Khwārizmī's astronomical tables, which, like Chaucer's use of Māshā'allah in his *Treatise on the Astrolabe*, were based on a Spanish version made by Maslama ibn Aḥmad al-Majrīṭī (d. 1007). The scientific and philosophical translations of Arabic texts are accounted for not only by the direct testimony of their contents but also because they often state what they are — "ex arabico in latinum." We have no such evidence in the case of Provençal lyric and even less so in Sicily, where no trace of Siculo-Arabic popular

poetry has survived. We have to rely on circumstantial evidence and the re-creation of plausible channels and contacts such as we have in this book.

A disturbing feature, however, is Menocal's rhetorical stance with regard to the hardly neglected "Arabic-Islamic component" in medieval thought. The author asserts that Averroes and Maimonides, "Aristotle's faithful keepers," have been "abandoned and forgotten" in Spanish literary history and pleads for their "restoration" as "stellar Spaniards and Europeans" (p. 153).

Hyperbole aside, Menocal's lucid and uninhibited account of the polemics in her field, stated at the opening in chapter 1 ("The Myth of Westernness in Medieval Literary Historiography"), gives a resonant leitmotif to her work and sets its single-minded direction of engaged advocacy on the basis of strong scholarship. It is clear to the reader at the outset that the study of the Arabic role in the literary heritage of Spain, as well as the study of Orientalism in general, has regrettably become an ideology. Yet even if the thesis of the book is at times overstated and it recapitulates much material that is well known, the author's skill in presenting it with a fresh look makes her book a fascinating introduction to an area of medieval literary and cultural history still replete with nationalistic tensions.

The elegant appearance and beautifully written style of the book add to its special character. Its scholarly value is enhanced by an excellent bibliography and extensive supplementary notes closely aligned with the bibliographical listings.

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JEAN MEYERS, *L'art de l'emprunt dans la poésie de Sedulius Scottus*. (Bibliothèque de la Faculté de Philosophie et Lettres de l'Université de Liège, 245.) Paris: Société d'Édition "Les Belles Lettres," 1986. Paper. Pp. 220.

This fine book clarifies an important aspect of Sedulius Scottus's poetic composition: How and why did he borrow from other works? Jean Meyers defines a borrowing (p. 35) as "everything taken from an author in full awareness and with a precise purpose." In this narrow definition words unconsciously appropriated from another are not borrowings; they belong to one's own language, because drawn from memory. The unconscious reminiscences that form part of Sedulius's language are excluded from this study, which devotes one chapter each to his borrowings of words, of phrases, and of sentences and a fourth chapter to certain poems characterized by accumulated borrowings.

Of the borrowings of rare words (chap. 1), some quite simply pleased Sedulius; others required his readers to recognize the borrowing and its origin in order to comprehend his meaning. In poems 2.15 and 2.30 his use of *linguosus*, for example, invites the reader to recall the whole of the biblical contexts describing the odious *homo linguosus*: otherwise the reader will not understand the poems, which have puzzled earlier commentators (pp. 49–53). Sedulius's suppression of unwanted associations receives valuable attention. Thus in poem 2.37 (pp. 42–43) he changed the meaning of *depascere* in order to prevent his reader's inappropriately recalling the word's negative context in Psalm 48.

The borrowings of phrases, which are numerous and various (metaphors, paraphrases, striking collocations of words, and so forth), are classified in chapter 2 as "purely ornamental," "learned," or "connotative." Of the many phrases borrowed from Vergil, some are "ornamental," perhaps unconscious; others bestow an epic, heroic coloring (pp. 75–80). The latter are "learned" borrowings, which appeal to the reader's literary culture. Only the reader capable of recalling the context from which